role-modeling socialist behavior

*The Life and letters of Isaac Rab*

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

* Victor Hugo

RAB’S MATHEMATICSTo everyone’s protestationsagainst his socialist “utopia”with “one cannot changethe world into a moneylesscooperative world societywithout leaders or borders”he would invariably pointout the logic of mathematics:if every world socialist —between 50 and 100,000 atleast at present — followedhis dream of the goodlifeand convinced just one personand they in turn convincedjust one person the revolutionwould be here in a year —

“there is nothing as powerfulas an IDEA whose time has come.”

* Trevor Goodger-Hill

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

— Isaac Rab

**preface**

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

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

It isn’t very hard to recognize that no matter what our standing in thiscapitalist world — whether we’re on Welfare, we’re working for a livingand making it, or we have enough capital so we’re all set even if we don’twork — 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 isto spread knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism. Thislittle 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 forsocialism is so important is that World Socialism can only come intobeing when huge numbers of ordinary people understand what it is, andwant it enough to commit themselves to making it work. That’s the onefactor lacking to establish World Socialism right now. All the other mate-rial conditions necessary for a socialist revolution, such as the techno-logical ability to produce abundance, are already in place. Once there isa general recognition that global capitalism is clearly not operating in theinterests of most people, and never could be reformed so that it would— and that a viable alternative to global capitalism does truly exist, therest will be easy.

It might sound like a waste of time to devote one’s whole life to tellingpeople what’s wrong with the world, and why and how to change it tomake 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 firststarted talking about these things together, “Just picture what it would belike. You know you’re no smarter than anyone else. Other people can dothe same as you. Picture what would happen if thousands and thousandsof people were doing the same thing as you are.” (He spoke in italics alot.) “Think what would happen then. Just multiply yourself by about amillion and imagine what an impact that would have.” Meaning, it hasto begin somewhere. That’s why the title of this book is Role-ModelingSocialist 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 withanyone who crossed his path, and nine times out of ten, he’d bring thesubject of the conversation around to socialism pretty soon. He said thatwas planting seeds.

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

A word about me: Born into the Rab familyin 1940, I learned about socialism by osmosis,first at endless discussions around our kitchentable, 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 knowthat I was a socialist, in the same way I knewthat 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 under-stand what being a socialist meant; or what“the movement” was all about; or even what“socialism” was. I remember walking homefrom Second Grade one day, when I noticedthat red flags had been put up all over theneighborhood. Joyfully, I announced to myfamily, “The Revolution has finally happened!”

“How do you know?” asked Papa. “They’ve put up scarlet banners! That’sthe Socialist flag!” I enthused. Patiently, I was made to understand that thoseflags were being used to warn people away from a construction site, and thatthe 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 mewhat socialism was. He said it was three things: a science, a movement,and a system of society. He talked about the materialist conception ofhistory, the class struggle, and a classless, moneyless society based on thecommon ownership and democratic control of the means and instru-ments of production.

Well, that was quite a bit to digest all at once, but I tried. By the timeI officially joined the World Socialist Movement in 1962, I had a goodbasic understanding of the case for socialism. From then till now, I’vebeen doing my very best to speed the day when the Revolution doeshappen. You know, the only thing standing in the way at this point is thelack 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 apart of that conscious socialist majority.

CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings

***1893 — 1915: Rab’s family in Navaradok; hischildhood in Boston; Ohio Northern University.***

Rab’s parents, Sheppie Rabinowich and Sarah Friedberg Rabinowich,came from Navaradok shtetel, in Minsk-Gobernia, on the Russian-Polishborder. Sheppie’s father and grandfathers for generations back had beenrabbis 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 isirrational to believe in a god. Therefore, he gave up on being a rabbi andbecame a lay teacher and a scholar instead. He was one of the few Jewishpeople in those times, in that place, who had papers to travel anywherehe wanted. And he considered himself a revolutionary socialist.

Sarah Friedberg was a young distant relative of his. They first met whenher family engaged him to tutor her. Like Sheppie, Sarah was already anatheist, and she was very bright. He convinced her of the importance ofestablishing a socialist society, and somewherein the midst of his teaching and their discus-sions, she fell in love with him despite the largedifference in their ages and the fact that theywere cousins of some sort.

I have no way to know how the Friedbergs orthe Rabinowiches felt about this marriage, butnot long afterwards, Sheppie and Sarah left forAmerica. Sarah was pregnant during that longtrip. They arrived in Boston in August 1893,and on December 22, Sarah birthed a son intheir new home, a small apartment above astable for horses in the North End.

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

The year after Rab was born, Eugene V. Debs led 60,000 workers inwhat came to be called the Debs Rebellion, outside Chicago. All thoseworkers 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 inthe United States, left it to join Debs’s organization in 1899. By thattime, he had established himself as an importer of his own special brandof tobacco, which he sold at “Sheppie’s Blue Store” on Washington Streetin the South End, and distributed to other smaller stores in the area.

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

The family considered itself to be special, but this had nothing to dowith material possessions: it was a matter of what they valued as impor-tant. Sarah used to say that highbrows talk about ideas; middlebrowstalk about events; only lowbrows talk about other people. The Rabino-wich family talked about ideas. Sheppie’s Blue Store became a gatheringplace for discussions. Later, as an adult, Rab bragged, “My parents wouldpreach socialism to the customers.”\*

“Because of my parents’ friendships and discussions with a coterie ofinspiring persons in the neighborhood, I spent time with such personsas Wm. Monroe Trotter ... Not only did I spend time in his store, but Iaccompanied him on his walks doing errands on behalf of The Guardian. ”(Trotter was a well-known Black radical; The Boston Guardian, which hehad founded in 1901, was a protest newspaper with the motto “For everyright, 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,” wasat the Blue Store so often he was “practically a member of the family. Butwhen Marcus Garvey loomed on the horizon” [this would probably nothave been until Rab was in high school], “ [Mr. Cook] became an ardentsupporter of his cause. You can picture the discussions. But in no way didit interfere with personal relations. [All the people at the discussions] hadone thing in common: [they were] genuine human beings.”

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

Sarah and Sheppie presided over discussions where ideas of all sorts werediscussed, but the most important were ideas about social change. Rab,being somewhat frail as a child, was often home from school, listening tohis 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 thananyone else. When he was in his early seventies, hewrote of her: “Sarah... my mother... was the pio-neer revolutionary socialist in the family. She wasfree from religious superstitions, unqualifiedly.Both Comrades Kohn and Baritz visited myparents in Boston, while I was still in Detroit.It was my father who had originally convincedher of socialism while they were still in Russia,but in his later years he became enamored of theRussian bug and the Jewish problems.’ He neverswallowed the religious nonsense, clarity on this wastoo deeply ingrained.”\*

Sheppie was a joiner. He was a founding member of orga-nizations ranging from the Workmen’s Circle (the old Arbeiter Ring) tothe Communist Party of America. Although Rab loved and respectedhim, he was critical of him for letting his emotions carry him from oneorganization to another: “Away back in 1893, my father was a member ofthe Socialist Labor Party, then he jumped withthe other Kangaroos into the Socialist Party ofAmerica when it was formed in the 1899 - 1900period. In 1919 he became a charter memberof the Communist Party, to which he belongeduntil his death.”\*

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

Rab’s sayings came back to me, as I watched hisbrain die during the 1980s. How many neuronscan be lost and still let the mind retain an adagelike “The Devil takes care of his own!” (Rabalways said that with a mischievous smile whensomething went well.)

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

He loved to point out the distinction between being “open-minded” andbeing “broad-minded.” “Broad-minded” people will accept an idea thatseems vaguely on the right track, even if it isn’t demonstrably valid; abroad-minded thinker might thus be willing to compromise on mat-ters of principle. If you ever thought that the Americans for DemocraticAction, for instance, or the Students for a Democratic Society, wereorganizations that might actually accomplish something significant, thatwould indicate you were “broad-minded” because neither the ADA northe SDS were primarily focused on eliminating capitalism — whereas,obviously, real democracy (which surely must involve the ability to makemeaningful choices about one’s own life) is impossible within the frame-work of capitalism.

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

Rab was very clear that there is no such thing as “socialistic.” A thingeither 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 yourideas fit the facts.”

In 1895, Sarah gave birth to another son, Nat, and not long after to ababy girl, Leah. As a comrade in the Socialist Party of America, Sheppiesent all three of his children to the Boston Socialist Sunday School at 88Charles Street, which had been organized towards the Turn of the Cen-tury to expose children ages 6 - 10 to ideas they wouldn’t hear weekdaysin 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 generalgood time ... Pity there are no such things any more,” Rab reminiscedlater. “One of the highlights was the massive Moyer/Haywood/Pettiboneparade of labor unions and other organizations. The Sunday School ledthe procession and I was the proud chief marshal, in 1906.”\* This paradewas part of a national outcry against the frame-up of three socialist laborleaders, members of the Western Federation of Labor and founders ofthe I.WW., on a murder charge. In Boston, 12-year-old Rab marched atthe head of 50,000 union members chanting “If Moyer and Haywooddie; If Moyer and Haywood die; Twenty million workingmen will knowthe reason why.” The three men were found not guilty.\*\*

Rab’s elementary schooling was at the Dearborn School and the AaronDavis School. “In the 6th Grade,” he told a friend in 1968, “I wasexpressing ‘radical’ views to a bunch of kids. It was not long before I wasbrutally attacked by a gang of enraged kids in Orchard Park because ofmy remarks on the Church and patriotism. The favorite remark: ‘Yougoddam Jew, you killed Christ!’ (And all the time this was going on, I feltsorry for their ignorance and superstitions and didn’t hold any grudgeagainst them.) ... Incidentally, my father was boycotted by religious Jewsfor opening his store on ‘sacred’ holidays because of their superstitiousnature. And strange to say, he was regarded as an authority by the sameJews 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 formeda friendship with Arthur Fiedler, a classmate who later became famous asthe conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The two young menmaintained close ties of friendship long after their school years. While atLatin School, both of them, along with all the other students, were part ofthe school Chorus; but, unlike the musical Fiedler, Rab was politely askednot to sing, but just to move his lips because he kept throwing everyoneelse 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 wonthe 100-yard dash in Track (his windbeing still not strong enough for thelonger events). He was also an out-standing scholar, particularly in Latin,

Greek and mathematics.

He graduated in 1912, the same yearthat Sarah bore her fourth child, Dina.

You can see him in his high schoolGraduation picture above. With Isaac(or Ike, as he was called in those days),

Nat, Leah and Dina, Sheppie and SarahRabinowich’s family was complete.

Of course, being Sheppie and Sarah’s son, Rab considered himself asocialist 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 SocialistParty of America in 1909, at age 16.

The story goes that the SPA’s Constitution at that time required membersto be at least 18 years old, and that five members were required to con-stitute a Local. But four of the men who had been discussing socialismat the Blue Store were looking for a fifth so that they could organize aRoxbury Local; and once Rab agreed to be their fifth member, they gotspecial permission from the SPA Headquarters in Chicago for him tojoin. “We held several meetings in small halls on Tremont Street,” herecalled later, and added that, of the five comrades, “One especially was apowerful 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 behavioralterms. After graduating from Boston Latin School, Rab applied and wasaccepted to Harvard College, a course of action which his parents bothencouraged. 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. Hewanted to be a real worker. He did some serious thinking and readingthat summer, and in the fall, instead of matriculating at Harvard, he tookthe train to Ada, Ohio, and entered the Freshman class of the Agricul-tural College of Ohio Northern University, which offered a program hefelt was suited to his interests. Spending his life on the land as a farmersounded right to him.

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

Rab’s roommate at Ohio Northern was the son of the General Superin-tendent of the Cadillac Motor Car Company in Detroit, Michigan. Thisyoung man had many practical talents and a good heart, but not enoughacademic 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 whocalled themselves “The Junta.”

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

Has anybody here seen R*abby*?

R, *a*, double *b*, *y*

Has anybody here seen R*abby*?

He can dance like a butterfly.

*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 theback of the program is another verse, or maybe a chorus, to the song:

*“Junta* — *JuntaThat’s the place we go toSunday night with all the boys.*

*There we make a lot of noise —*

*Socialism Anarchism Optimism PessimoThen to Miller we would goWhist to play and ball to throwThat’s what we do at the Junta* —

*Junta* — *Junta* *—”*

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

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

The agricultural students were traditionally required to raise a crop usingthe latest and most up-to-date methods available. In the Spring semesterof 1915, Rab and his roommate were given a five-acre plot of land nearthe Scioto River in Belset, Ohio. They chose to raise onions as theirproject. In Rab’s own words (transcribed from an oral history tape madein 1978), “...we had everything that you could imagine happen to us.Everything. We had a wind blowing ... we had a sun that burned ... fivetimes we had to replant, reseed it. But the climax was, one day it startedraining, pouring, thunder. It was real, real rainstorm, and it lasted allnight. 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 upin the morning, I found myself floating down the Scioto River.” Havinglost the entire crop of onions, there was no money left to go back toschool. So the roommate (whose name is nowhere mentioned in any ofthe accounts I’ve heard of this part of the story) wrote to his father onRab’s behalf. The father was well aware that his son would never havegotten this far in his academic career, nor passed any examinations,without Rab’s tutoring. “Bring him to Detroit,” he wrote back, “and I’llgive him a job.”

“And he gave me a job that I was no more qualified for than the Man inthe Moon,” said Rab later. “He put me in charge of all the tool cribs in theCadillac 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 methere for about seven or eight months. He should have fired me in twoweeks! But anyhow, that’s how I happened to get to Detroit. That was inthe middle of the summer of 1915.”

CHAPTER TWO

Rab Becomes a Revolutionary

***1915 - 1921: Detroit, Michigan; Rab’sintroduction to revolutionary socialism; foundingof the WSP; marriage to Ella; starting a family;the Socialist Education Society***

Detroit was a boom town from 1910 to 1918. Auto and other indus-tries attracted hosts of workers. When Europe went to war, contractsfor military supplies went to Detroit, and workers from Canada andBritain who didn’t want to get into the army came there too. Amongthese were members of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) and theSocialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), both Marxist and opposed toreformism.

In the Detroit Local of the Socialist Party of America (SPA) reformerspredominated, but the revolutionary minority drew encouragementfrom the new reinforcements and from Kerr’s International SocialistReview with its flow of Marxian classics and corresponding Americanstudies. The combination of these circumstances led to the establish-ment of a noteworthy study class in Duffield Hall, a highlight of theperiod. The two instructors were Adolph Kohn, a Marxist scholar, andMoses Baritz, professionally a musicologist and a formidable debaterand socialist agitator, both of them members of the SPGB...” [[1]](#footnote-2)

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

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

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 tojoin her husband Sam in Detroit; the Kleemanns were acquainted withthe Rabinowich family through the Socialist Party of America.

Rab soon learned about the study class beingconducted in Duffield Hall by members of theSocialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) such asAdolph Kohn and Moses Baritz.

“...In Detroit,” he wrote years later, “I came intocontact with so-called slackers escaping militaryservice in Canada and England. They changed mywhole point of view from reformism into revolu-tionary socialism. These comrades from the SPCand the SPGB wielded a great influence in Detroitwith their study classes and street meetings andpublic lectures.”\*

When Rab entered his very first class withSPGBer Moses Baritz, his impulse was toimpress Baritz with his learning, which was,after all, considerable. The class consisted, inpart, of readings from the first volume of Marx’sCapital. Rab proudly offered to translate a Latinphrase, to show off his classical scholarship,and Baritz graciously accepted the offer, so thatRab felt like a helpful assistant instructor. Buta little later in the same class, based on Marx’stext, 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 toBaritz’s response.

“Taxes are essential to the maintenance of the capitalist state. In the longrun, the workers don’t pay taxes. All that happens is that the workersfunction as transfer agents via withholding taxes, sales tax and the like,resulting from the quarrels among the various sections of the capitalistclass 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 problemthat the ruling class, that is, the capitalist class, has to grapple with. If the

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

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

Wages or salaries are the workers’ means of subsistence. They are whatthe workers get for something they sell. The only commodity they haveto sell is their own physical and mental energy. This is generally disposedof on a time basis, and, like every other commodity, its value (the valueof labor power) is determined by the necessary labor time wrapped up inits production — i.e., the things working-class families need to live, suchas food, clothing, housing, entertainment, transportation, training/edu-cation, etc.

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

There is only one way really to improve matters significantly and per-manently, and that is removing labor power from the category of com-modities, abolishing the system of capitalism, and establishing Socialismin its place.

This analysis was new to Rab, in spite of all the SPA meetings he hadattended. 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 Kohnand Baritz.

It was also around this time that Rab first encountered John Keracher,the Michigan State Secretary of the SPA. Keracher was originally fromScotland, but had settled in Detroit and been in the SPA there since1910. He and Rab became good friends.

Rab became an active revolutionary in 1915 as a direct result of his expo-sure to the SPGB’s principles. It brought him to the realization that therewas, as yet, no political party in the United States embracing the prin-ciples of scientific socialism. Neither the SPA nor the SLP had the neces-sary scientific analysis.

The socialist revolution would have to be the result of conscious, polit-ical action undertaken by a majority of the whole community; only socould it sustain itself. As Rab so often pointed out, “Socialism cannot berammed down the throats of the workers.” It cannot be brought aboutby leaders or great men, but only by convinced socialists, i.e., by ordi-nary working people committed to making it work. The first step inrevolutionary activity, then, must be to educate people about the futilityof 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 thedesirability — and even the necessity — of socialism. Then, once thisidea takes hold, the revolution can be as simple and as easy, in Rab’swords, as “voting capitalism out and voting socialism in.”

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

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

After the lecture, Rab couldn’t pull his eyes away from the girl takingup 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 hiscompanion. “Who is that girl? Do you know her?” Yes, Reynoldsknew her from Bay City; she was Ella Riebe, a friend of his sisterMartha. Her father, a German, had been active in the Party for a longtime. “That’s the girl I’m going to marry,” Rab told Reynolds. (Rab was21 and Ella was 19 years old.)

It was fairly easy for Reynolds to arrange for Rab and Ella Riebe to bepaired up at the May Day meeting just a few weeks after this, a big affairat which the SPA traditionally had the boys and girls in the Young Peo-ple’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 irresistiblyhead-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 atOhio Northern (she was very sympathetic aboutthe lost onions). He also told her about the jobhe’d just landed in the tool crib at the Ford plant,to earn some money before he went back to col-lege after losing his position at Cadillac. Ella was acountry girl. She told him about growing up on asheep ranch out West in Laramie, Wyoming, withher brothers Otto, Freddie and Willie, and howpoor Willie had just recently been killed in a tragicbicycle accident. She told him about her won-derful Father, Alex Riebe, and about her Mutter,

Anna von Kleeman Riebe, who had been so sickwith breast cancer until they sold the ranch so shecould have an operation, and how after that, the family had to move toBay City, and then, in 1914, to Detroit. She told him about the timewhen she was a little girl and Eugene V. Debs had picked her up andkissed her when she presented him with a bouquet of red carnations ata socialist rally.

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

Both of them were naifs. Neither of them had ever been warned whatmight happen if they gave in to their feelings of passion. In fact, boththe Rabinowich family and the Riebes prided themselves on theirfreedom from conventional prejudices, and on their commitment toSocialist values. Rab and Ella had the confidence of the innocent and theopen-minded.

Both of them enjoyed the frequent discussions of Marxian socialism thatwent on among their comrades in the YPSL, as well as with some ofthe broader membership of the Detroit SP Local. 1916 was certainlyan exciting time for anyone interested in changing the world. Probablymost of the people involved in the Socialist Party of America were fol-lowing the news of current events in Russia very closely. It was possible

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

There was one couple in the Detroit Local who, like Rab’s parents, hadconsidered themselves revolutionary socialists in Russia before immi-grating to the United States when they were young. The Rivkins hadbecome well established in Michigan; both husband and wife were suc-cessful physicians, and they had a teen-aged daughter, Olga. The Rivkinsnow wanted very much to return to Russia, where they felt they couldhelp the cause of the Revolution that was fermenting there; but Olgadidn’t want to leave Detroit. It had been her home for her whole life. Sheled an active social life centered mostly around the YPSL and had manyfriends, including Ella Riebe, and others in that social circle.

Olga’s parents felt uneasy leaving her on her own, a single girl with noone to watch over her. They noticed that she liked to dance with WalterGreen, one of the young socialists in the group. They spoke to Green asa comrade, and told him that if he would marry their Olga, they wouldprovide him with enough money so that there would be no financialproblems 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 whatwas happening in Russia. As a Marxist, he was aware that circumstancesin Russia were not really ripe for Socialism. But what if it could mustersupport from workers all over the world? Wasn’t there a role that the SPAcould play to help?

The way Rab remembered it later, his friend Keracher might have acteddifferently if he hadn’t been the State Secretary of the Michigan SocialistParty at this time.

A new political party was needed in the United States, a party “determinedto wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor oravowedly capitalist, ... [to] call upon all members of the working class... to the end that a termination may be brought to the system whichdeprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give placeto comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.” [From the Dec-laration of Principles of the SPGB.] Gradually, that summer, a group cametogether in Detroit with the goal of establishing just such a party.

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

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

In July 1916, 43 members of [Baritz’s and Kohn’s] study class, includ-ing 19 members of Local Detroit, SPA, of whom this writer was one,decided it was time to organize a genuine socialist party in the UnitedStates along the lines of the SPGB. The Workers’ Socialist Party of theUnited States resulted.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Rab reminisced later about how he and Adolph Kohn that July had sentout notices to announce the organizing meeting to form the WSP inDetroit. At first, this group actually named it “the Socialist Party of theUnited States,” but since the SPA challenged their right to that, “Workers’Socialist Party” was substituted.[[3]](#footnote-4)

“Nineteen of us resigned from the Socialist Party of America, and theattitude of most of the members there was, ‘You don’t hand in anyresignation, just quit, that’s all.’ And they passed a motion that theyshouldn’t accept the resignation. But Keracher took the floor, andexplained that it was an obligation that they should, see. They took avote. 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 Iyelled out, just like this: ‘You, too?!’Spontaneously, you see.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

Along with Rab, some of the founding members of the WSP were BillDavenport, who became its first Secretary; Bill Gribble, the first orga-nizer; Lawrence Beardsley; George Ramsay, and Walter Green. It is notclear whether or not Ella Riebe was officially a part of the new orga-nization at the beginning. She had, after all, voted not to accept Rab’sresignation from the Socialist Party. I think it’s likely that both she andher friend Olga left the finer points of socialist theory for the men to sortout.

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

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

But after a while, it struck the man that his adorable little girl, the appleof his eye, was actually considering leaving home and marrying this IsaacRabinowich. This Jew. He couldn’t let that happen. Although he was anatheist, Riebe came from a Christian family of Prussian origin, and whenas 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 toofast, and he wanted to slow them down somehow.

Some new rules were established in the household for Ella. “The doorsare locked at nine o’clock! If you are not back by nine, you will not beallowed to come in.”

As Rab told a comrade later, “They made it awful tough for Ella. Wedecided that I would quit the job I had in Detroit, and I would go toAnn Arbor, to the University of Michigan, and resume my studies, andshe would get a job in the Five-and-Ten, which she did, and we’d tell herparents that we separated . But something happened. On account ofthe pressure being put on Ella . it finally got under Ella’s skin.”[[5]](#footnote-6)

One evening in September, when nineo’clock came, they were not back. Andwhen they did eventually arrive back atthe Riebe home, they found the doorwas locked. Although Ella could seethat her mother and father were in thehouse, they wouldn’t let her in.

What should she do? Rab brought herto Bertha Kleemann’s house, where shestayed until they decided. Ella and Rabwere married on September 27, 1916,only a few months after they had firstmet. “Oh,” Rab said, unsuccessfullytrying to conceal his disappointmentthe first time he saw his slender sweetheart undressed. “You don’t haveany breasts!” But before Ella could mind very much, he showed her howlittle it mattered.

None of Ella’s family came to visit them after they were married, neitherher parents nor either of her brothers. Her mother pretended not to seeher when they passed each other on the street. Ella walked to the housewhere she used to live, but no one would acknowledge that she had everbeen a part of the family there.

1917 As the winter months came on, Ella began to feel weak, andtoo sick to face the thought of food even when her friends Bertha, orsometimes Olga, fixed her favorite things. Bertha, the expert in suchmatters, recognized the signs of pregnancy. Neither Rab nor Ella everforgot 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 daughterback to the family house; and all was forgiven.

That month, at around the same time that Rab and Ella moved into theRiebe 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, weremoved to support the Bolshevik attempt to establish Communism inRussia, and the socialists in the new Workers’ Socialist Party were sneeredat 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” therecould only lead to the establishment of a capitalist government.

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

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

Here is a letter Rab himself wrote about the events of that time, datedAugust 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, inCapitalist Society. As-Engels points-out inthebest bookthat I ever reador studied, ***The, Origin, of theFamily***, ourloveis, almost, impossibletothebourgeoisie and can onlybe developed inthe more favorable soil of proletarian, sur-roundings, in-few instances.. The action andpractice ofCapitalism,, with its resulting superstructure of its-presentmoralconceptions, of course,, really prevents., inthelargersense,, truelove. Oneofthefew, rare,, reallove affairs-under Capitalism, is mine, andsomeday, whenwemeettogether, I may tell you, the story.

Fifteen minutes after twelve,, yesterday afternoon, “a- littlestranger arrivedto-brightenour lives-,” WillieKarlRabi,-nowich, ishis name,, weighing seven pounds-. Wenamedhim, Willie after Ellds-older brother, who died years-ago,and Karl after Karl M arx-- We can't figure out who itresembles-, allthathasbeendefinitely decidedisthat ithas my nose, Ask Uncle Nathan what hethinksofthat.Otherwise, his features are perfect. Dear Ella-is, restingcomfortably. The sufferings of birth-labor are indescrib-ablebut Ella-came out of it excellently. SheisnursinglittleWillieandheisas fat asa-tub.

***Love from-Ella and myself to- the family and regards to-allour friends.***

***Your nephew,***

***Isaac.****.*

***P. S. Answer soon-andl promise you some discussion-on-any Socialist topic/, UncleMashieor you-may disagreewith- me.***

Ella continued to nurse Willie Karl, and Rab continued to be a dotingfather at the same time as he was constantly involved with socialist edu-cation. He never was successful, however, in bringing any of the relativesreferred to in this letter into the Workers’ Socialist Party. Uncle Mashie(Sarah’s brother) remained in the Socialist Party of America and laterbecame a Zionist; Uncle Nathan remained apolitical.

Ella and Rab remained close to Sam andBertha Kleemann, and also developed awarm friendship with Olga and WalterGreen. Walter and Rab consistently sup-ported one another’s propaganda efforts.

Olga was enchanted with little Willie. Shewas expecting a baby of her own in the winter,and she and Ella formed a special bond. Olgamissed her own mother terribly. She didn’treally care much about things like Marxianeconomics or the class struggle, the subjectsthat occupied Walter’s mind and took hisattention away from her. She wished her par-ents were with her during these months ofher pregnancy, and wished her mother couldbe with her when the baby came. Ella remembered how hard it had beenfor her, too, to be separated from her parents, even though Rab and shehad been so much closer then than the Greens seemed to be. And now,to her relief, the Riebe family had truly become reconciled to Ella’s mar-riage. How could they help falling in love with their new grandson? MaybeWalter would change, too, after his baby was born.

When Willie was a vigorous and healthy three-month-old, one day Olgacame 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 asif she had lost her mind. “Where is he? What will I do?” Finally, the storywas told: Walter Green had left her, taking with him all the money herparents 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, aban-doned 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 shewas unable to care for her child. Ella nursed Olga’s baby, Joey, along withher own Willie, and both children thrived.

1. Rab had joined the auto workers’ union, the UAA, in 1915,shortly after arriving in Detroit. By 1918, he had been put in chargeof running the tool crib at the Ford plant. That year, he was teachinghis fellow workers about Marxian economics in the yard of the plant,explaining, among other things, that regardless of the socialist preten-sions on the part of the Russian Communist Party, it was a form ofcapitalist economy that was being developed in Russia; and urging that ifthey wanted to bring about a real socialist revolution, the first step mustbe to organize and spread socialist awareness in Detroit.
2. For a while, his employers at Ford tolerated Rab’s teaching. Butafter the war ended, there was a climate of increasing repression towardsCommunists, Anarchists, and Socialists, not only in Detroit, but all overthe United States. The apparent success of the Russian Revolution in1917, 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 radicalsin which union offices were smashed and the headquarters of many Com-munist and Socialist organizations were ransacked.

Faced with this hostile political climate, the Workers’ Socialist Partymembership had a hard decision to make.

Without changing its principles, the group opted, in 1919, to abandonthe structure of a political party, and to re-group as The Detroit SocialistEducation Society. George Ramsay, who became its Secretary, referred tothe Detroit SES as a “club.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

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

1920 In April 1920, Ella gave birth to another baby, a little girl thistime. 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, killedin a bicycle accident in his teens. Now she was adamant that her grand-daughter 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 Rabhe had to stop teaching his Marxist classes anywhere, and he had to stopmaking speeches about socialism anywhere, too, if he wanted to keepworking for Ford. But Rab didn’t stop.

He was doing a good job for Ford, running the tool crib. His fellowworkers respected and admired him, and did their best for him. Rabbragged 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 forsocialism whenever and however he could.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER THREE

The Birth of Boston Local

***1921 - 1932: The move back to Boston; CapenStreet Days; the Vagabond Club; the ScienceClub; 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 heneeded help in the store.

Sheppie had joined the newly formed Communist Party as a chartermember, and Sheppie’s Blue Store had become a central distributionpoint for Communist literature while Rab was in Detroit. It was well-situated for the purpose, in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, nottoo far from the CPA’s Headquarters on Winona Street. Comrades couldconveniently visit there to pick up pamphlets and the latest Communistcirculars.

Sheppie’s Blue Store was something of a gathering place for these “revolu-tionaries.” 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, orthe 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 toexplain 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, whileSheppie drove around town with his horse and wagon, delivering Com-munist literature along with the cigars and tobacco with which he pro-vided various corner stores around the City of Boston.

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

Ann loved to tell this story: “While we lived there, I had diphtheria, andthe doctor gave me too much toxin, or antitoxin, or something ... [Mymother] was still nursing me then, and she passed her hand in front ofmy eyes, and noticed that I couldn’t see. How terrible that must havebeen 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 differentplace. “My earliest memory is a visual one: looking through white barsand seeing a mackerel sky and a full moon, and what looked to me likea big Easter egg on a wall. The bars were my crib, painted white, andon the back of a building of some sort, they had painted an ad for KingArthur’s Flour, that looked like an Easter egg to me . And I was nineand a half months old then!”

Her earliest memory was of seeing, between the white painted slats ofher 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.

Ella was lonely in the new place; theywere further away from Rab’s family andshe made no new friends in Roslindale.She took Willie and Anna for long walksthrough the nearby Reservation, whereboth of them enjoyed rolling down TowerHill. When, in 1996, I asked my UncleBill to tell me about this part of Rab’sstory, he remembered most vividly thewooden bathtub there.

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

Willie started school from the Morton Street house. He told me Ellahad taken him to several different Kindergartens the year before, but hedidn’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, hisEnglish had become passable (his first language was German, since hehad grown up among the Riebe family who spoke German at home).Because the Boston School System could not accept that “Willie” wasa real name, he became “William Karl Rabinowich” in all his schoolrecords, 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 afteronly a year, the Rabs moved again, thefourth move in just over three years. Butthis time, it was to 123 Capen Street,

Dorchester, the place they were to callhome from 1924 to 1932, while Billieand Anna grew from childhood intoadolescence.

Rab had resumed the task begun inDetroit, his lifelong work of spreadingknowledge and understanding of thecase for socialism, almost as soon ashe got back to Boston. He began soapboxing while the family lived on MortonStreet, and continued after the move to Capen Street in 1924. He spokeon Dorchester street corners all along Blue Hill Avenue, and became afamiliar figure to the groups who would gather to hear his point of viewon current events. His charisma as an outdoor speaker drew large audi-ences to listen to the socialist analysis.

Of course, he stayed in touch with the socialist comrades he had known inDetroit. George Ramsay, Tom Bolt, and perhaps a dozen others remainedactively involved in the Socialist Education Society (SES), established in1919 “to promote the study of Scientific Socialism through the mediumof study classes, lecturers, and the best and latest literature attainable.” Bythe mid-Twenties, this group, without making any changes in its prin-ciples, had dropped the name SES in favor of “The Marxian Club.” Rabcorresponded regularly with these comrades.

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

In 1923, the New York SES reprinted an SPGB pamphlet, Socialismand Religion. The Declaration of Principles held by the SPGB (and bythe WSP when it was first founded in 1916) was included on the insidefront cover of this SES pamphlet with only one alteration: — instead ofaffirming that “the party seeking working-class emancipation must behostile to every other party,” the SES pamphlet version “declares its pur-pose 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 com-rade to help with the revolutionary task he had set for himself. Ella pro-vided moral support, but was too occupied with the children to be anactive socialist.

My Uncle Bill told me, in 1996, that he remembered Rab and Ellafighting quite a bit during the Capen Street days. Fights were mostlyabout issues of money and security. Both Ella and Rab placed a highvalue on socialism, and on raising their family; but for Ella, her childrenalways came first. For Rab, the first priority was the socialist movement,the successful outcome of which he understood to be necessary in orderfor all children to have good lives. This difference between them wasnever to be resolved.

Rab was always having job interviews and being offered positions. BillRab 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, heworked at Friedberg’s Electric and Locksmith Shop for several years. Thisbusiness belonged to Rab’s uncle, Mayshe Friedberg, who made a goodliving operating it. The shop was successful enough that Uncle Mayshecould afford to travel, which he was eager to do; so when he took histwo nephews, Nat and Ike (as Rab was always called by his parentalfamily) into the business, Mayshe freed himself up to spend his time ashe pleased.

This was during the period when the city of Boston was gradually beingconverted from D.C. to A.C., and the shop did contracting work allover the Back Bay neighborhood. Rab was in charge of managing theinventory. He did well, and learned enough to become competent atminor electrical repairs in all the various places he lived afterwards; but,following the usual pattern, it wasn’t long before he found that the jobinterfered 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 financiallysuccessful enterprise right up until the Depression, and his son Leongrew up to make a successful career as an electrician, too.

Rab consistently put socialist work ahead of mere opportunities to earnmoney, and turned down many prestigious and high-paying jobs thatwere offered him, until Ella would shout in frustration: “Get out of thishouse!” — which Rab obediently did, often asking his son if he wantedto come with him in the car (“Maybe so he’d have an excuse to comeback,” Bill said). The boy always went because that meant he could havea “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 noshouting, nor a fight of any kind, and Rab was asked to take him out ofthe house for no reason he could think of.

Ella had become pregnant for the third and last time, and she realizedthat there would not be enough money to take good care of the twochildren 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’sfortunes ahead of Socialism; and, after all, she was a socialist too. Sheadored Rab because he was what he was. Ella, just as sincerely as herhusband, yearned for a world where mothers and fathers could nurturetheir children because they had free access to what they needed, withoutthe necessity of working for wages. How could she bring another childinto this bleak capitalist society?

She made her choice and asked Rab for help. He found a doctor who waswilling to terminate Ella’s third pregnancy. (This was, of course, beforesuch help was legal; Ella’s choice was more dangerous than it would betoday.)

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, Elladid tell her daughter about the abortion; and, later still, Ann told meabout it — but all Billie ever knew was that he got to go for a ride in thecar, 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’shome in Detroit for several months.

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

This shop belonged to a professional artist, Fred Jacobs. Jacobs andRab talked about Sacco and Vanzetti, and about how the capitalist classeffectively deals with threats to the system. Rab was no Anarchist, buthe often said that when Anarchists erred, they erred in the right direc-tion: that their hearts were in the right place, although often they hadn’tthought things through. The “direct action” advocated by many Anar-chists appealed to the heart, but Rab’s position was that political action,as advocated by Socialists, would be necessary to achieve a lasting Revo-lution. Heart and head must both be involved.

Two members of the working class were arrested and convicted ofa murder by the State of Massachusetts. Evidence in overwhelmingabundance shows that these two workers were innocent of the crimesof which they were accused. Hosts of people who have no inkling ofthe existence of a class struggle, admit this. If you don’t know it wasa class affair, your masters did! Electric chairs are made by workers,operated by workers, and sat in by workers: here is one case of some-thing being done for the sole benefit of the working class! ... Saccoand Vanzetti were kept in prison for seven years, and then executedby the master class, who, by the way, seem to have a pretty thoroughunderstanding of their class position and interests, and show a lot ofsolidarity in protecting those interests! It’s a shame and a disgrace thatwe working people don’t show the same understanding and the samesolidarity in protecting our own class interests!

Jacobs, a former Wobbly, found that Rab’s analysis of the class struggleresonated with his own. From then on, the frame shop, located at 113CWarren Street, in the Roxbury neighborhood, became the first “Head-quarters” for the people who were to form the nucleus of socialist activityin Boston. Jacobs lived in rooms behind the shop; there was a littlekitchen and a place to sit and talk. Fred Jacobs was the first worker inBoston to be recruited into the socialist movement through Rab’s influ-ence — and the first person Rab could count on to help him in his taskof building a revolutionary socialist organization in Boston.

The Vagabond Club

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

The Vagabond Club was associated with the Hecht House, which wasstill a well-known institution in Dorchester during my own childhoodin the 1940s. It was a Neighborhood House whose mission was largelykeeping young people off the streets by providing them with supervisedactivities (mostly sports-related) after school, drawing boys and girlsfrom many different school districts. There was a policy that every HechtHouse club must have an adult director. The adult who had originallydirected The Vagabond Club now no longer could find time for it, andsince the members were very eager to continue meeting, they lookedaround for a suitable replacement.

Several of the young Vagabonds already knew Rab. Some of them hadbeen part of the audience who went to hear him speak about socialismon Blue Hill Avenue, and were already familiar with his ideas. It wasyoung Louis Spiegel, a high school boy who happened to be the Rabs’upstairs neighbor in the Capen Street house, who asked Rab if he wouldbe willing to become the director of the Vagabond Club.

Well, Rab had always been interested in athletics. Nevertheless, under hisdirectorship, the Vagabond Club did not really remain a typical athleticclub. The Vagabonds continued to play baseball and tennis, but theyalso were taken on tours of the Harvard Museums, where Rab lecturedthem about the exhibits (and where Harvard undergraduates also weresometimes drawn to hear his explanations). He encouraged them in dis-cussions of science, history, anthropology and materialism, and on morethan one occasion he brought experts in these fields to address the boys.

With Rab as Director,although the club per se neverbecame overtly socialist, theVagabonds all learned to keepan open mind while observingthe world around them, andthe club itself became an envi-ronment that fostered recep-tivity to a socialist analysis ofthe world. These boys, whoseaverage age was about 16when they first came underRab’s influence, all lived indifferent parts of Dorchester.They brought their friendsto hear Rab speak. More andmore people heard the case forsocialism. In the end, eight of the Vagabonds joined the socialist move-ment; but all of them, not only those eight, were part of a wideningsocial circle where socialist ideas were understood and accepted.

***The Science Club and Camp Nitgedaiget***

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

Holy Roller meetings; Rab encouraged all this exploration. He and Ellaalso sent the children to the Young Pioneer meetings sponsored by theCommunist Party, where they met children whose parents belonged tovarious 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. Ellawas always warm and welcoming, and somehow, in spite of Rab’s notbeing a good provider, she could always find refreshments when Annaand Billie’s friends came by after school. One of these friends, Bob Weis-berg, told me in his oral history that the flat on Capen Street was a havenfor anyone who wanted to drop in.

For these youngsters too, Rab created an environment that would fosterthe socialist outlook. Treating this houseful of his children’s friends asyoung scientists, he encouraged them to form a Science Club.

Rab was the Director of the Vagabond Club, but he never exactly directedthe Science Club; he let the kids do that. They met in the big living roomat Capen Street, and after a year or two, there were so many of them thatthey couldn’t fit into the living room any more and spilled over into thedining room as well. When Bill Rab, at age 81, reminisced about the Sci-ence Club, he said, “Somewhere in the attic, I have some of the scienceperiodicals that we put out. We called it ... Science News or somethinglike that; and what it consisted of was the talks that we gave, to the Sci-ence Club, on whatever subject happened to interest us there, or on aspecialty. There were a couple of people with specialties . When wegave a talk, we couldn’t just ramble; we had to have notes, or sometimeswe’d type it up. I think that’s where I learned to type. Sometimes wewould hectograph them. The original ones were hectographed, and lateron, we got access to a mimeograph machine someplace . ”

Sometimes one of the Vagabonds would give a lecture at the ScienceClub. (The Vagabonds were about seven years older than Billie, ten yearsolder 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’sbest friend, Squee, for example, brought in many newcomers. It is note-worthy that although the club’s subject matter was science, not socialism,several of these children (including Weisberg) joined the WSP when theygrew 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 socialistis capable of viewing science objectively, without moral reservations andethical compunctions.”\*

The Rab children also attended Camp Nitgedaiget, a summer camp runby the Communist Party. The camp was on a lake in Franklin, MA; someYoung Pioneers stayed there, others were brought each morning by abus that picked them up in front of International Hall. Here Billie andAnna met more children of Communists and “socialists” from variousorganizations. Many of the other parents knew of Rab, and knew thatRab didn’t agree with many of the ideas being inculcated into the YoungPioneers. At Camp Nitgedaiget, Anna met Lilian Pollock, a girl who wasto be her closest friend all through her girlhood, and brought her into theScience Club. Lilian grew up to be a scientist and always gave credit tothe Science Club for getting her started on the right track. Bella Polatnikalso 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 Raband the Science Club on her thinking.

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

Years later, when asked how he had managed to enlist his children’s sup-port as he did, Rab replied, “Socialist pressures on their children ... oftencreate resentments and resistances. There is no substitute for ‘exposure’rather than persistence. I’ve been fortunate in having very favorableadvantages, such as being able to organize and direct boys’ clubs andscience clubs when the kids were young. My emphasis was on ‘makingideas fit facts’ rather than on ‘making facts fit ideas.’ This is effective increating the healthy attitude for hearing the socialist case. At no time wasthe ‘heart’ divorced from the ‘head’ but the coupling of the ‘heart’ was onthe groundwork of the ‘head.’ Then, of course, there was Ella, withoutwhose enthusiasm and support there would have been no results. In aword, I had the lucky breaks and no special credit for superior wisdomis really involved.”\*

Rab never stopped adoring Ella. But it wasn’t always easy for her to givehim her “enthusiasm and support.” She was concerned when he put thesocialist movement ahead of his family responsibilities. He never reallyhad a career except for that of a revolutionary, although he was successfuland respected at almost every job he had, from the position at the Fordplant in Detroit, through working at Friedberg’s Electric and LocksmithShop with his brother Nat, to the proofreading he did for the Hearstnewspapers in the 1950s and later. Rab’s goal, though, was to spend aslittle time as possible making money, while he devoted himself primarilyto the socialist movement. Ella, on the other hand, cared more deeply forher children’s welfare than for anything else.

So it was that Ella was frustrated, and at times depressed. Once, whenshe went to Rab’s mother for comfort, Sarah told her, “Remember, wecome 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 Raband Walter Green reconnected in person. Ella was horrified at the pros-pect of seeing Green again after his desertion of her friend Olga twelveyears before. Rab’s thought was: “It is easy to condemn. The acid test ofa socialist reaction to an individual’s behavior is socialist sympathy andunderstanding. Personally, I reserve my condemnations for the systemand its apologists.”\*\*

In New York Green had found a new companion who fully shared hiscommitment 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 gainfullyemployed full-time as a typist (a useful skill for anyone interested inthe communication of ideas). She was happy to put aside any thoughtof conventional family life in order to devote herself to revolutionaryactivity. Together, Walter and Babe were urging the New York SES tobegin publication of its own periodical: The Socialist.

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

Green visited Boston on August 16, 1929, and addressed a meeting ofthis 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-Streettodiscussthe advisability of issuing an-educational socialistpublication/.

Comrade Green-of N.Y.C. gaveatalk on-the value to themovement ofsuch-apaper.

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

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

Rab was one of the regular writers for The Socialist. I think I hear hisvoice in an unsigned column in the first issue, asserting: “The SocialistMovement is far from dead in America. The capitalist press is congratu-lating itself prematurely on the downfall of the S. P. of A. The force ofthe class struggle still operates. We strive for the amalgamation of thosegroups and individuals throughout the land, subscribing to our posi-tion. Upon that position we shall erect the political party of the workingclass.” Elsewhere in that issue, he wrote “The Other Side of the WailingWall,” an analysis of the then-current situation in Palestine.

Rab’s contribution to the second issue (December 1929) is reprinted infull as “Our Practical Program” in Selected Writings (pp. 428-432). It iswell 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 theend that we . may . establish Socialism.” In a word, a Socialist revo-lution first must take place in the heads of the workers; then will followthe conquest of political power, overthrow of the capitalist system andthe establishment of Socialism.

A Socialist working class, conscious of its position in society, has noneed for a special program or blueprint plans. Whatever measures aredictated by the particular social forces then operating will be adoptedby a Socialist proletariat. The socialization of production, togetherwith the concentration of capital, has already laid the economic foun-dation for Socialism.

Our “practical program,” if you please, is clear and definite ... “Theworking class must organize consciously and politically for the con-quest of the powers of government.”

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

1. The so-called Socialist Party of America is not a Socialist organiza-tion. Even the cloak of Socialist appearances was shed at their last con-vention, when the clause subscribing to belief in the class struggle wasdropped 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 ClassStruggle,” to state these demands. A little comment on but a few ofthese “revolutionary” gems will serve as an object lesson in the pitfallsof a “practical program” ... We find demanded the “immediate enact-ment of a Federal law . for a . forty-hour, five-day week . andforbidding all overtime. . This is a measure that helps capitalism runmore smoothly, and is a favorite palliative of capitalist reformers .[Inall,] there are 102 demands by these practical people. If all this activityresulted in the arousing of revolutionary understanding there might besome justification, but sorry experience has shown that it only resultsin apathy because of the false hopes raised, then dashed.
3. .The Proletarian Party, too, has a “practical” program. They “callfor 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 onMarxism, indeed . Countries like China, India and the rest, are blos-

soming out into capitalist countries . The newly rising bourgeoisiein such backward countries find the ideologic expression of their eco-nomic and political needs in movements of nationalism.

1. .The Socialist Labor Party . stated officially their practical pro-gram: — “Not a ‘general strike’ of the workers but a ‘general lockout’ ofthe Capitalist Class . by organizing the workers, industrially, to takeand hold the means of production”. A study of history will show thatcontrol of economic resources is only made secure by control of theState . It is impossible for the working class to take and hold industryas long as the state is in the hands of the capitalist class . Their viewthat the industrial union is the ONLY means of taking and holdingindustry, 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 theexisting form of property relationships.

It is worth noting that this article denounces all these other organizationsequally, since at this time there were strong social and personal linksamong them. The Proletarian Party, for instance, had been formed byRab’s old friend, John Keracher. Moreover, Rab always maintained thatthere was no competition going on about who was going to make theRevolution: if another group should turn up that proved to be organizedon the same basis as the WSP/SES, he was, in principle, ready to takesteps to merge. But this article delineates very explicitly some of the fac-tors that prevented him from considering the Proletarian Party, or anyof the other parties mentioned, as a genuine socialist organization. Tohim, it was always clear that they were not organized on the same basisas the WSP or the SES. To join forces with any of them would havebeen tantamount to abandoning the task of preparing the groundworkfor a lasting socialist revolution: namely, building a conscious, politicalworking-class majority who are committed to socialism based on knowl-edge and genuine understanding.

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

Rab’s study class at International Hall

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

Nevertheless, from September 1929 to March 1930, Rab was able touse International Hall free of charge. From that point on, “hall rent”of $1.00 per meeting was required, and by the end of December, theCommunist Party was no longer willing to put up with the disrespectthey were getting from Rab and the members of his class. After fifteenmonths, socialist meetings at International Hall came to a stop.

As the reader will remember, when Walter Green addressed Rab’s MarxianStudy Class back in August 1929, the members of the class voted to namethemselves a Boston branch of the SES. This was, however, a little pre-mature. At the beginning, there were really no membership requirementsfor 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 ofthese two was ever seriously interested in socialism. Fred Jacobs broughthis friend Tom Flanagan to the meetings, and Tom came often enoughso he was referred to as “Comrade Flanagan”; but Flanagan also neverofficially committed himself to socialism, although he remained a closesympathizer.

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

The Minutes from those fifteen months of meetings document a smallbut lively organization who were actively involved in distributing TheSocialist; they also attended, and helped publicize, both street meetingsand the indoor lectures given by Rab and by visiting comrades fromNew York. They paid dues and voted democratically about how thosedues would be spent (regretting that some of the money went to theCommunist Party as hall rent). They also studied Marxist literature, andwere 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, developedtheir speaking skills.

(As an interesting side note, several years later — long after the classRab had conducted at Communist Party Headquarters had found othermeeting places — a controversy arose in the newly-formed WSP as towhether it was a violation of the Party Constitution for a member to con-duct 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 thatused 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 classnot only the Socialist position, but also showed how the S.P. of A. wasnot taking that, but an anti-Socialist position.”\* Frampton recognizedthat, like Baritz, Rab had made it clear at every point how different thesocialist analysis was from that of the Communist Party.)

That spring (while the study class was stillmeeting at International Hall), little Annawas looking forward to more interestingmatters. She would be turning ten yearsold on April 18. She told her parents shewould like to see New York City for hertenth birthday. Anna really thought shewas asking for the impossible, becauseshe knew trips were very expensive. Rabamazed her when he said he would behonored and delighted to take her to NewYork for her birthday.

My mother loved being shown the sightsof New York. What a thrill it must havebeen 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 alonewith her father, far away from her always-teasing big brother Billie. Shealways 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 willingto fulfill her birthday request was that there was some important socialistorganizing going on in New York City.

In fact, Babe Green had written this letter to Nils Akervall, a Detroitcomrade, 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 atall possible you attempt to dig up an old copy of the Detroit Workers’Socialist Party’s constitution for purposes of comparison. Both Walterand Rab consider it much better. He would like to have your version ofthe story, therefore this suggestion.

Upon taking up the first part of the Constitution we immediatelystruck 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 newname for the organization and the advisability of forming a politicalparty. Strange to say, someone whom we never expected to bring upthe subject, did so. The man is Sam Orner. A number of them were infavor of both, but there was a great deal of opposition. The matter wastabled until April 25th.

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

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

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

Rab, Walter and Babe Green and Sam Orner must have engaged insome very lively discussions that April. Orner and Rab remained lifelongfriends and comrades.

Green and Babe spent three months at the Rab household on CapenStreet that summer. Billie Rab could remember the date for certain,because the Greens were there the August when he turned thirteen, andmanaged to take up so much attention that no one remembered hisbirthday request: a bicycle. Bill explained to me that although the Rabsdid not consider themselves Jewish, still, most of his friends had had abig 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 friendOlga. Rab was able to overlook this; he was full of admiration for Green’sdeep commitment to organizing for socialism. I think Rab also appre-ciated his free-spirited way of life. Walter and Babe lived on a house-boat when they were at home, and held unconventional views on manyaspects of life unrelated to scientific socialism, such as matters of diet anddigestion. Both Billie and Anna felt, resentfully, that the Greens wereallowed to take over the household during their visit. Ella learned to cookvegetarian food while Walter and Babe were guests in her home, and thewhole household remained vegetarian until Billie began to complain ofstomach aches (well after the Greens’ departure), at which point Ella,supported by the family doctor, insisted that they resume a more con-ventional diet — although a few delicious vegetarian meals, such as herspinach-and-egg pie, continued to appear on the menu throughout myown childhood. Rab followed some of Walter Green’s precepts, such asfasting one day each week, for the rest of his life.

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

It was during the Greens’ visit, on August 3, 1930, that Jacobs becamethe second Boston socialist admitted to the SES, in time to be eligible tovote for the resumption of the name Workers’ Socialist Party and for thechange from an educational society to a political party. Fred Jacobs neverbecame a speaker for the Party, but he was a loyal member. (See page 437for a tribute Rab wrote for Jacobs upon his death, in 1958.)

Some of the New York comrades, probably those accused of “conser-vatism” by Babe in her letter to Akervall, favored changing the nameof the organization to the “Working Class Educational Society,” whichcould be affiliated with a “Working Class (Revolutionary) Party.” Othersfavored “Social Revolutionary Party,” or “Marxian Party.” There wassome concern that the word “socialist” might no longer mean, to theaverage worker, the same thing that Marx had meant when he used theterm “socialism” interchangeably with “communism.”

Nevertheless, when the ballots were all in and counted, on September12, 1930, the old Workers’ Socialist Party was re-formed at a meeting ofthe New York Socialist Education Society, and the twenty-eight mem-bers in good standing at that time became charter members of the newpolitical party. Thus the WSP continued as it had begun, having onlyused the alias of “SES” for an eleven-year interval.

The New York comrades were slow to put into effect the decision madein 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 whichthe convention of May 30 was called . and to refer this action tothe members for their comment and correction. The provisions of theConstitution were put into effect, with the election of the followingnational officers.

Secretary: E. Hagman

Treasurer: S. Frampton

Additional Members of the Executive Committee:

E. Brown

S. FelperinJ. FramptonN. Akervall (Detroit)

I. Rabinowich (Boston)

As to the two Auditors, nominations were asked for in the report sentto the members. Minutes of the N.E.C. meetings are to be sent eachtime 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 membersof the Vagabond Club who had been in Rab’s Marxian Study Class, joinedthe WSP That made five comrades in Boston — the number needed offi-cially to constitute a Local. On June 12, 1931, Boston Local was officiallyrecognized 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 socialistideas and to Rab. In 1931, Flanagan was living with his sister Nellieat 198 Walnut Avenue. On one occasion, he invited Rab and Ella todinner. Ella was tremendously impressed with his gracious home, whichwas 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 houseand what a kindly old gentleman Tom Flanagan was.

Rab often set up his soap box on the corner of Blue Hill Avenue and TalbotAvenue, just across from the tennis courts of Franklin Field. Many of theVagabonds enjoyed playing tennis and watching the expert matches thatsometimes went on, so inevitably there was some cross-over between thegroup listening to Rab speak and the group competing on the tenniscourts. It is not surprising that one day in the late summer, a really top-notch tennis player named George Gloss crossed Blue Hill Avenue tohear Rab speak. Gloss was about the same age as the Vagabonds, andknew some of them from the tennis games. He expressed an interest injoining their club, but was rejected by vote of the membership. In spiteof 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 toplay a major role in the history and development of the WSP

As the summer turned to fall, Nellie Flanagan’s health worsened, andshe died in 1932. Tom Flanagan, finding himself alone in a big house inthe very depths of the Depression, and seeing people he cared for andadmired having trouble paying their rent, invited the Rabs to move inwith him. He kept two rooms for himself, which were off-limits exceptby 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 theDepression years, when so many workers suffered hard times, the Rabswere always comfortable, and even able to offer comradely hospitalityto 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 realsense, inviting his friends the Rabs to share his home with him.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

The Local in its Heyday

***1932 - 1947: WSP Headquarters at 12 HaywardPlace;* The *Western Socialist; “a youthfulmingling of social and socialist activity”; the waryears; the WSP moves to 27 Dock Square; theScott Nearing Debate; the World Socialist Party***

Around seventy newmembers joined BostonLocal of the Workers’Socialist Party between1933 and 1939.

Towards the beginning ofthis period, the comradeswere renting a hall in theMorton Theatre Buildingon an as-needed basis forpropaganda meetings, while the discussion at business meetings centeredaround plans for distributing The Socialist Standard; how best to publicizeRab’s Study Class (which had been meeting more or less continuously eversince late 1929); lectures; and, during the summer, outdoor meetings, atwhich the local membership were joined from time to time by visitingcomrades from New York. The official contact address, which was listed inthe Socialist Standards of the period, was Fred Jacobs’s home in Roxbury.

In late November 1933, with a membership of twelve, the Local votedto rent a two-room suite in Codman Square, Dorchester — one roomhaving a seating capacity of 75, and the other suitable for an office. TheLocal was very eager to publicize this new Headquarters; they asked thecomrades 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 Localstarted. In reply, first he mentioned the Vagabond Club and the ScienceClub; and he told about organizing street meetings. Then he said, “butmore important, I organized a class in Dorchester. That was the mostwonderful class. It was always on a Tuesday night, and the average atten-dance, 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 politi-cians of Boston and Dorchester (it was a Jewish neighborhood up thereon Blue Hill Avenue) used to come to that class to get information aboutcurrent events. They’d stay for the other stuff, too. The second sectionwas some Marxian pamphlet. The Communist Manifesto; Value, Price andProfit, 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 liketo give a class on speaking.’ So that was the last section of the class. Andthat’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 moveWSP Headquarters to 12 Hayward Place, a tiny byway just off 600Washington Street in the heart of Boston. It was an easy walk from thereto the Boston Common, where there was a long-standing tradition ofoutdoor 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, oftenaccompanied by other comrades. One of these old-timers, Ralph Rob-erts, 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 Ellawould ... come along with us. She always used to ask questions, ‘What haveyou been doing?’ and all that stuff. She had a genuine interest in everybodywho came there. She was a great mate for a dedicated socialist.”

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

the 1950s, when the present-day parking facility was built. Soap boxorators 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 Streetside of the Common. During this time, Rab was by all accounts an out-standing speaker, both indoors and outdoors. (Unfortunately, by the timeI was old enough to pay proper attention to such things, his thoughtshad gotten so much faster than his speech that sometimes the phraseswould 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 theCommon and elsewhere, joined from time to time by visiting comradesfrom New York like Walter Green, Edgar Hagman, and Jack Whittaker.

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

Ella wrote a letter to Rab, dated August 27,

1935, when he had gone out of town on atrip with the Vagabond Club (which wasstill meeting during this period). The letteris worth including here because it so artlesslyshows the delight both of them felt at howwell Boston Local could function in Rab’sabsence. It also gives a good idea of what theLocal’s activities were in the mid-Thirties.

*“Dear Rad:*

*Be careful not to-catch-a-cold/, thi&Csjust tolet you-knowthat I have one coming-on/, I can-feel it, you-know thatgrand swelling feeling, but don't worry. “EllaandtheKdsr’ are not missing- the goat onebit. Now that you-aregone, weareonestep nearer to-socialism/ Wearethrough-with-wet nursing, we now feedthem alfalfa tablets; we willsoon-come out with-a-report disclosing startling results'■■ ■*

*I did not goto-the afternoon Common Mall meeting,but I understandG[eorge] G[loss] pulledoff-apiece ofstrategy. He openedthe meeting 10 minutes earlier,*

***beforeany oftheother meetngshadbegun, inthiswayhe got the whole crowdthat were hanging around theMall, whentheothers-openedtheir meetinghewasway inhlytalk/anddgoodmany stuck. 80$ literature was sold,Rothstein, Callahan, Jacoby were present.***

***Forum- was O.K.. too, Georgejust gave a “rambling”’ talkwith-clippings from-the newspapers, hiynew “blaebooh”from/the State House stoodhimgood 15 were present.Questions were asked ontheballot, andhow it willtakeplace, etc. Collection-was a $1.02.***

***Last night Streetmeeting, GG- gaveagener'al^alk, notbadat all, if only hewould-try to develophis own-intelligenceandnot constantlyrely bn-“clipy.” Foronce hewasgoodin- the answering ofquestions, but nearthe endthe meetingwasbrokenup by abunch-of hoodlums, but as it was near 10:30 it didnotmatte****r.* ***After the meeting wehad a discussion. Alpinehadagroup atbneplace, andG.G- at another'. Inthisdiscus-sion, George did a most masterly job, it wasatreat to seehow he not only met, but put all their argamentyonddusty bach shelf nolonger meeting theneedsof Societytoday, andthey listened withkeen interest until wayafter 11 -O’Clock, it was really a second meeting.***

***For Tuesday class, LeoKahan-will give atalk on Science,hewillspeak/for about an-hour anddhalfandthenGeorge will interrelate it toour position, the scientific-socialist position. GG- will also speak/ onEngels, andwelook-forwardto avery pleasant evening.***

***Street meetings are no worry to us, I wrote toJack/ [Whit-taker], “Doyou think/any of theN.Y. fellows can-come tospeak/ontheCommonSunday, andatour Forum.”*** ... ***IhopeJack can-influence some one tocome, if not, GG- willgiveat^alk onEngels, and if it is as good ashis talk/ onMarxwasafew monthyago, wellit willbeworthlisteningto-, as you will remember*** ...

Anne- andBill are onthejobevery morning at ***7:30,*** Billis anyway. Anne get*y* therearoundS but never much-later, they- say there-is abso-lutely no-busines*s.*

Oh-yes! Lest I forge*t*, it willbe-a-dam-shame if Kriggy don'tdo-something about his elec-tion-. Everyone- wants to-seeour candidate. GG- made itclear that it was not the manbut the- principles of the Partythey shouldvote-- for, that too-longhave they votedformen-wholater betrayedthem/. It causedus plenty of worrylast night, andKriggy better come in- and attend tohisobligationto-theParty or elsetheL[ocal] A[ctivities]C[ommittee] will take action... To those inthe BostonLocalnow thisisa-very vitalthing, and no-monkey busi-ness will be tolerated believe me. ”

In this letter, when Ella says “GG” she means George Gloss, but whereshe says simply “George,” she may be referring to George Alpine, anothercomrade.

Of the comrades Ella mentionsin this letter, the only ones Iremember clearly (other thanthe Rab family) are CharlieRothstein and Kriggy. I don’tknow how Rothstein met Rab— probably through the StudyClass — but he was alwaysquiet, like Fred Jacobs. Thosetwo, I understand, were alwayspresent at meetings but spokevery seldom. Jacobs moved away from Boston before I was old enoughto really have retained much of an impression of him, except as an oldman who was a comrade; but Charlie Rothstein was a presence in theWSP until I was active in it myself, always doing his quiet part. He usedto spend his summers in Miami, and eventually he retired and movedthere permanently.

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

Because it was recognized that anyone representing the WSP in publicneeded to have a solid grasp not only of the subject matter they werespeaking about, but also of any issue that might be brought up by aheckler in the audience, no comrade spoke in public for the organizationwithout having passed the Speakers Test.

Rab and Jack Whittaker both had taken the test in January 1933. TheNational Executive Committee, which was located in New York until1939, administered the test in person to comrades applying for it in theNew York area. In Boston, Rab handled it himself, until the Local hadenough speakers to form a committee for the purpose.

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

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

Ralph Roberts, one of the newer comrades, was assigned to meet Pan-nekoek and bring him to Headquarters. “Rab told me to go to thesubway,” Roberts reported, “and wait out on the outside, and a man bythe name of Pannekoek, a philosopher, will come and speak to us. Andhe’ll be wearing a flower in his lapel. Sure enough! A little old man withwhite 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 himand take him down to the Headquarters . And that night we had agood turn-out at the meeting, and he spoke. His approach was similar toours — that’s why Rab knew about him.”

Rab smiled mischievously when he told me the sponsors of Pannekoek’strip to Boston were upset that their honore “much preferred the WSPenvironments to the Harvard intellectuals.” Rab crowed, “He gave us themost inspiring talk on Russia I’ve ever heard. It was impossible to get inthe hall; people were in the [outer] hall and stairs. His Socratic methodof dealing with the Russian patriots was superb: ‘Is that not so?’ He hadopposed the Bolsheviks at the very beginning on the basis of the Dicta-torship of the Proletariat vs. democratic majority.”

Later, in 1947, Pannekoek contributed an article on “Public Ownershipversus Common Ownership” to The Western Socialist, jointly produced bythe SPC and the WSP since 1939. Later still, in 1959, when I was plan-ning a trip to Europe, Rab urged me to look him up and say “Hello.” I wastoo 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 ofthe Common, where both Gloss and Rab spoke almost on a daily basis,is called Avery Street. A young student of accounting named LeonardFeinzig was putting himself through night school by working in thatneighborhood as a bookkeeper, and got into the habit of walking throughthe Common on his lunch hour, eating his lunch on a bench and lis-tening to the speakers from various groups and organizations. In the fallof 1936, Feinzig heard Rab expounding the case for socialism, and afterthat, he was eager to get involved. Noticing Feinzig’s interest, anothercomrade in the crowd, Julius Sherman, told him he was welcome toattend a forum at the WSP Headquarters right down the street, anySunday evening.

It was at one of those Sunday forums in 1936 that Feinzig met Rab’sdaughter (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 yearof high school when they met; Lennie was 18.

Len Feinzig joined the WSP on December 11, 1936. He passed the Par-ty’s Speakers’ Test in September 1938 (three months after being awardedhis Diploma in Accountancy from Bentley). Anne Rab didn’t join untilMay 28, 1937; but she passed the Speakers’ Test a month before Lenniedid. She told me Rab was surprised when she became a speaker for theParty — that he hadn’t expected her to. She was pleased to have madehim proud of her. She’d done something her brother hadn’t done, andshe felt good about that.

Anne and Lennieknew they were inlove forever withinmonths after theymet. They are myparents, and whenI was born intothe family in 1940,they named me“Karla” in honor ofKarl Marx. Theirmarriage lasted for63 years, until mymother’s death in 2002. Lennie, my father, remained an active memberof the WSP till he died at the age of 88.

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

The July 1938 issue of The Socialist (since 1937 the “Official Organ ofthe Workers’ Socialist Party of the U.S.A.,” rather than of the S.E.S.) liststhe following calendar of activities for Local Boston:

Sunday — Open-Air Meetings. Boston Common, every Sundayfrom 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," 1163Blue Hill Ave., Dorchester, Every Tuesday, 8 PM.

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

Thursday — Study Class at HQ, Textbook used, "The TheoreticalSystem 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 ArtsTours. "History of Social Customs." Meet at main entrance at1:30 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 onevery day of the week. Its membership not only had a solid understandingof the case for socialism due to the ongoing study classes, but also anenthusiasm for promoting the movement which proved contagious.

The Minutes of the monthly business meetings for1936-39 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) tellhow the Local supported the 1937 decision by theparty’s National Administrative Committee (NAC),located in New York, to resume publication of TheSocialist, besides contributing articles, membersarranged for the paper’s distribution at local book-stores and sold it themselves at street meetings; theLocal Activities Committee also assigned comradesto sell Party literature door-to-door.

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

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

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

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

A committee of six, including Billie Rab, Len Feinzig, “Kriggy,” RalphRoberts, 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 occa-sion. Billie made an advertising circular to distribute.

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

... The most important event of theperiod was the mass meeting for Social-ism, held at the Old South Meeting Houseon November 27. Despite the fact that theweather was unfavorable, between 230and 270 workers were present . Thefund for the mass meeting was first set for$25, but with the aid of our members andsympathizers throughout the country, thefinal figure reached far beyond expecta-

tions. Thousands of circulars were distributed throughout the city andsuburbs. A brief announcement was made over the radio, and a soundtruck was hired for a day to advertise the meeting. There were also twoconspicuous ads placed in the newspapers. The speakers were: Com-rades A. Rab, I. Rab and Gloss of Local Boston, and Comrade Felperinof Local New York. The chairman was Comrade Muse. The positionof 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 them-selves as a club, “The Young Workers’ Socialist Educational Group,” underthe auspices of the WSP. They studied pamphlets that were available fromthe selection at Headquarters (the first one they chose was Marxism andDarwinism), but held their meetings at the Rabs’ home.

Of course, the Rabs had a long history of holdingOpen House for young people interested in scientificsocialism. Bob Weisberg (a former member of theScience 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 wel-coming than our own homes,”) told me: “We’d bethere, you know, until 1:00, 2:00 in the morning ...we never would go home. One time, Rab decidedthat we should go home, and paraded through theliving room naked, saying: ‘I think you should all go home.’”

At one meeting, Mickey Rosenfield’s Minutes record, a suggestion was madethat “all members be asked to sit in the room and take part in the text” and atanother meeting, a motion was passed “that no individuals be allowed in anyother 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 thatincluded Bella Alpine and Bobby Weisberg. Ralph Roberts was in theyouth group too, although he was probably its oldest member. As anorganizer for the ILGWU, Roberts was able to introduce many of hisUnion contacts to socialist ideas. He also was at least partly responsiblefor the extraordinary success the WSP had at drawing crowds to theparty socials at Headquarters.

Mickey Rosenfield was the group’s secretary. Reading her Minutes, I havethe impression that “The Young Workers’ Socialist Educational Group”felt, in many ways, like a continuation of the old Science Club, with alot of the same individuals in attendance, and the same kind of informaloversight from Rab; only now, the young people were older and morepolitically focused.

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

During the meetings at 198 Walnut Avenue, each member in turn gavea 15-minute talk on current events, which often led to lively discussionsabout 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 Placein 1938. The woman labeled #1 at the far left is Ella Rab (Rab himselfis not in the picture); #2 is Alvin Zalinger, later Professor of Sociology atBoston University; #3 is Len Feinzig, with Anne’s arm around him. #4 isBill Rab with Mickey Rosenfeld, #5, posing with her elbow on his back. #6is Abe Feinzig, Lens brother, arm in arm with his wife Shirley. Standingjust behind Ella is #7, Kriggy. Ralph Roberts, beside him, is #8.

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

Meanwhile, the Local in general participated in very successful outdoorSunday meetings on the Charles Street Mall, which continued intoDecember with an estimated average attendance of264 people.

A crowd estimated at 1,350 listened to a debate between the WSP and agroup called the American Action Associates on Sept. 11. The topic was:‘Can Capitalism be Reformed in the Interest of the Working Class?’ withComrades 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 largeattendances at the Sunday outdoor meetings, the last 6 months of theyear 1938 can be considered as the most successful in the history ofLocal Boston. The influence of the Local was extended, and manyworkers became acquainted with the name and principles of theWorkers’ Socialist Party for the first time.

Towards the middle of 1939, Tom Flanagan — theowner of the house at 198 Walnut Avenue, who had sograciously invited the Rabs to share it with him in 1932— began courting. When Flanagan and his sweetheartset up housekeeping together, not only could the WSP’sYouth Group no longer meet at 198 Walnut Avenue, butRab 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 apart-ment building at 71 SymphonyRoad, Boston, which was actu-ally closer to Headquarters thanWalnut Avenue was. When Flanagan hinted to Rabthat he should seek a new home, Bella told Anneand Lennie that there were vacancies where she andGeorge lived. Anne and Len moved in on one floor,and Rab, with the rest of the family, took a largerapartment upstairs.

Billie Rab had married Mickey Rosenfield in 1937, while the family wasstill at 198 Walnut Avenue, and Ella and Rab had given the young coupletheir 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 SocialistParty of Canada, moved to Boston and became a joint organ of the SPCand the Workers’ Socialist Party. The first issue of The Western Socialisthad been published in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in October 1933; butby 1939, the Canadian comrades feared for its continued publicationbecause of the political climate. The Canadian Parliament declared waron 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 meet-ings and to publish The Socialist, itwas clear that Local Boston was ina better position than New York totake over regular publication of TheWestern Socialist. Through his Anar-chist connections, Rab knew someonewho had been on the Sacco and Van-zetti Committee a little over a decadeearlier. Aldino Felicani owned theExcelsior Press, in Boston. There wereenough active Local Boston comradesto assure getting out a publication ona consistent basis (which they did from 1939 until 1980), whereas thepublication of The Socialist by Local New York had proven to be spottyat best.

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

The first issue of The Western Socialist to be published by Excelsior Presswas Vol. VI - No. 55, but it is clear that this issue was prepared largelyin Canada, and it carries a “Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canadaon the War.” The next issue is dated November 1939, when the USAwas gearing up for World War II. On the front cover is emblazoned thisstatement about the war:

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

— A sentiment as timely and meaningful today as it was then. It is dis-couraging to note that from 1939 to the present writing there has neverbeen a time when war was not being waged someplace on Earth, and toremember that in all these wars, the victims have been overwhelminglymembers of the working class.

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

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

A considerable number of the governments of the world have alignedthemselves in the holocaust of war. The United States Congress,through recently enacted measures, has prepared plans to conscriptmany of the industries of the country with their workers. The ownersof these industrial plants will continue to receive adequate profits, ofcourse. Arrangements have also been completed by Congress for theconscription of workers into the army and for the instituting of suchdictatorial measures as war situations may make necessary. From theexperience 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, rawmaterials and for strategic military or naval objectives which can be offuture advantage to the material aggrandizement of a country’s rulingclass. These are the principal causes which can, and may, involve theUnited States of America, as well as other countries now neutral, inthis war.

This conflict of interest between capitalists in different countries is ofno concern to the average member of the working class. It greatly con-cerns important sections of the capitalist class in these warring coun-tries. For them it means their expansion or contraction as exploiters inthe world’s economy, depending on whether their particular govern-ment is victorious in the war; but for the workers war means only fieldsof wooden crosses and shattered lives.

“YOUR ENEMIES”

When the armed American worker faces the “enemies” of the idealsfor which he is persuaded to die, these “enemies” turn out to be noneother than workers like himself. They, too, are told they must fight tosave an ideal or a truth that must be preserved. Under Capitalism theseworkers are not allowed to live together in peace but must slaughtereach other in wars as a result of their being conscripted and forced tofight in the armies and navies of the various countries.

AFTER WAR ENDS

Whether retaining the old or having a new “alien” master usheredin, YOU are still wage-slaves. The Class Struggle still rages. This ClassStruggle between the workers and their REAL enemies, the capital-ist class, continues unabated, manifesting itself in strikes, lock-outs,unemployment, dependent old age and poverty. No war has ever freedthe worker from his worry of how to eke out a living or stopped hisrobbery by the capitalist class. After all the wars that have been foughtfor “liberty,” “freedom” and “democracy,” the great toiling mass ofhumanity is exploited as never before. The liberty YOU fought to pre-serve 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 ofa Socialist majority, would serve as a lever of emancipation. The veryneeds of capitalist society fostered the advances in such democratic“rights” as exist today. However, for YOU, American Democracy meansregimented education, degrading charities and economic slavery. Withthe present confusion among workers the Capitalist Class has a bet-ter opportunity to restrict civil liberties; and in the midst of wars to“defend democracy,” much of the limited democracy now existing islost.

THE SOLUTION

Fellow Worker, there are NO solutions to our problems within thisjungle of capitalism. National boundaries have been destroyed eco-nomically. The world is becoming more and more of a closely knit,interrelated unit. Highly developed machinery and modern sciencehas made the production of wealth a socialized process demandingsocial cooperation. Wars over wealth are only necessary under Capital-ism. Abundance is now possible for all.

Only Socialism can be adapted to the needs of modern society. Social-ism, i.e., the common ownership and democratic control of the meansof living by and in the interest of all society, is the solution of ourproblems.

When the workers, who are the great majority of the population, real-ize that the only thing worth fighting for is Socialism, they will orga-nize for this object.

DELAY NO LONGER! JOIN THE RANKS OF THE WORKERS’SOCIALIST PARTY; PUT A SPEEDY END TO THE PROFITSYSTEM 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 theArmed Services, or of the Police Force, could remain in the organization.Some of the comrades were conscientious objectors, but most who weredrafted left the party until they were released from duty. Bill Rab wasnot 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 ofWorld War II. I was born in 1940, while Anne and Lennie were living onSymphony Road. Since times were hard, Len had taken a bookkeepingjob for a company in Atlantic City during the last months of Anne’spregnancy. He stayed in New Jersey with WSP Comrade Robert Houselyuntil my birth brought him home again.

During the early Forties, there were gala socials at Headquarters almostevery week, but there were also Party socials at the house where my ownmemories begin, at 5 Dennison Street, Roxbury, where the family movedin 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 wasa significant part of what paid for the Party’s propaganda expenses.

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

Blue Hills, or at one of theGloucester beaches, Wing-aersheek or Stage Fort Park.

It was easy to imagine livingin a socialist society with somany people sharing foodand camaraderie that easily.

Party socials and other socialactivities were a huge part ofwhat kept the interest so highin the WSP all through thisperiod, as indeed had prob-ably been the case all along.

The social element was a supplement to the classes Rab still offered inCapital, and other Marxian texts like The Communist Manifesto, WageLabor and Capital, and Value, Price and Profit. Billie and Anne both madecharts to help Rab teach those classes, and so did Aime Martinat, anartist who had joined the Party. Later on, when I was older, those chartswould definitely help me understand things — but my memories fromthe early Forties are largely of Aime and my mother trying to earn someextra money by painting furniture, a business venture doomed to failuresince, although the furniture was beautiful, neither Aime nor Anne hadany talent for business. The charts, on the other hand, were a valuablegraphic aid to Rab’s study classes.

I remember when I was six or seven, Rab was working on a new chart, “AMan’s Eye View of Evolution,” which I now realize he must have startedeven earlier, and kept revising to keep it up-to-date with advances in sci-ence. It graphically summarized cosmic events from a time where therewas only “Matter and Energy” to the present. Rab was very proud ofthat chart, and of being a scientist (although to Billie’s chagrin, he neveraccepted the Big Bang theory).

One of his favorite aphorisms was: “All things are interrelated, andSocialism is the Queen that unites all the sciences.” He demonstratedthis continually by starting up conversations with people about what-ever they were interested in, and quickly turning the encounter into adiscussion of the case for socialism — without ever changing the sub-ject. Rab also was fond of making the point: “Everyone you talk with

will easily concede that in their own particularline of work, things would go better if we hadsocialism. But very few people can see that thesame can be said of all aspects of society.”

Billie Rab was drafted in 1943. Although hisrelationship with Mickey had ended after twoand a half years of marriage, she came to seehim off when he was shipped overseas from aNew York air force base. That was not so sur-prising; but both Ella and Anne were surprisedthat another girl also came to see him off: itwas Billie’s new girlfriend, Caroline Clemente. Rab, however, was notsurprised. Knowing that his son intended to make Carrie his wife beforehe went overseas, Rab had helped to arrange for Carrie to travel to NewYork, where Billie was stationed, so the couple could get married — butevents moved too quickly. Billie was shipped overseas earlier than antici-pated, leaving his fiancee single.

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

Sunday Forum, Oct 31: "Clear Thinking"—RabWed. Class: "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific,"—I. RabLOOK AT THE BULLETIN BOARD IN THE HALLFOR SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS — DEBATES — SOCIALS.

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

The “girl” seated at the deskis Billie Rab, dressed in drag!

It was at this social that Billiefirst met Carrie. She told melater that she really thoughthe was a girl, and was sur-prised when he asked herto dance. Carrie had cometo the social with her high-school friends Sally and

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

When Billie finally came safely homefrom the War in 1945, he marriedCarrie, right in the big living roomwe had at 5 Dennison Street, Rox-bury, and moved with her to an apart-ment in Dorchester. They decided toget married on the Winter Solsticebecause it’s the longest night of theyear. Billie and Carrie’s wedding was the most wonderful party I had everbeen to, and I thought my new Aunt Carrie in her wedding dress was themost 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 Headquar-ters at 12 Hayward Place in 1946, and being without a place to meet forseveral months put a strain on the membership of the Local. There wasan organizational slump that needed to be addressed. The Party outsideBoston, however, was doing even worse.

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

After a short search for a new place,the organization moved to 27 DockSquare, in the Faneuil Hall neighbor-hood, that August. One of my earlymemories is of watching my motherpaint the beautiful tin ceiling of thenew Headquarters. There were lots oftiny squares, and it was hard to brushthe white paint into them. But it lookedso wonderful and shiny when it was all

done! That Headquarters, as I remember it, was mainly one big room, withwooden folding chairs and a few tables. There were frequent socials therewhich I was sometimes brought to. At one of them, when I was six or sevenyears 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 ofLocal Boston in 1946. She was an active socialist, and also held a job ina machine shop during and after the War. I was raised by Ella and Rabas much as by Anne and Len, and have always felt very lucky for havinghad four parents instead of the usual two!

As Secretary of the Local, Anne Rab oversaw the move to the new Head-quarters; in fact she got her boss at the machine shop to lend the WSP atruck 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 windowsthat could be seen from the street below, one of which had a sign (madeby Billie) reading “Workers’ Socialist Party.” As an added feature, it waslocated near Faneuil Hall, then as now a famous Boston landmark.

Rab, in his new role as National Organizer, went back to Detroit inan attempt to build up a Local there, where the WSP had originallybeen founded almost 20 years earlier. He visited Olga Rivkin, the oldfriend whose baby Ella had nursed along with her own son in 1917. Thatbaby was grown up now, and Olgahad remarried. Rab now met hersecond husband, Louis Bradlin, forthe first time. (This photograph ofthe Bradlin family was taken a fewyears before Rab’s visit.)

Olga, not particularly interested inRab’s socialism, had never spokenabout it with the children she hadwith Bradlin. Her parents hadreturned to Russia in support ofthe 1917 Revolution, and Olgahad taught her children to admirethe Soviet Union.

Now Olga was dismayed to hear Rab insist, after all this time, there was noreal 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 triedto tell him how wrong he was. But Harriett now had much the sameexperience that Rab himself had had, the first time he heard Moses Baritzexpound the case for scientific socialism right there in Detroit.

“In Socialism,” Rab explained to Harriett, “there will be no classes. Youcan’t deny there is a class-divided society in Russia, can you? There won’tbe any money in Socialism; everyone will have free access to what theyneed. 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 suchvitality,” she remembered when we talked about this in 2004. “He wasan inspiration! He could quote Capital like Scripture.”

Harriett became one of the comrades in the new Detroit Local thatresulted from Rab’s organizing visit, joining Gordon Coffin and hisdaughter Mardon, Irving Canter, Frank Marquart and others. Andalthough she was away from the socialist movement during the Sixtiesand Seventies, she was to return as one of the strongest supporters of theorganization in the years after Rab was gone.

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

At weekly business meetings, the Local comrades accepted many womenand men into membership who had first been attracted to the movementthrough the socials and only later had attended forums, lectures andother activities. Early in January 1947, the NAC made a formal requestto Boston Local that they use a written application form, which couldthen 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. Althoughin general agreement with WSP principles, he stated a few things differ-ently. He said, for one thing, that when the socialist revolution occurs, itwill not be a victory for the working class — because at that point, therewill no longer be a working class, socialism being a classless society.

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

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

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

In later discussion, Anne Rab agreed with this and added further, “I seethat a trend of capitalism generally is toward better working conditionsand higher standards of living. Why? For one thing, capitalist productionitself no longer requires the more obvious and ruthless methods onceemployed so generally; and also, the organization of workers into unionsis a factor. I would never deny the important role of the second, but weshouldn’t minimize the first.”

The problem was that many WSP comrades in the Thirties and For-ties were active unionists: Ralph Roberts and “Chubi” Kligman wereboth organizers for the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union(ILGWU); Frank Marquart worked as Educational Director for differentUnited Auto Workers’ locals; many other comrades were very involvedin their unions. Anne was accused by George Gloss, speaking for theNAC, of failing to recognize “that we are a working-class organizationourselves, and that we are part of the working class. This fact, in itself,compels the socialist movement to support the struggles of our fellowworkers to the extent that we do.”

During discussion, Lou Fein, Anne Rab, Henry Muse, and many othercomrades and strong sympathizers expressed the idea that “the organiza-tion of socialists into a political party for the abolition of classes does notrepresent the interests of the workers as a class. Socialists are united bya common bond of understanding, not class.” A majority of the WSP,however, contended that such statements are non-socialist because thestruggle for socialism is primarily a working-class problem. “If we havecapitalists in the Party, it is only because they have risen above their classinterests and come over to the party of the working class.”

Lou Fein’s application was rejected, but the controversy within BostonLocal continued for months.

Rab had often made the point that the criteria for membership weresimply understanding that capitalism can never operate in the interestof society as a whole, no matter how it is “reformed,” and that socialismrepresents a viable alternative to capitalism in which the interest of societyis identical to that of each individual. However, Rab was out of town formost 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 amember, 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 persuadeothers to change their minds about it. But the strategy backfired, andAnne was dropped from the Party rolls in late June, along with HenryMuse (who had been the circulation manager of the Western Socialist).Rab — still away on his organizing tour — and Sam Orner, in NewJersey, both sent telegrams to the NAC in Boston, urging that they nottake any action rashly — but it was too late.

Throughout her life, Anne consistently defended the case for socialismeven though she had been hounded out of the only organization thatheld to that case. In the course of time, ironically, the Party’s positioncame to look very much like her analysis of trade unions. As the labormovement in the U.S. slid steadily downhill, newer members of theWSP did not trouble to hide an openly critical attitude towards unionsand their politics. By the time that happened, though, Anne Rab had lostinterest in being a member.

***The Scott Nearing Debate***

Meanwhile, at the same time as all this was going on, Local Boston com-rades on both sides of the controversy were busily making preparationsfor what was to become their largest and most effectively publicizedactivity to date: a debate at Boston’s Old South Meeting House betweenComrade Frank Marquart and Scott Nearing.

Nearing was quite a well-knownfigure in 1947, already the authorof several books, who consideredhimself a pacifist and a socialist,but who also supported the SovietUnion. He had agreed to debatewith the WSP on the topic:“Resolved: That the Soviet Union isPioneering an Alternative to Capi-talism.” It was rare for a figure of hisreputation to debate with the rep-resentative of a party which had nofamous “names,” and Local Bostondid everything they could to takeadvantage of this opportunity to attract a large indoor crowd to hear thecase for socialism.

After considering several alternatives, the decision was taken to haveMarquart of Local Detroit represent the Party. Marquart had plentyof speaking experience as the Education Director for the United AutoWorkers union, and could well articulate the socialist position in thedebate. Len Feinzig was chosen to be chairman. The comrades placedadvertisements in the two largest Boston papers, the Globe and theHerald, to appear on the morning of the debate; they printed and dis-tributed circulars; they rented a sound truck to tell everyone about theevent; and they erected a prominent sign outside the Old South MeetingHouse. These efforts paid off; on at 8:00 PM, May 2, 1947, a large audi-ence came to hear two avowed Socialists debate about “Communism.”

During the debate, Nearing stated: “Russia, despite its present shortcom-ings and difficulties, represents the vanguard — the beginning of a newsystem that is to replace capitalism.”

Marquart summed up as follows: “To replace American capitalism, Iwould not advocate the bureaucratic totalitarian Russian state capitalismwhich Nearing favors, but socialism. Socialism means a system of societywhere there would be no classes; the means of production would be atthe disposal of society as a whole; commodity production and the pricesystem would be wiped out; cultural advantages would be open to allthe people; the state would be replaced by a democratic administrationof things, and the guiding motto would be ‘From each according to hisabilities and to each according to his needs.’”

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

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

George Gloss, as National Secretary, called the Confer-ence to order. He is pictured in the photograph to the left.In 1947, Gloss was just getting started in the used bookbusiness. Later, he owned and operated the famous BrattleBook Store in downtown Boston.

Henry Victor Muse gave his report as Circulation Manager for TheWestern Socialist. A Native American, Muse had been in the Party since1935. He reported that 5,000 copies of each issue were being printed.For the most recent issue, 3,755 had already been distributed. Therewere 394 individual subscribers in the U.S., 162 in Canada, and 11 for-eign, 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 com-rades and groups in the U.S. (466), Canada (469), and foreign coun-tries (1,725) More copies had been distributed free to new contacts, asexchanges, and a few to ex-subscribers; and the rest (1,245) were set asidefor 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 timerunning a business with his two brothers, one ofwhomwas also in the WSP. Feinzig noted in his report thatin order to continue activities at the present level, andto increase them, the party would need to increaseits income somehow; and several motions were madeand passed regarding ways to do that.

Rab gave his report as National Organizer: how he had helped with officeroutine, 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, espe-cially as we have so many visitors”). As to building up the party, he felthe had had more success nationally than he hadlocally. “I had visualized,” he reported, “talks atfactory gates, wide distribution of circulars, manytalks at all kinds of organizations, and so forth, inBoston. But they did not materialize. However,there have been the addition of science movies,some debates, and a university talk arranged asa result of my being Local Boston Organizer.”

On the national scene, however, he felt he hadaccomplished 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 newmembers 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, includingdiscussion 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 choosinga new name for the organization, which had come up because of a trou-blesome confusion between the “Workers’ Socialist Party” and a newTrotskyist organization which had dubbed itself the “Socialist WorkersParty.” Many members were reluctant to give up the old name, whichhad, 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 member-ship, asking “Do you want the name of the party changed?” and also,“Whichever way you voted on the question just above, if the name ischanged which of the following names do you prefer?” Six choices werelisted.

When the votes were tallied, the WSP officially became the WorldSocialist Party.

Rab often exclaimed in later years what a fortuitous choice that was.It emphasizes the international nature of the socialist movement. Infact, the group of companion parties subscribing to the same object andprinciples as the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which before 1947 hadnever really had a common name, is now known as the World SocialistMovement.

**CHAPTER FiVE**

Changes

***1948 - 1973: Post-War McCarthyism; Rab asa union man; the two Rab households move toNewton: 62 Woodcliff Road; Rab’s and Gloss’stour of Great Britain; the National Officemoves to Detroit; WSP issues of the Ballotand Violence: “Is there Room for Differencesof Opinion in a Socialist Party?” AnotherGeneration of Socialists; the WSP and the CivilRights movement of the Sixties; the WSP at 50.***

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

I remember discussions around our kitchen table with the visiting com-rades who would come to talk about socialism with my family — Mimiand Papa and my parents. (“Mimi” was my name for Ella Rab.) Therewere so many visiting comrades that once Mimi wrote the words “Rab’sHotel” in the frost on our window.

Jack Whittaker from New York Local stayed with us several times, fora 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. CathyMacPhail, who was the daughter of a comrade in the SPGB’s GlasgowBranch, stayed with us for many months and sang dozens of Scottishsongs. (Songs — many of them from the little red IWW Songbook— were always there in the background of my childhood.). Cathy wasengaged to an American soldier she’d met back in Scotland, but while shewas in Boston, she was part of the Rab household.

Another woman who was part of our household fora long time, off and on, was Chubi, pictured on theleft. Her real name was Jenny Kligman. She was amember of the WSP, and she was also an organizerfor the ILGWU. Chubi and I bonded. Once, whenI asked my mother if I could have a Fairy God-mother 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 alwaysa wonderful Godmother to me, probably even better than a Fairy onewould have been, for the rest of her life.

All during that period — from when my memory begins, up to myadolescence — there was a ferment of socialist activity going on in thebackground of my world. My four parents took me to Boston Common,where I heard WSP speakers like Papa, Daddy (Len Feinzig), and GeorgeGloss (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 startchanging around the time this chapter begins.

“After the war, the social climate became less favorable to spreadingsocialist ideas. Returning servicemen were forced to reorganize theirlives under new circumstances and perspectives, altered hopes andfears. With the cold war anti-red sentiment and the witch-huntingof the McCarthy era, the Party suffered along with every other groupthat deviated from the 100% flag-waving jingoism of the period. TheWSP continued to hold its own for many years, but it had clearly lostits 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 andestablishing themselves in careers. But there was more to it than that; itwas a different era.

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

The circulation of The Western Socialist was to decline steadily throughoutthe whole next decade, dropping from a total of almost four thousandcopies distributed in 1947, to only about two thousand in 1957; andthis was probably not due to anything the members of the WSP did ordid not do. The material conditions were simply not as conducive to ageneral desire for social change as they had been earlier. The Americanworking 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 representedideas 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. TheHouse Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), founded in 1938,was investigating Communists, while Senator Joseph McCarthy (firstelected in 1947) was finding Communists and socialists trying to under-mine 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 whodidn’t officially join — provided a social glue that kept Boston an activeLocal for a long time.

Here is the Organizer’s Report that Rab presented to the 1948 Confer-ence of the WSP:

Resulting from instructions of last year’s Conference, I spent much ofmy 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 thecollections, etc., covered the expenses, there was a falling off of nationalincome. 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., andMilwaukee. Besides visiting contacts and WS readers, I gave severaltalks and slide lectures, participated in debates and discussion groups.The net results were not spectacular. The phrase “sowing seeds” bestdescribes 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 membersresulted. Most urgently desirable would be local socialists in manylocations, such as Milwaukee, where there is some high regard for theWSP but no local individual to fill the gap.

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

Upon assuming organizer duties I stated that its success could be mea-sured in terms of obtaining socialist voluntary cooperation of membersand sympathizers in subdividing our labors. In that respect, the resultswere far from glowing. It is important that detail work and committeework be assumed by more members instead of the present situationwhere a very few carry on the whole load. Personally, I would like to berelieved of Party work, except for the Editorial Committee, and startwriting a pamphlet on Science and Socialism. Also, I would prefer help-ing to get out much-needed new pamphlets and leaflets.

— I. Rab, National Organizer

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

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

As Rab explained to Canter, “one personal difficulty I have [in workingon our book]: I am now a sub-proofreader on the Boston Hearst news-papers, 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’tget work daytimes then I must get more sleep, so that I don’t fall asleepif I should get work that night. You have no idea what havoc this worksin any organized routine for research work ... but I’m determined to gothrough with this project with you ... ”

Until 1948 or ’49, Rab had never had a paying job that lasted more thana 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 theage of 55, by claiming ten years of proofreading experience based on hisEditorial Committee work for The Western Socialist), he settled into theroutine of the Hearst composing room, working from 6:00 P.M. to 2:00

1. M. five nights a week.

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

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

***Rab as a Union Man***

Frank Marquart, who had ably represented the WSP in its 1947 debate withScott Nearing, was on the editorial board of the magazine Dissent duringthe 1950s. In 1959, Marquart wrote an article for Dissent on “New Prob-lems 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 overpro-duction of such “analytical” articles. What is needed is articles comingto grips with “So, what about it?” The nearest you come is: “.bya labor movement I mean an association of trade unions — moreimportant, of trade unionists — who feel that in some sense they arecommitted to a vision of a more selfless and devoted life than can usu-ally be provided by our commercial society.”

Not one word do you say about unions as the economic phase of theclass struggle; the inherent strength of unions when banded in soli-darity for common interests; the need for political action for socialchange, or any similar observations that constitute meaningful prob-lems for present-day unions.

Because [Dissent’s editorial board] think only of practical measureswithin the framework of capitalism, socialism appears a long way in thedistant future . The advantage of a socialist is that he has the knowl-edge and understanding to think outside the framework of capitalism.That is why a socialist can be an optimist on the basis of historic neces-sity, truth and science. The answer to that question: “So, what aboutit?” is What is needed are Socialists ... Finally, please find enclosed acopy of the latest Boston Typographical Bulletin. It contains my adviceto my fellow members to read this issue of Dissent devoted to “Workersand 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 Arethe Featherbedders?” and reprints from The Western Socialist. So, youcan see I’m not commenting from any ivory tower or in an academicsense. Let me tell you, the really serious limitation — far more seriousthan the limitations of unions, themselves, as adjuncts of capital — isthe 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 theWorkers’ Socialist Party, when he taught classes in Wage Labor and Cap-ital in a union hall. It was in exactly this same spirit that he now con-tinued his socialist teaching in the Typographical Union.

As of this writing (2006), the ITU is the oldest surviving trade union inthe United States, and is still notable for its long history of union democ-racy. Within it, Rab had ample opportunity to spread knowledge of thecase 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 andlabor because, in the final analysis, a reduction in wages results in anincrease in profits. Conversely, an increase in wages results in a decreasein profits. Inexorably, wages are determined by the cost of existence ofthe workers. It is the rise in living costs that compels the fight for higherwages. The superstition that a rise in wages causes a rise in prices has beenexposed as brain-washing propaganda by capital.”

To one of his fellow workers in Local 13, who aspired to a leadership rolein 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 bejointly and intelligently settled over the bargaining table.

Fundamentally, the interests of management must be to operate profit-ably. They are not in business for love or for the benefit of the employ-ees (although often, intelligent employers are benevolent because itmeans 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 sorryplight, for capital is in the stronger position, economically. Unionsare the only weapons workers have. You have had ample experience torealize where labor would be if they had not resisted and fought.

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

I am writing this because I believe you are honestly mistaken. Themere fact of your refusal to sign a contract with the Herald-Travelerwithout a proviso that, in case of a strike, you will have the optionof joining the men and women on the picket line speaks volumes foryour good intentions. Unfortunately, you will learn the hard way thatyou cannot serve two masters.

Your thinking can’t help being affected by the very nature of yourresponsibilities. Already you have stated: “The newspapers have finan-cial 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 refrainedfrom taking the floor for fear of seeming to imply that you were “sell-ing out.” I am positive that you had no such idea in mind. But at thesame time, I did want to emphasize to the membership my disagree-ment with the principle that you stated, which should be voiced. Ionly wish I knew how to make these remarks without making it seemto be “personal” or an “attack,” but merely as a statement of a basicprinciple of unionism.

I would appreciate it if you would recommend that this letter be pub-lished in our local bulletin.\*

In a letter to the Editor of the ITUJournal, May 18, 1963, he wrote:

.The primary objective of unionism is the fight for improving wages,hours and shop conditions. It is the urgent need of the workers toresist the encroachments of capital on their economic interests thatproduced the unions in the first place. The inspiring history of theearly struggles of unions demonstrates that our strength lies in solidar-ity and militancy. We just saw anew how this was confirmed to the hiltin the recent [1963] New York newspaper strike. Can anyone questionthat the Big Six [i.e., Local 6 of the NY Typographical Union] neverwould have won their major demands without resorting to the strike?

.The roster of those congressmen in both houses who voted for mea-sures such as Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin only demonstrateshow some of our “friends” really think, when the chips are down. It isa fallacy to expect “liberals,” with their abstractions of “justice,” “prog-ress,” “the good fight,” etc., to grasp Labor’s problems. In fact, theITU’s opposition to arbitration is rooted in our realization that these“broad-minded, impartial” arbitrators examine “both sides” withoutunderstanding the issues involved. Real progress can only come whenwe fight our own battles.\*\*

It’s easy to see how Rab could not find much time to collaborate on a bookwith Irving Canter, nor to do any serious writing of his own; and I think itwas around this time — the late Fifties or early Sixties — that he came torecognize this himself. It was around 1963 that he began giving me copiesof the letters he wrote, many of which are included in this book, and toldme, “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 alsothe center of a close family. In July 1950, the Rabs and Feinzigs — Raband Ella, Ann and Len, along with 10-year-old me — moved to a homeof our own in Newton Highlands, and Rab reveled in the stewardshipof the beautiful little house and garden at 62 Woodcliff Road. He con-structed a patterned brick walkway from the front door to the street,and a low brick wall all along the front border of the property. He evenbuilt a brick barbeque near the back door, and a folding counter top tocompensate for the lack of space in the tiny kitchen.

He enjoyed being a handyman, fixing things, finding solutions to house-hold problems.

Although the WSP did not thrive during the 1950s as it had in the Thir-ties and Forties, nevertheless the Fifties were a positive and exciting timein Rab’s personal family life.

Best of all, the new house, with its large living room and a cellar set upwith a bar and lots of room for dancing, was ideal for WSP socials. Thiswas especially useful now that the spacious Dock Square Headquarterswas gone. The family had finally found a permanent home, and nevermoved again during Rab’s lifetime.

Billie and Carrie Rab already had two children, Denise Ann and KarlKrig. Within a few years, these “Rab Juniors” moved into a house at 39Floral Street, within easy walking distance ofWoodcliff Road, so that thewhole family of Rabs was together again.

“It is pleasant to recall,” wrote Bill Rab in 1986, “that Rab found opti-mism and encouragement even when things appeared adverse. One suchspecial occasion was his visit (with George Gloss of Boston) to GreatBritain during the early fifties: he brought back unending anecdotes andaccounts of the trip. He met people he had only known through cor-respondence or the Standard, or by reputation. He attended meetings inLondon, Manchester and Glasgow, speaking at branch and propagandameetings; he was thrilled by the size, quality and support of the gen-eral membership. The entire experience was one of the highlights of hislife.”

Gloss had bought the Brattle Book Shop in 1949, and by 1954 had suc-cessfully established himself in the used book business. Unfortunately,this meant he could no longer represent the WSP as a speaker for fear itmight jeopardize his career, alienating clients who knew him only as abookseller. It also meant, however, that now he was able to support themovement 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, heoffered 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 bythe WSM is that, since capitalism is a global economic system, it can bereplaced only by a system of society that is also global in scope: WorldSocialism. We consider it likely that before the socialist revolution cantake place, there will be affiliated organizations of ordinary people inmany different parts of the world. Historically, though, the movementbegan in England. Rab’s first contact with it had been through membersof the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The SPGB has always been thelargest and most active party in the World Socialist Movement.

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

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

A SOCIALIST TOUR

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

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

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

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

welcome, and the hospitality in the homes was genuinely gracious. Awelcoming social was held at the Head Office, London, at which about150 comrades exuberantly expressed themselves in group dancing, sing-ing and discussing — for a most enjoyable evening.

The afternoon of their arrival, the comrades headed for their first out-standing destination — Hyde Park. There they met a goodly numberof comrades and saw some SPGB speakers in action. They had littletime to listen for, in response to persistent requests, they took the standto speak to large and attentive audiences. The crowds at this and otheroutdoor meetings at which the comrades spoke, looked and acted muchlike those on Boston Common and asked similar questions. However, atevery meeting, they asked about conditions in the U.S., the possibility ofsocialist expression, the influence of “McCarthyism.” Opposition camemainly from a few vociferous Communists; heckling was far less thananticipated, and there was usually a round of applause for Socialism.

Starting with the meeting at Hyde Park, the comrades were almostcompletely absorbed in Socialist activities. In the fifteen days in Britainthey spoke at eight outdoor meetings (Hyde Park 2, Lincoln’s Inn Field3, East End Market 1, Portsmouth 1, Glasgow 1); ten SPGB Branchmeetings, one Executive Committee meeting, and a lecture at Workers’Open Forum, Glasgow. Besides these organized meetings, there werenumerous group discussions with comrades until the wee hours of mostmornings. It was inspiring and instructive to listen to and participatein the critical and interesting discussions on various aspects of socialisttheories and analyses. At every branch meeting the need was stressedfor closer cooperation, correspondence between the overseas comrades,articles for the WS. Emphasized was the fact that we are as one and weare not alone.

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

A meeting with two members of the Editorial Committee, both ofwhom 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 wasassured. Most important was the fact that surplus articles would bemade available for the Western Socialist thus enhancing the possibilityof its monthly issuance.

To reciprocate in a small way for the splendid cooperation by the SPGBwith the WSP throughout its existence, the American comrades made adonation toward launching a fund to employ a full-time paid organizer.This project, which was presented to the Executive Committee for con-sideration, received a very favorable response wherever the comradestraveled. Incidentally, while in Glasgow, a comrade made a generousdonation to the WSP

A fascinating trip through the heart of England was made possible by thesplendid cooperation of a Lancashire comrade who drove 215 miles toLondon in his “jalopy” and then traveled back with the comrades throughOxford, Warwick, Stratford on Avon, Litchfield, Kenilworth, and theMidlands to Burnley where wonderful hospitality awaited them. Whileplenty of the countryside was beautiful, a perpetual pall of blackness andmisery seemed to hang over the entire industrial area. Much seemed toremain just as Engels described it in 1844. The stone barrack-line slumswere 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, metfor a stimulating discussion of Socialist problems.

One of the most inspiring incidents of the visit took place in a comrade’shome. There, in a kitchen, a group of comrades from England, Ireland,Scotland and United States discussed their common problems, spokethe same socialist language, adhered to the same principles. Beforeleaving for the Workers’ Open Forum meeting, they stood around atable, firmly grasped hands in a symbol of international solidarity, andexpressed the hope for the speedy realization of an international Social-ist conference.

Climaxing the trip (only a few hours before plane time) was a meetingat the Workers’ Open Forum, Glasgow, addressed by the two [Ameri-can] comrades. The hall was jam-packed by more than 450 workerswho, except for some heated opposition in question and discussion bya small group of Communists and Anti-Parliamentarians, enthusiasti-cally received and loudly applauded the Socialist case.

After the meeting the comrades were surrounded by well wishers, andmore 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’shome, where a goodly group of Glasgow members, who had been pres-ent at the meeting, expressed great enthusiasm, sang comradely songs,and further cheered the comrades on their way. Awaiting them at theairport, thirty miles away, was another group of Glasgow comradeswho 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, thefollowing estimate of the trip is expressed: “That your visit to Englandand Scotland aroused tremendous interest is beyond doubt. In Londonand Manchester (and over the ’phone to Glasgow) we learned frommany comrades something of the great enthusiasm which is but oneof the results of your tireless endeavours to visit as many branches andmeetings as was possible during your all too brief stay ... Our comradesin America will feel tremendously encouraged when they realise the fullimport of your visit to Britain. I feel sure that I am merely expressingwhat hundreds here are already thinking and saying, that your momen-tous visit must and will be the forerunner of many more involvingmany comrades. And equally important, it must be two-way traffic,and who knows? — maybe it won’t be very long before Delegates fromall the Companion Parties will be converging on some city in Europeor 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 bemoved from Boston to Detroit.

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

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

At the 1950 Conference, held in Detroit, IrvingB. Canter replaced George Gloss as the NationalSecretary, since the new NAC had to be com-posed of Detroit comrades. The Editorial Com-mittee (consisting of Rab, Harry Morrison, LenFeinzig and George Gloss) remained in Boston.

Tom Jackson, still an active member of the WSP,reminisced in 2006 that when he joined DetroitLocal in the early Fifties, “Irving Canter was con-ducting a series of lectures, in an upstairs roomin one of the wonderful old houses in an ex-poshneighborhood near the university ... I liked and admired Irving a lot.His lectures were real eye-openers — in fact, they formed the foundationof my understanding of socialism and capitalism . Irving had a goodsense of humor, and it enlivened his exceedingly informative lectures.”The lecture series Jackson attended was “Economics Since Marx” (thetitle of the book Rab and Canter were still trying to write together), anoutline for which was presented to the 1950 WSP Conference as a “Classon Advanced Economics.” (This outline is reproduced on page 144.)Canter was also a frequent contributor to The Western Socialist, writingmostly about economics, under the pen name “Karl Fredericks.”

Comrade Mardon Coffin became the new National Treasurer. ComradeGeorge Lynch transferred from Boston Local to Detroit Local in orderto facilitate the transition. Harriett Bradlin Cooper and a good numberof others, including my Socialist Godmother “Chubi” (whose work hadtaken her to Detroit) were all active members, capable of serving on theDetroit-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 wasneeded, with the working title of Introducing the WSP. Canter wrote thepamphlet and submitted it to the Editorial Committee, which approvedit 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 misin-terpreting the socialist attitude towards violence, with the sad result thatnot only was the pamphlet never published, but Canter stepped down asNational Secretary, as the National Office returned to Boston.

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

There was never any question that the socialist revolution envisioned bythe World Socialist Movement will have to be brought about throughthe conscious political action of a socialist majority. We have always sup-ported political action, as opposed to direct action, to accomplish therevolution, because direct action carries such a huge risk of violence. Theruling 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 when-ever necessary to maintain its power. In any confrontation involving vio-lence, the ruling class has every advantage over the workers.

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

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

In the original version of the proposed new pamphlet, after a statementthat the WSP advocates the ballot as a revolutionary tool, Canter wenton to say: “However, as a minority party today, the World Socialist Partydoes not, nor should not, lay down the exact steps by which the majority,once it becomes socialist, will introduce socialism.” The presence orabsence of this deleted sentence has little if any effect on the meaningconveyed. Certainly no one was advocating a violent revolution. The realissue seems to have been: who was in charge, the Editorial Committeeor the NAC?

On one level, it is tempting to conclude that George Gloss — who hadbeen a key member of Local Boston for a long time, serving both on theNAC 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 theU.S., and in the other Companion Parties, arguing his personal opinionthat the NAC’s position, articulated by Irving Canter, was un-socialist.

While agreeing that using the electoral process would be the ideal methodof establishing that a majority supported socialism, Canter insisted thatno one can foretell the future. On the Editorial Committee, Rab andFeinzig both supported him in this, but were opposed by Gloss and Mor-rison. In 1953, in a personal letter to Rab, Canter wrote:

Morrison is still putting words in comrades’ mouths, because he wantsto believe they think in this manner. It is unfortunate that he shouldlevel his attacks on you, for after all you are the main instigator of theWSP as it stands today, and if you do not know the Party’s position onthe ballot, who does? Looking back ... I do not see your position anydifferent than that expounded when you came to Detroit. Of course,there has always been a difference between us as to what we thoughtmight happen at the time of the socialist majority, but we were bothagreed on getting that majority first. I think your approach is scientific,that of Morrison completely dogmatic, theological, and teleological. Ido not hope to change Morrison; he will go on for years with the sametype of thinking, that he has the answers not only for today, but for alltime. Power to him, but history will prove him wrong. Certainly thefact that we were all wrong in predicting a post-war crash (of course,other factors intervened, but we did not foresee these, so the analysisapplies) should bring us all up sharp as to what will happen in thefuture.

You see, it was for all these reasons that I did not want to answer Mor-rison or Gloss any further. It would have been a waste of time. Whydon’t we wait until we get a socialist majority, meanwhile using theexisting parliamentary machinery. I hesitated a long time about join-ing 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 amajority to assert itself at the polls. He said, how do you know? Whydon’t you work towards the majority, and then we will see what theruling class will do? Then he quoted Engels about the ballot beingnothing more than a barometer. I realized he was right, that my viewsabout what I thought would happen in the future might not even hap-pen at all. Further, if capitalism boasts about democracy, and the ruleof the majority, let us take them up on this.”

Later that same year, Sam Orner shouted at a Party Conference, “It is nota question of method, but of winning over the majority of the popula-tion. We as a minority cannot tell the working class five or a hundredyears in the future what they will do in order to gain power. We shouldnot tie ourselves to restrictions, and lose members ... The socialist revo-lution will be achieved by people who know where they’re going. Wedon’t know what the socialist majority will do in the future. Our job is tospread sound socialist knowledge. Only an idiot would advise violence!We can’t tell in advance what specific situation may arise. Today we advo-cate 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 noone can predict the details of a future situation. The “ballot controversy”officially ended with the passage of a party-wide referendum stating: “Weadvocate the ballot as a means of attaining socialism and anyone whoadvocates violence as a means of attaining the socialist victory cannot bea 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 accom-plished by the conscious, socialist majority. The reason we alwaysemphasize the ballot is clear. The ballot is the symbol of the politicallyconscious, socialist majority.

The trouble is that, unfortunately, “force” and “violence” are not syn-onymous terms. When they are used as substitute terms for each otherthey lead to quibbles ... By “force” in the context of the socialist revo-lution, is meant the power to accomplish our objectives, and this forceincludes social and economic forces (developments). I would recom-mend 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 foroppressing another. If the proletariat, during its contest with the bour-geoisie, is compelled by force of circumstances, to organize itself asa class, if by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class (bywinning the battle of democracy, p. 79) and, as such, sweeps away byforce the old conditions of production, then, it will, along with theseconditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of classantagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolishedits own supremacy as a class.”

And hereby hangs a tale, the horror of the bourgeoisie that the Com-munist Manifesto advocates violence with their hypocritical condemna-tion by quoting, out of context of the Manifesto itself, the final paragraphof the historic document: “They openly declare that their ends can beattained 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 refer-endum sent out from that Conference resulted in a decision to movethe National Office back to Boston. Gloss regained his title of NationalSecretary and the group of Detroit-area socialists remaining in DetroitLocal carried on as best they could.

For men like Canter, Morrison, Orner and Gloss to become so passionateover the controversy just described demonstrates how seriously each ofthese comrades took the task of spreading knowledge and understandingof the case for socialism. The urgency of this task is even more evidentnow, in the 21st Century, than it was in the 1950s; they were certainlyjustified in being passionate about it. But, unfortunately, each of themalso became persuaded that the movement was failing to grow becausethe 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 membershipto blame one another for the failure of the organization to make betterprogress, instead of taking into account the over-all material conditionsof society. Hank Faunce, a close sympathizer ever since he first came incontact with the WSP in 1946, told me: “There was a lot of infightingamong the members in the Forties and Fifties.” (When I asked him onceif he knew why my mother had been dropped from the rolls in 1947, hisresponse was, “She didn’t dot her ‘i’s and cross her ‘t’s right, that’s all.”)

***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 remark-able qualities is that he never had an ego large enough to think he had allthe answers. Yet ironically, over and over again, the members of variousLeftist parties and groups would dismiss the World Socialist Party as beingdogmatic and sectarian, so interested in keeping itself “pure” that it excludesmany real socialists. To this, Rab would counter that such critics frequentlycomplain that “capitalist parties have stolen their planks (as though any cap-italist party could steal a socialist program). Look at the net result. Whereare the socialist masses? As far as numbers are concerned, they are not muchbetter off than the WSP Their practical, realistic policies have proven worsethan illusory. They have failed to make socialists! Yet, they continue to heapscorn 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 keepitself “pure,” he asserted that because a Socialist party is democrati-cally controlled by its membership, “an influx [of non-Socialists] couldtransform a genuine Socialist party into its opposite.” Membershiprequirements must be “narrow enough to exclude all who are not Social-ists.” Still, “in a socialist party there is plenty of room for differences ofopinion.”\*\* “Broadly speaking, a Socialist is one who understands thatCapitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interests ofthe working class or of society; that Capitalism is incapable of eliminatingits inherent problems of poverty, wars, crises, etc.; and that Socialismoffers the solutions for the social problems besetting mankind.”\*\*\*

When the National Office had left Boston in 1950, the WSP had movedto 11 Faneuil Hall Square — only a block away, but less expensive torent because, where Dock Square had been bright and spacious, FaneuilHall Square was a dingy place with little rooms. There were still fre-quent socials, but since the new Headquarters did not lend itself to socialactivity, 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 June1953 Forum.

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

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

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

Although there was less attendance at WSP activities in general thanthere had been earlier, there were still regular meetings at 11 FaneuilHall Square — business meetings of Local Boston; Editorial Committeemeetings (The Western Socialist was still published every other month);and Sunday Night Forums. The first time I remember going up to 11Faneuil Hall Square was a Sunday in 1954, when I listened to Rab givea talk on “An Introduction to the Philosophy of Socialism.” Rab alsooffered a “General Knowledge Class” on Monday evenings; but I did notattend that, being too preoccupied with school, and also with outsideactivities like the Boston Children’s Theatre at the time.

Then Len Feinzig, my father, brought me up to Headquarters with him in1956, when I was in high school, and gave me a job to do. He handed mea list of all the libraries in the U.S., on which someone else had already puta 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 WSyet, that I thought ought to be given one. The libraries I selected wouldreceive 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 annualWSP Conference had been held in Boston over the previous Labor Dayweekend, and one of the things the comrades had voted to do was starta Library Campaign. Feinzig had proposed this as a way to increase thecirculation of The Western Socialist, which had been dropping steadily eversince 1947. (Two years later, at the 1958 Conference, I learned that 2,162copies had been distributed that year — up from 2,057 copies the yearbefore — 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 schoolresearch project. Standing at the old wooden card catalog in the Refer-ence Room, I looked up the WS, not really expecting to find it. WhenI saw it listed, I felt a surge of pride that I still can call up now when Ithink about it. That was probably the first time I realized that the WorldSocialist Party was not just what I saw at home and at Headquarters: itwas an organization with the potential to influence anyone who useda library — and I myself had added to its influence by adding morelibraries to its circulation.

During my senior year of high school, I kept going up to Headquar-ters with Lennie, Billie and Rab. I learned to use an Address-O-Graphmachine to put addresses on bundles and single copies of The WesternSocialist. I also sometimes brought my high school friends up to a discus-sion meeting, although none of them was impressed enough to comeback a second time.

The visit of Rab andGloss to the SPGB in1954 sparked a series ofreciprocal interchangesbetween SPGBers andtheir U.S. and Canadiancounterparts. In the fall of1957, Gilbert McClatchie(known as “Gilmac” orsimply “Mac”) came fromLondon to address the1957 WSP conference,which was held at a Bostonhotel, rather than at the WSP Headquarters. This was his first trip to NorthAmerica, but Mac ultimately made many tours across the United States andCanada in the interests of socialism. “Rab’s Hotel,” in its new location inNewton, was busier than ever as a stopping place for visiting comrades.

Many diverse people sat, at various times, around the extra-large oak tablein the dining room at Woodcliff Road, and were drawn into intense dis-cussions about current events, the state of the world in general, and aboutthe meaning of “socialism.” Rab himself was sometimes away at work; butguests found ample stimulation from conversation with other membersof the family. Gilmac, Cyril May, and Jim D’Arcy were among the SPGBcomrades who were quickly becoming friends.

Not all the visitors were members, however: Tony Turner spent manyhours at our table after he had left the SPGB. Turner was possibly thebest-known outdoor speaker of all time in the World Socialist Move-ment. On September 3, 1939, the day World War II broke out, he hadkept an audience of thousands spellbound in Hyde Park, London, andhe had spent many years as the principal Party Organizer. Turner hadrecently left the SPGB to avoid creating a schism in the socialist move-ment, since he was aware of opposition from some of the membershipon 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 twoof 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-classalone’ as the saviours of humanity, springs from the fact that the natureof socialism has been forgotten, disregarded, or not known. Socialismis a way of living; living harmoniously with all people. It is untrue thatthere are people who have little or nothing to gain by the establishmentof socialism.” Both were certain (as are, I am sure, most of the member-ship of the WSP in the 21st Century) that the socialist revolution willbenefit not only the workers, but everyone; and that we should direct ouroutreach not only to workers, but to everyone. This is not to deny theclass struggle, but to understand that the struggle won’t end in a victoryfor the working class, but rather in an end to both classes.

Comrade Gilmac, too, entered into discussions about “the Ann Rab contro-versy,” 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 recognizedthat she consistently presented the case for socialism as though she were stilla member even though she wasn’t. After a while, he told her privately that hethought her position on unions was the same as his own, and that he felt itwas wrong for her to have been dropped from the Party rolls.

The economist Paul Mattick and his family were very frequent visitorsto Woodcliff Road, from when I was in high school until the early Sev-enties. 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). Mattickhad been writing occa-sional articles for theWestern Socialist sincethe 1940s, but wasliving in New York formost of that time. Inthe photo on the right,taken on the back porchat Woodcliff Road, theman standing aiming acamera at the camera isBillie Rab. To his left is Lennie; continuing clockwise is Ilse Mattick;then Carrie Rab. Paul Mattick is sitting in the middle, turning to lookat the camera; his son is sitting next to him, and then Ann.

Mattick was not a member of the WSP Like Pannekoek, whom Rab alsoheld in high esteem, he was a Council Communist and did not agree withthe WSP on the ballot, believing rather that Workers’ Councils would takehold of industry and introduce socialism. But Rab might also have said ofhim as of Pannekoek that “on Marxian economics, reforms, and especiallythe question of leadership,” he was “crystal clear.”

Council Communism is one of the currents described in The Thin RedLine: Non-Market Socialism in the Twentieth Century, edited by JohnCrump (1987). Crump asserts: “To find a coherent set of ideas whichare subversive of capitalism, and which do offer an alternative to produc-tion for a world market, one must turn to the ‘thin red line’ representedby 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 tobe a good socialist is to understand that capitalism does not work in theinterests of the majority, can never be reformed or administered in such away that it would, and that socialism — i.e., a classless, moneyless societywhere everyone has free access to all the available wealth — represents aviable alternative to capitalism.” Crump’s book did not appear until afterRab’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 onthe market.
* Distribution will be according to need, and not by means ofbuying and selling.
* Work will be voluntary.
* In socialism, there will be no social divisions based on class, sex orrace.
* Capitalism must be opposed however it manifests itself in allexisting 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 schoolsdid not offer the kind of education his parents wanted for him. The Rabfamily lived in Newton, Massachusetts, which at that time had one of thehighest ranked public high schools in the United States. I would soon beoff to college, so my room was available. We invited Mattick Jr. to live withus and attend Newton High using our address as his residence.

When young Paul moved in that summer, one of the first things we didwas have a discussion about what he should be called. His parents alwayscalled 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 newnames. Paul Jr. became Otto Mattick (and for years everyone called him“Otto”). Since he was thought of as my little brother, I became Sista Mat-tick. The rest of the family were Axio, Rhu, and Dog Mattick. We all hada 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 atthat time a separate part ofTufts University. Its campus is just a few milesNorth and East of Newton: near the Mystic River instead of the familiarCharles. Far enough away for me to be fully in my own world, but closeenough to be within easy reach of the family and the comrades.

By that time, I understood what Rab and the rest of my family werestruggling for; but I confess I wasn’t as interested in it as I knew theywere. No one in my family ever urged me to be a socialist, either. I wentaway to Jackson College to study Classics in preparation for a career as aLatin teacher, and to participate in the dramatic productions at the TuftsArena Theater.

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

It was in the summer between freshman and sophomore years of collegethat I brought home a Canadian poet whom I had encountered: GeorgeGerell, from Montreal. I had a job that summer ushering in a theater inCopley Square, and after the productions, often I’d go with a girlfriendto one of the coffee shops that were then proliferating across the CharlesRiver in Cambridge. I met Gerell at the Cafe Mozart in Harvard Square,and it was the beginning of a long relationship.

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

During the year he was away, he wrote letters not only to me, but also tothe 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 learningabout — and becoming convinced of — the case for socialism. Rab wasalmost as excited about Gerell as I was. Here is just one of many lettershe 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. Theyare a well-known firm and you won’t have any difficulty locating them.They are the publishers of Pannekoek’s Anthropogenesis. Will you pleaseask them for Pannekoek’s home address and visit him, if at all possible ...Lenin, in his State and Revolution, deals with Pannekoek, who opposedthe Bolsheviks at the very beginning on the basis of the Dictatorship ofthe Proletariat vs. democratic majority. Be sure to make a special visitto him and please give him my regards, also the Boston Comrades andalso give him greetings from Paul Mattick, in Boston. By the way, didyou notice my reference to Pannekoek in my article on evolution in theWS ? That reminds me, bring him a copy of that article, it will serve asa real introduction.

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

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

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

Affectionately and comradely, Rab\*

I spent the summer between junior and senior years traveling throughEurope with George, spending the final two weeks in England. Rab hadgiven us many addresses of people to look up. Looking back now, howI wish Rab had coached me better aboutthose contacts! One of the people I did visitat his request that summer was Tom Bolt.

George and I spent a very pleasant day withBolt, but Rab had not told me anythingabout him, and our conversation did notprogress much beyond tourist small talk.

Not until I began to research this book didI realize Bolt had been present in the earlydays of the WSP in Detroit.

That summer of 1959 was, nevertheless, amemorable adventure.

We married in December 1960. All theBoston Local comrades and sympathizerswere invited to the wedding, as well as friends and family; 62 WoodcliffRoad was filled to overflowing with people.

George and I moved to Montreal,where both of us joined the SocialistParty of Canada. There, we began anattempt to organize a new MontrealLocal (which did eventually comeinto being in 1966) but returned toBoston in 1962 for George to earna Ph.D. in English at Tufts while Isupported us and started work on aMasters in Humanistic Studies. Weeach transferred our membershipfrom the SPC to the WSP (US) in1962.

***Another Generation of Socialists***

During the 1960s, Boston Local was in better shape than it had been in along time. Four new members joined by 1964. After the choking conser-vatism of the Fifties came a resurgence of the idea that perhaps we mightnot, after all, be living in the best of all possible worlds. I remember peoplein Somerville, the working-class community where George and I lived,reacting to the Cuban Missile Crisis with fear. “Socialism” (at least theCuban version of it) wasn’t as universally hated as it had been, and youngpeople were becoming interested in alternatives to capitalism again. Therewere enough people of my own generation who had joined the Local sothat we were able to form a Local Activities Committee, which freed upthe older members to run the NAC and the Editorial Committee. (Notthat the newer comrades were discouraged from participating in thosecommittees either.)

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

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

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

WS.P. conference ... The Local has a very active membership, bothlocally and nationally. As will be appreciated the political atmospherein the United States is considerably different from that in Britain.There the working class have no interest in politics ... This makes itall the harder for the American Socialists to put over our case ... Onthe other hand, members in the U.S. have openings which we havenot, as for instance, the purchase of radio time and radio programmesin which listeners can participate by telephone.

In Boston activities are in the hands of a Local Administrative Commit-tee, composed of the younger members of the Party. They are respon-sible for organizing all activities [such as] indoor meetings each week[which] take the form of a talk or tape-recordings, or a film followedby discussion. Outdoor meetings are held every Sunday on BostonCommon. The W.S.P. is the only organization to avail themselves ofthese opportunities, although the conditions are not ideal owing to thepersistent attempts by Cuban refugees and various patriots to shoutdown 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 ourcase are available. All in all, prospects in Boston are hopeful.

The LAC consisted of Steve and Connie Butterfield, George Gerell andmyself, and Bill Jerome. Bill’s wife, Joni, was a close sympathizer. Once amonth we held LAC meetings in one another’s homes, where we social-ized and planned activities for the next four weeks.

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

A major project of Boston Local in the Sixties was our radio program. TheLocal first became aware of radio’s potential through Harry Morrison’s ini-tiative as a caller to AM radio talk shows, which gave the Boston listeningpublic exposure to the case for socialism at no financial cost to the Partyat all. In 1963, a radio interview was arranged for Comrade Eddie Grantwho was visiting from the SPGB, and radio interviews continued beingrelatively easy to set up for visiting comrades on many occasions.

But in some ways more exciting was the fact that, starting in 1964, theLAC was authorized to buy radio time on WCRB-FM on a regular basis.At first, we experimented with different formats, but by 1966 we hadsettled into a routine — five-minute broadcasts each developing a spe-cific topic and including an advertisement for activities at Headquarters— which continued well into the 1970s. At first, I did most of the workfor the WCRB broadcasts, both in writing or borrowing material andalso in presenting it. As time went on, Morrison did more and more ofthe writing; but the voices were always a good mixture of women andmen, 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 nowan active World Socialist Party had begun in July 1916. 1966 was a goodyear, and everyone felt like celebrating.

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

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

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

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

The Party buys time on local radio WCRB FM . Saturday eveningradio broadcasts have proven one of our best sources for new con-tacts. These broadcasts consist of a 5-minute talk on some aspect of thesocialist case ... and an advertisement of our other activities, includingthe Western Socialist, delivered by the WCRB announcer [Dave Mac-Neil] ... The radio activity elicits quite a large response from WCRB’slistening audience, about half of it negative — this is addressed to thestation — and the rest sympathetic, or at least curious. We receive anestimated 4 or 5 requests for information each week.

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

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

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

At the Vietnam protest march on March 26, several members of theLocal distributed socialist literature in front of the Arlington StreetChurch.

On May Day . Com. H. Morrison addressed the Arlington StreetChurch Singles Club on “Capitalism and Socialism.” There was anaudience of about 125 people, and com WK. Rab made a tape of theproceedings.

Finally, again through the efforts of H. Morrison, SPGB comradesPhyllis 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 Rabsand Fentons in Newton. This was a great success from every stand-point: 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 FaneuilHall Square to our present address at 295 Huntington Ave. Thisbrand-new Headquarters has not yet really been put to the test, but weface the new season confident that our central location and pleasant

meeting rooms will enable us to make many new contacts and, just asimportant, to hold the interest of these contacts, so that next year wecan 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 didmanage to maintain a good level of activity. Four or five of us took turnsbeing in charge of the Saturday sessions at 29 5 Huntington Avenue, wherethere were always coffee and refreshments available in case someone whohad heard the radio announcement the day before should appear. Inaddition, Comrade Joe Lyle often took some flyers and distributed themto passers by on the street (usually college students), inviting them to themeeting that was about to start. There generally were a few newcomerson Saturdays, and often a good discussion would take place; but therewere seldom more than ten in attendance altogether, and most of thosewere already members or sympathizers.

One day when it happened to be my turn to speak, there was a surprisein store for me. It was an evening when the Black activist Stokely Car-michael was speaking at the Ford Hall Forum, across the street from ourbuilding. Such a huge audience had come into town to hear Carmichaelspeak that many had to be turned away. Comrade Lyle brought a sizeablenumber of this spillover crowd up to Headquarters.

It was the first (and last) time I ever addressed such a crowd of peopleon socialism, and I was unprepared for the occasion. My audience madeit clear they wanted to know our attitude towards what they called “theNegro Revolution” and I wasn’t sure what to say. What came out of mymouth was something like: “Socialists are color blind; we need a socialistrevolution which will benefit all of us, regardless of race or sex.” Thiswas met with outrage. Many better and more experienced speakers thanI were present, but none of us socialists were able to satisfy this groupthat we had anything relevant to say to them. After a while, in twos andthrees, they all left.

The Civil Rights Movement of the Sixties

The WSP has always maintained that socialists are “color blind.” Oneof our core principles is that “As in the order of social evolution theworking class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation ofthe working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, withoutdistinction of race or sex.”

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

Some comrades felt that, as socialists, we should stand aloof from thisunrest because it was an attempt to make the capitalist system workbetter — a reform. Others found it hard to ignore the plight of peopleof color in the United States. (George Lynch, for example, who had beenan active, even a dedicated, comrade both in Local Boston and in LocalDetroit, disappeared around the time of “Freedom Summer” [1963] andseveral comrades remain convinced that he went South in support of theuprisings 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 nota reform. Socialists have participated in just such demonstrations inthe past and will again in the future, when the occasion arises. Afterall, civil liberties are important socialist tools and weapons to carry onsocialist education and propaganda. Note well, our attitude has alwaysbeen that we will march side by side with others but never under thebanner of others. We will not be identified with non-socialists.

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

The civil liberty phase of the Southern Negro resistance . was a sponta-neous demand of the colored workers that had overwhelmed the Negrospokesmen. These “leaders” found themselves followers who were ledby 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 onbourgeois demands being made by the Negro organizations. They havebecome 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 rec-ognition of and determination to alleviate the social plight of theAmerican Negroes. But we are not witnessing anything that does awaywith this social plight. All we see are legalistic measures being enacted,which require coercion and duress for their enforcement. And, in thediplomatic arena, the driving force behind the official support of theNegro “equality” movement is admittedly the necessity of creating afavorable image of American “freedom and democracy” in the Asiaticand African continents with the reactions on European chancelleries.

A question: Negroes of the South, would you see your future? Just goup North and ask your brother Negroes about the alleged blessings ofNegro “equality and freedom.” The passage of civil rights measuresand the so-called abolition of discriminatory practices have not, in anyway at all, altered the predominant social relations.

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

Inherently, capitalism breeds prejudices, bigotry and hatreds. KennethB. Clark, in The N.Y. Times Magazine (4/4/65), bemoans the “Delu-sions of the White Liberals.” Unfortunately, both Negro and Whiteliberals, as well as Negro and White reactionaries, suffer the samedelusions. This very concept of race, itself, is a fallacy, speaking scien-tifically. Negroes and Whites are essentially social categories, as can beseen by examining differing behaviors and attitudes throughout theglobe. Homo sapiens is but one species.

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

Chubi, my “Socialist Godmother,” died in 1968. Rab and I attendedher funeral together. Chubi had been close to me for as long as I couldremember, 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 sonAdam, who was born in 1967; but I brought pictures of him with me tothe hospital when I visited her there at the end.

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

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

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

But the outcome was not so rosy. The younger members (in Montreal,Toronto and one of the groups in Vancouver) did not feel supportedby what they perceived as the rigid organizational structure of the SPC.The Montreal Local disbanded in 1969. Trevor Goodger-Hill and MarieKoehler, both comrades who were very close to George Gerell and myself— and whom we had been at least partly influential in encouraging tobecome active in the movement — essentially gave up on the SocialistParty of Canada, both resigning their membership. They did not abandontheir hope for a socialist revolution, but each chose to work for socialismoutside any organization.

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

(The reader may get some insight into the nature of the controversyby browsing through Selected Letters. Much of Rab’s correspondenceduring the 1960s was on the subject, particularly his letters to VancouverComrades Watkins and Ahrens.)

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

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

The manpower shortage generally was much worse in the Seventies thanin the Sixties as comrades lost interest and/or moved away from theLocals. New York Local lost its Headquarters in 1972; both there and inLos Angeles, the members ceased holding meetings that year. Althoughthere were officially Locals in New York, Detroit, San Francisco and LosAngeles, they were increasingly “shadow” Locals whose members hadno success at spreading knowledge and understanding of the case forsocialism to potential new recruits.

In fact, looking back, it can be seen that the WSP(US) had begun itsslow transformation into an organization of members at large. At the1972 Conference, Rab put the question of how interest in the movementmight be maintained by isolated members at large on the Agenda; butno action was taken. At several later party meetings in the 1970s, varioussuggestions were made regarding methods of supporting and encour-aging 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 theInternet) but none of the suggestions were put into effect.

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

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

1973 saw the first appearance of the WSP on television. The programwas “Catch 44,” a half-hour of prime time TV on Channel 44, the localPublic Broadcasting System outlet, which was offered free to any com-munity group who requested it. We took eager advantage of this offer,and put on three different performances over the course of the next fewyears. The first was a panel discussion starring Local Boston comradesHarry and Sally Morrison, Karla Rab, and Mike Phillips. Phillips wasthe National Secretary that year. He had originally joined the WSP in1939, but like so many other comrades, after returning from the SecondWorld War he had settled down to raise a family and effectively dis-appeared from the movement. Unlike most of those who disappeared,though, Mike returned to the WSP again around 1970, and made hismost valuable contributions to the socialist movement in his middle ageand 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 wereable 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 some-thing a little different, and put on a half-hour dramatization acted out bymembers and sympathizers. Nine or ten people were involved in all, andwe had such a good time rehearsing together and then putting on theshow that morale in the Local rose to a higher level than it had been inquite a while. (In fact, one of the actresses joined the party a few monthsafter the performance.)

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

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

One goal that had been agreed on years before was for the WSP to bringout a pamphlet. Many times this had come up at conferences, and voteswould always be taken in favor of it, but somehow an actual pamphletnever appeared, only leaflets, and the special 50th Anniversary Issue ofthe WS in 1966.

Finally in 1973, the Editorial Committee conceived of a pamphlet thateveryone knew could be produced out of materials already on hand.The 300th issue of the Western Socialist was published as The Perspectivefor World Socialism — radio talk scripts, all written by Harry Morrison.2,500 copies were bound with a special cover commemorating the 300thissue of the WS; 500 with a pamphlet-style cover for WSP(US) use; while2,000 copies were left uncovered so that covers could be provided laterwith different information on or inside the front or back cover accordingthe 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 officialceremony at which he received a certificate stating that on September 23,1973, he had “completed twenty-five years of continuous membership inthe International Typographical Union of North America and merits therespect and admiration of all Union craftsmen.” However, Rab was muchprouder of the informal surprise party given by his co-workers in Local13 of the Boston Typographical Union, with whom he had shared 25

years of camaraderie. Some ofthem had come to appreciatehis socialist outlook, and eventhose who didn’t had learnedfrom him the principles ofunion solidarity. They honoredhim with a large poster with apicture of him, on which eachhad written a short message.

Rab had every reason to feel good about himself, with so many of hisco-workers making much over him. Moreover, unbeknownst to him, hisfamily was also making plans to honor him with a surprise party as his80th birthday approached.

**CHAPTER SiX**

The End of an Era

***1973 - 1986: Rab’s 80th Birthday Celebration;How the Gods Were Made; Alzheimer’s Disease;gradual loss of momentum within the WSP;Rab’s death.***

Rab’s 80th Birthday Celebration

In December 1973, there was a huge celebration at 62 Woodcliff Road,honoring Rab on the occasion of his 80th birthday. Ann, my mother,wrote a verse for the invitations:

You are cordially invitedTo a monumental blastIn honor of Rab’s birthdayNow that eight}- years have passed

We’re rounding up his familyHis friends and comrades trueFrom near and far, from then and nowAnd most important ... you

So don your bib and tuckerLift a glass to Rab againOn Decombor twonty-BecondFrom eight ’til who knows when

RSVP as soon as possible

(U17) 244-8772 02 Woodcliff Road

Newton, Ma 021C1

AW.S.P. donationhi lieu of any giftWould be a fitting tributeAnd give the guy a lift

It was a wonderful party.

Hundreds of people came,and well over $1,000.00was donated to the WSP inhis honor.

Among the guests were theMattick family — Ilse, Pauland “Otto” (pictured in thephoto on the right; Otto isin the background) — andalso some of the musicians who had been recruited either at the oldHayward Place headquarters or at 27 Dock Square. All the stalwarts ofBoston Local came, of course, as well as a few comrades from Detroit,

such as Mardon Cooper. Threeformer Vagabonds were there: EdSeifert (a life-long active memberof the WSP), Red Wolf, and RayRichmond (pictured on the left).Conspicuous by his absence wasGeorge Gloss, by this time a localcelebrity for his book give-awaysat the Brattle Book Shop. Glosswas unable to attend because ofpoor health. Steve and Connie Butterfield drove down from Vermont(where Butterfield was now teaching at Castleton State College) to honorRab; 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 justthe same as he’d always been; but Ella and Ann, who saw him on a dailybasis, later revealed to me that they’d already been vaguely aware then thatsomething was not quite right. Rab himself often said, jokingly, “There’snothing the matter with my memory, but my forgettery is working over-time!” But then, he’d never had a particularly good memory; I laughedwith him about it, and I wasn’t worried.

Rab did not serve on the NAC in 1973, but he did perform the duties ofNational Treasurer, and carried on a widespread correspondence with com-rades outside Boston. He also attended all the Party functions held at Head-quarters during this period.

The NAC met twice a month, and Harry Morrison, as National Sec-retary, typed the Minutes of each meeting and signed his name ontoa master sheet, from which mimeographed copies were made and dis-tributed. It had been Rab’s custom to sign his Treasurer’s reports on themimeograph master, too; but starting in January 1973, Rab’s name isusually typewritten — and where there is a signature, it is not in Rab’sown distinctive handwriting, but in his son Bill’s.

How the Gods Were Made

Spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism hasalways been the most important function of the WSP. To this end, besidesdistributing the Western Socialist and the Socialist Standard, the organiza-tion has generally been involved in distributing books and pamphletsfrom other sources. One such source was the Chicago-based Charles

1. Kerr Publishing Company, from which we obtained such socialistclassics as Pannekoek’s Marxism and Darwinism and Keracher’s How theGods Were Made.

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

Rosen contacted Rab in 1973, asking if he would write an introductionto a new edition of How the Gods Were Made. Needless to say, Rab wasthrilled at the opportunity. He had wanted to write a pamphlet for a verylong time; but circumstances had always intervened. Now, at last, he wasgiven this invitation which would not only give him his opportunity towrite, but would also be a major benefit to the Party. Since the WSPwas the largest purchaser of the Keracher pamphlet, Kerr was offering toreprint it, with an introduction by Rab, in two editions, one of whichwould have “a WSP cover, with WSP announcements and its Declara-tion of Principles” — on condition that the WSP would help with theexpenses of reprinting, and would agree to take 2,500 copies.

The WSP’s Editorial Committee Report to the 1973 Conferenceannounced: “With reference to Com. I. Rab’s Introduction to Keracher’sHow the Gods Were Made, the Edit. Comm. hopes that this pamphlet willbe issued as a party publication. Negotiations are now in progress [withKerr] 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 Keracherfor a new edition of How the Gods Were Made. Glad to hear it.

I happened to be reading something of the struggles within the Finn-ish Socialist Federation, and the attacks after the 1907 Iron Rangestrike on the Finns for being godless. The Socialist Federation of courseresponded that “religion is a private matter.” It reminded me of the olddiscussion in socialist circles on that question: SPA taking the positionthat religion is a private matter and welcoming those of various faiths; Ibelieve SPGB took the position that since religion is a social fact it is nota private matter, but part of the enemy’s arsenal. The anarchy syndical-ism [sic] International Working Men’s Association (otherwise knownas the First International) in its statement of principles “declares itselfatheist.” The IWW sings of pie in the sky, but has steadily taken theposition that a union should not attempt to dictate a member’s politicsor religion, etc.

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

Yours,

Fred

To which Rab responded:

It is my intention to summarize the issue of “religion as a private mat-ter” 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 alsothat. The latent strength of socialism is its scientific analysis, which is inharmony with an understanding of the social forces at work in society.

Its generalized conclusions are confirmed and corroborated by unfold-ing events. That is the acid test. This is great merit of Keracher’s Howthe Gods Were Made.

Regarding John Keracher, I intend to praise his contributions to social-ist understanding. Also, I will be critical of his “Dictatorship of theProletariat” confusions and his support of the Soviet Union...

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

I forgot to mention that in the Introduction, I’m thinking of men-tioning our [Keracher’s and Rab’s] personal relationship. Despite anydifferences of opinions that developed after the Russian Revolutionwe remained fast friends. In fact, when visiting Boston to speak for theProletarian 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 Thomp-son’s next letter came quickly, with an undertone of urgency to it:

.I could probably have taken for granted without writing you, thatin an introduction to How the Gods Were Made you would mentionthe different views that have been expressed within the socialist move-ment regarding religion and the relation of the socialist movement toit. That is good. When we first reprinted The Pullman Strike, I wasdisappointed that we had not added at least a page or so to give themain 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 rangeof readers, by adding informative rather than polemic introductions,and this has helped the working stiff reader who digs history on hisown account, and has got a much wider class room use for the variousbooks. The Right To Be Lazy coming out now has a life of Lafargue,very brief, but hard to come by otherwise; and some explanation ofthe circumstances under which he wrote it, and notes on the folkshe talked about. I think it will be a better educational tool that way.With so few people knowing anything about Keracher, an accountof him will not only make the book something plainly written by areal person, but also tie its debunking use to constructive social effort.How about a listing of five or six books one could recommend in thesame field?

Burt tells me he has so few copies, he would like to turn it over toprinter. The Introduction need not be long, in fact it shouldn’t be: pri-marily to tell who Keracher was, what sort of a fellow, his prime inter-ests or concerns. He did that well for Engels, and I hope you can doit as warmly, but more briefly for John Keracher. Certainly no harm[in mentioning] that you could be friends and argue in a friendly wayabout the difference in evaluating the Russian revolution, etc., but ofcourse not going into the pros and cons of the arguments. I expectyou, he and I all see the movement as bigger than its sundry organi-zations and parties, and consequently the need for the solidarity of avaried left, a differentiated left, capable of intelligent discussion of itsdifferences. Some of my young friends today, I regret, do not seem tosee this need.

Best wishes,

Fred Thompson\*

Rab was excited about this prospect. He wrote an introduction to Ker-acher’s pamphlet covering all the points he felt should be made, and heshowed it both to me and to Bill, asking each of us to look it over. I tookthis job very seriously, read what he had written, and offered a few sug-gestions as to the wording. I don’t know what Bill’s editorial commentswere, but he also did some editing before Rab sent it off to Kerr.

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

How The Gods Were Made deals, of course, with religion, a subjecttowards which Keracher’s attitude was identical to Rab’s — but quitedifferent from that of many others. As Rab put it, in this excerpt fromhis Introduction:

For years there has raged a continuing controversy between two schoolsof socialist thought on the significance of religion. One school wouldavoid any discussion of religion as though it were a plague, insistingthat religion is a private matter for every individual to decide for him-self. It holds that any other view only antagonizes prospective socialistsand keeps them from joining the socialist movement. The other schoolmaintains that religion is a matter of social import, both practicallyand theoretically.

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

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

It is true that there are many gaps in our knowledge, but wheneverwe get answers they always prove to be physical, material ones. Thisapplies to the social sciences, including morals and ethics, as well as allother 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 thecore. With Ella confined to a wheelchair for the remaining five years ofher life, Ann devoted herself completely to her mother’s care. Neverthe-less, when Ann needed to leave the house for brief periods, she had noanxiety about leaving Ella with Rab. I was busy during that time raisingmy family, teaching childbirth classes, and going back to school (I gradu-ated and became a Registered Nurse in 1976). When I visited 62 Wood-cliff Road, I failed to notice anything unusual about Rab. He often calledme down to his “office” (a small space in the basement) to show me hiscorrespondence, including letters which can now be read in this book.

Many other people also failed to notice his decline, including WSP com-rades who had become so confident in Rab’s ability to rise to any occa-sion that they took it as a given.

On some level Rab knew his “forgettery was working overtime” moreand more in his ninth decade. In spite of this, though, everyone aroundhim expected him to function the same as he always had. As an example,in 1976 when Harry Morrison — who had been doing tremendousamounts of work at Headquarters — got a new job that cut into thetime he was able to devote to the Party, Rab rose to the occasion and tookover 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 ofbeing continually on the Edit. Comm. the comrades relieved me fromserving on that committee. However, they had asked me to continueproofreading the WS, which gives me an opportunity to make sugges-tions regarding articles. I do not attend Edit. Comm. meetings — thereason I’m not on the committee is that I’m involved in routine mat-ters. I open the mail, process subs, mail literature orders, and handlemany details, such as answering minor inquiries, as the factotum ofthe party office. This is on top of my Treasurer duties and my personalcorrespondence, 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 clearthan the earlier ones. Although it is easy to tell what he wanted to say, thewords sometimes are so garbled that I felt a need to edit for clarity beforetranscribing them into Selected Letters. (A good example is his letter toFrank Marquart dated May 24, 1976, where I have left Rab’s own wordsin a footnote; see pp 393-395.)

Rab continued to carry on a voluminous correspondence all through the1970s, and to give me carbon copies of the letters he felt were important.However, beginning in 1979 there are some letters in the WSP Archivewhere the signature is in Billie’s handwriting, not in Rab’s own. Theseletters were probably as much Bill’s as Rab’s, and I have not included anyof them here.

Ella died on December 5, 1979. Only after this point did it becameobvious to me that Rab was no longer able to function normally. I don’tthink he ever quite realized that Ella was dead. He knew it sometimesbut would forget it again. Maybe that loss was the last blow, the one hecouldn’t recover from.

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

The following year, 1980, saw the last issue of The Western Socialist pub-lished. Harry Morrison had suffered a heart attack towards the beginningof 1979 and, on the advice of his physician, “retired” from active workin the WSP because it was too stressful for his cardiac condition. Hedevoted himself to his own writing, and no longer attended meetings.George Gloss, who had once been a key figure on the Editorial Com-mittee, was becoming increasingly frail. (Gloss died in 1985.)

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

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

Bill told me that starting at some point in the late Seventies, Rab “foundthat his handwriting just was failing him — he couldn’t quite manipu-late the pencil, or maybe it was his eyes — I don’t know, but he justcouldn’t write too well. And the typewriter was just beyond his power. Sohe’d have me type letters. It was impossible to have him dictate it. He’dramble 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 havehim ‘proofread’ it, you know. And he said, ‘Oh, that’s fine, fine, fine!’ butI know there were a lot of little things I’d changed, because I knew he’dmade mistakes.”

Although no one knew it at the time, Bill Rab was helping his fathermore 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 wouldhave wanted to say in response to the letters he received.

But Rab had always kept in touch with so many comrades, all over theUnited States and Canada, as well as in England, and scattered fromIceland to Australia to France! In a very real sense, he had extended hishand in comradeship to everyone he corresponded with: the old stal-warts of the World Socialist Movement and the new contacts, studentsand workers. He had been the teacher, the confidante, the mentor, thepeacemaker. All this ended, winding down slowly; imperceptibly enoughso 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 wasnot 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 or85. I still thought he had his marbles. And then eventually, of course, hedidn’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 Ithink Billie’s life changed. He couldn’t get over his father not knowingwho he was. That was in 1981.”

That jibes with my own perception. In 1981, I was dating a man namedHal (who was not a socialist). At one point, Hal agreed to debate withBill Jerome on some subject at WSP headquarters. Although the debateturned 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-termmemory” — but only a few months later, Rab no longer recognized him.

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

In 1982, when Boston Local voted to give up the Huntington Avenueheadquarters 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 havebeen earlier, because he retained it only intermittently, just as with thememory that Ella was gone.

There was never any question of moving the National Office back toDetroit, or to New York, where once there had been so many social-ists. Now there was no Local any better equipped than Boston to main-tain a National Office. The closing of the rooms at 295 HuntingtonAvenue, therefore, was a blow not only to Boston Local, but to the wholeWSP(US).

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

Everything that had been in Headquarters was stored in various com-rades’ 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 organiza-tional work. Cartons of WSP papers, pamphlets, etc., were moved to mycellar in Lexington, and to Bill and Carrie Rab’s in Newton. ComradeKen Stewart also took some. I moved the large, framed Party manifesto,“The War and the Greater War,” from the wall at Headquarters andhung it on the wall of my living room, where it remains to this dayand will stay until the World Socialist Party is strong enough to have anactual Headquarters again.

With no official Headquarters, NAC meetings (as we kept calling themuntil 1983, although the administrative functions of the Committeewere no longer being carried out) were held at the Watertown home ofRuth Seifert, the widow of Eddie Seifert. (Both of the Seiferts had beenmembers of Boston Local from the beginning.) Ruth was no theoreti-cian, but she was always willing to help out in whatever way she could;and at this time, she took over more responsibilities than previously. Itwas 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 PostOffice Box 405, Watertown, MA, because Ruth Seifert took on theresponsibility of picking up the mail, and she lived not far from theWatertown Post Office. Besides picking up the correspondence fromthe 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 mesometimes joining in.

Meetings began with Lennie noting the incoming correspondence. I wasasked to keep track of it, but had a hard time of it, I remember, becauseI never had a chance to look at the letters ahead of time, and they tendedto get distributed during the meeting to whoever — most often Lennieor Mike — was willing to respond to the those that needed a response.So my secretary’s reports were woefully inadequate. Little activity wascarried 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 compi-lation of radio talks, World Without Wages (Money, Poverty or War), in1980. The magazine In These Times for August 1982 carried an ad forthis book, with Ruth’s Watertown address given as the contact. Leight’ssecond book, The Futility of Reformism, appeared in 1984.

Some comrades in the SPGB, notably Steve Coleman, proposed thatone way to fill the gap left by the demise of The Western Socialist mightbe to publish (in England) a semi-annual journal which would be a jointpublication of all the international contacts of the World Socialist Move-ment. At the “NAC meeting” at Ruth Seifert’s home in November 1982,Billie Rab, Lennie, Mike Phillips and I fully discussed this idea and cameto the conclusion that we approved of it. Lennie sent out a summaryof our discussion along with the November Minutes: “We are preparedto submit at least one original article and one classic reprint [for eachissue] ... Although we are at the present moment very weak and veryfew, we felt this long-range activity may have the best chance of success.”(Seven issues of World Socialist: Journal of the World Socialist Movementdid appear between 1984 and 1987, each with contributions from theWSP[US] as well as other members of the WSM.)

By 1983, we were no longer sending out “NAC Minutes” but an occa-sional “Report to the Membership” covering whatever correspondenceand 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 toone of the meetings that year, with a generous donation of money and arequest for literature to display in his bookshop.

Comrade William Z. (“Red”) Miller died around this time. The bulk ofhis estate was bequeathed to the Companion Parties, the largest sharegoing to the WSP(US). There was considerable discussion in Boston asto what propaganda use we could make of this completely unexpectedwindfall, but there were so few active members that the decision wastaken to donate it to the SPGB. The only voice seriously raised againstthis was Ken Stewart’s. At one of the meetings at Ruth Seifert’s, a votewas 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 astep without even consulting the membership outside Boston.

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

Meanwhile, Ann cared for Rab, as she had cared for Ella before. Lenniewas 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 inand out of bed, got much worse in the 1980s. Rab had always lived withAnn and Lennie, but after a while, Billie and Carrie Rab, who lived onlya 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 thefamily ever seriously considered putting Rab into a nursing home.

In May 1986, the first issue of The World Socialist Review appeared. Noneof 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 SidCatt, in Toronto, was the only Canadian — although the WatertownPost Office box was still listed as the address for the WSP, as was theSPC’s Victoria address, without giving the name of a contact person.

By that time, Rab remembered the WSP only intermittently. When Ispent time with him then, in fact, it seemed to me that he had forgottenall 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 toldme later; it was only an intermittent forgetting. Billie said: “He was stillwriting letters then, and holding meetings — in his imagination.”

But most of the time, he didn’t know anything except that he was withpeople 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 tokeep Rab longer than their usual week.

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

The night that he died, he’d got out of bed, and he came half-waydown the stairs (with a bathrobe on, fortunately), and I quick wentup the stairs to greet him, and introduce people to him while he wasleaning over the banister of the stairway — this was still before a lot ofpeople 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 payingbills, and how to get more money, and how to set up a youth organiza-tion.” That’s the kind of thing I’d always say to him. I had meetingsfor him every day.

.We were always planning meetings, people coming in from NewYork — a lot of it was imagination, but it was all Party. Everythingwas Party oriented, till the last night. He died during that New YearsEve party, and he was happy about it. He was with comrades, and theywere enjoying themselves. He exhausted himself, going up and downthe steps. I think he actually came all the way down, when I thinkabout it. But, be that as it may, I remember him shaking hands overthe bannister, along the wall. And between Carrie and I, we were upthere [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 chimingand the whistles blowing, the popcorn popping and whatnot. Fifteenminutes before that was when he died. And probably at 2:00 in themorning, there were still people downstairs, the undertakers had beenup there and had prepared him, and they carried him down the stairsright through the party, out the front door. Of course, I went out, andAnn was there — and shucks, there was nothing I could do — I wentback to the party. This was all arranged through the Tufts Departmentof 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’smemorial service:

TRIBUTE TO RAB(1893 - 1986)

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

While still attending high school in Boston, Rab was the youngestsecretary of the Socialist Party of America (Eugene Debs, NormanThomas) and considered himself quite well grounded in Marxism. In1916, as a young man enrolled at Ohio Northern, he went to Detroitin search of a summer job, fully intending to resume his studies in theFall. He found employment at the River Rouge Ford plant and alsocontacted 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-Wyo-ming-Colorado region.

He heard about two Englishmen who were conducting socialist classes.The “Brits” were Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn of the Socialist Partyof Great Britain who chose to sit out the war in the USA. After his firstencounter with Baritz’s eye-opening mockery of his reformist positionand Kohn’s scholarly analysis on the same theme, Rab was never thesame again. He knew what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. Somuch 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, despiteWorld War I, organized on-the-job classes using SPGB pamphlets

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

Somewhere around this time, a few scattered comrades in New Yorkand Detroit along with Rab in Boston organized the Socialist Educa-tion Society, which eventually evolved into the Workers’ Socialist Partyand finally the World Socialist Party. Alone in Boston, Rab spoke onstreet corners and attracted enough people to start classes, first in hishome and then in rented rooms, empty storefronts and finally meetinghalls. He was a colorful speaker and a superb teacher, so much so thatby 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 sci-ence, philosophy and current events (from which he always extracteda socialist message) soon had the boys reading Party literature and lis-tening to selected university professors whom Rab had been able topersuade to address the Club in their specializations. At least half thegroup eventually joined the WSP

The depression of the thirties provided fertile soil for socialist pro-paganda, and the Party grew in numbers and spirit. There was muchenthusiasm and a youthful mingling of social and socialist activity. Anew and busy Party headquarters became a center of many interests.Rab’s house became a home away from home to comrades and pros-pects alike. The open-house atmosphere was graciously presided overby Ella, whose children had by then grown up sufficiently for her tobecome active in the Party. She was secretary of Boston Local duringthe most dynamic years.

Then came World War II. The Party, even under wartime conditions,managed to carry on successfully. Regular forums, debates, economicclasses and discussions, as well as the publication of the Western Socialistwere steadily maintained. Of course, during this period, Rab was notalone; there were many members eager to write, speak and even cleanup headquarters after a meeting or a social event. It was possible toembark on an organizing tour of the Detroit-Chicago area which wasinstrumental in re-establishing the Detroit Local. Those were probablythe happiest and most rewarding years of Rab’s life.

After the war, the social climate became less favorable to spreadingsocialist ideas. Returning servicemen were forced to reorganize theirlives under new circumstances and perspectives, altered hopes andfears. With the cold war anti-red sentiment and the witch-huntingof the McCarthy era, the Party suffered along with every other groupthat deviated from the 100% flag-waving jingoism of the period. TheWSP continued to hold its own for many years, but it had clearly lostits momentum of earlier days.

It is pleasant to recall that Rab found optimism and encouragementeven when things appeared adverse. One such special occasion was hisvisit (with George Gloss of Boston) to Great Britain during the earlyfifties: he brought back unending anecdotes and accounts of the trip.He met people he had only known through correspondence or theStandard, or by reputation. He attended meetings in London, Man-chester and Glasgow, speaking at branch and propaganda meetings; hewas thrilled by the size, quality and support of the general member-ship. 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; yethe realized that modern times called for modern measures in the useof the mass media. To his credit, he even appeared on the Party’s TVbroadcasts in the sixties. Rab was disdainful of the concept of “lead-ers” and “great men,” implying as this does that an understanding ofthe forces which drive capitalist society was not required. He liked touse the initials A.C.D.S. PIE (A Clear, Definite, Socialist Position IsEssential) 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 didnot seem so insignificant as today. Although Rab would protest, thereis no doubt that the scope of his intellect, the example of his human-ity, his expertise as a teacher and his charismatic magnetism combinedin a unique personality that inspired people to think ... and thinkingpeople 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 notmade by great men, but by prevailing material conditions. That is indis-putably the case (although, of course, it is also true that each individualhuman being is a part of the prevailing material conditions, otherwise itcould be argued that the attempts of the WSM to spread knowledge andunderstanding of the case for socialism can have no effect on history).

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

Here are some of the things I heard — “Your grandfather was the key tokeeping the Workers’ Socialist Party alive . Rab was a good organizer,when I look back on it. He was friendly, warm-hearted; he had thatsmile, all the time, on his face. A sweetheart of a guy . Rab was nevernarrow-minded. He was a dedicated man about his beliefs . That’s whyhe kept it together, all those years . I was so affected by the way hetaught. He was a great teacher. The people who knew him, people thatwere scientists themselves — when they heard Rab speak, it made animpression on them.”

His son Bill said: “He was head and shoulders above anybody elsebecause of his panoramic, interconnected appreciation of what consti-tuted ‘Social Thinking.’ In those days, he had that. The way he just wentup to Harvard and MIT, and talked to these bigwigs, professors andNobel 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 achievedhis 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. Nosingle comrade has replaced Rab in all the roles he played in the organiza-tion; but various comrades have done their parts — beginning with RichFoland in Michigan, who began publication of the World Socialist Reviewin 1986 as a successor to the old Western Socialist, and quickly followedby Ron Elbert, mentioned briefly in the last chapter, who breathed newlife into Boston Local when he moved here in 1987. Elbert and I formeda deep connection as comrades both in the socialist movement and inour own lives.

The trend that was already beginning in the 1970s has continued; theWSP(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 anorganization. In 1997, five comrades — Elbert, Len Feinzig and myself;Tom Jackson (once of Detroit Local, then living in Pennsylvania); and anew recruit from Illinois — held an informal meeting at which we deter-mined to re-establish a more formal structure within the loose connectionof 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 AdministrativeCommittee took place. Elbert and I were joint National Secretaries thatyear. The NAC met via telephone conference call, instead of in any par-ticular city.

Most of our work now is done over the Internet. The WSP presence onthe Internet has become our largest single source of new members, andwe are currently taking in about the same number of new recruits eachyear as the Party did in its heyday. But in addition to those new membercomrades, hundreds of people are exposed to the case for socialism on ourWeb site every day. Although the number of those people who feel readyto 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 socialistmovement. Even in the years when there was lots of social activity inBoston Local, as well as study classes, public meetings, speakers onBoston Common, etc., there were always more sympathizers than offi-cial Party members. People who visit our site, and the Web sites of otherorganizations of the WSM, are potential sympathizers. When the timecomes, I wouldn’t be surprised if those sympathizers make up a big partof 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 cananyone seriously imagine capitalism continuing much longer? We are ona countdown now to some big changes, one way or another. Mainstreamscientists predict that sometime in the first twenty-five years of this newMillennium, the point of no return will have been reached, after whicheven if “business as usual” stops requiring environmental degradation, itwill be too late to reverse the damage already done.

Material conditions, notably the effects of global capitalism on the ecologyof Planet Earth, have changed enough so that, in my own experience oftalking with people who have never before even heard the case for socialism,I notice that more and more of these people already recognize that capi-talism 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 istrue. If a person weren’t an optimist, that is, if a person were easily dis-couraged, s/he probably wouldn’t become active in a socialist movement.After all, it does seem pretty unlikely that all these people who are nowin basic disagreement with the World Socialist Party are ever going to seewhat 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 enthu-siasm for actively promoting the socialist case. It’s too easy to give in tothe embarrassment of being out of step with almost everyone else youknow, whose circle of friends and acquaintances doesn’t include a singleother socialist. I suspect the reason many people who have no theoret-ical argument against socialism fail to involve themselves actively in themovement, is that they see no hope of success. It’s a syndrome sometimescalled 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 theconsciousness of everyone you come in contact with, as Rab so consis-tently did, how can you really know what might have happened if youhad? 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; witha 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 ifcertain necessary prerequisites are in place. One — the only prerequisitestill lacking in his generation, and even today — is a conscious politicalmajority of people who understand what socialism is and are willing tocommit themselves to making it work.

Another prerequisite, however, is potential abundance. Rab thought thatsecond prerequisite was still lacking in Marx’s time, so that socialism wouldnot really have been possible then. Without the technological ability toprovide abundance for every man, woman and child on the planet, itwould from a practical standpoint be impossible for everyone’s self-definedneeds and wants to be met, even if the means of production were owned incommon by the entire human community.

In capitalism, of course, real abundance does not exist. The capitalisteconomy requires that many necessities of life be deliberately kept in shortsupply so that a profit can be made on their sale. However, enough tech-nological advances were made during the 19th and 20th Centuries so thatpotential abundance does currently exist.

Rab never said socialism will happen automatically, but he did say that theonly alternative to it is chaos. Now it has become plain that if we don’t getour act together as a conscious political majority and establish socialismsoon, the chaos that will replace capitalism will take the form of climatechange, including massive flooding from global warming. The loss of mostof the major cities world-wide, as the water level rises, could easily causemore economic upheavals than even capitalism can rebound from. Andthe rainforests will be gone. The global environment will be less friendly toour species than it was before. Abundance, potential or otherwise, may nolonger 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 thetrap of being a realist.

Socialists, being optimists, ask: Why not give socialism a try? If the alterna-tive is to witness the ruin of everything human beings have accomplishedon our small planet, the good along with the bad, why not spread theword that there is a different way of organizing society? If everyone didthat, the Socialist Revolution could happen as quickly as it takes a personto change their mind. In Rab’s words, “It’s as easy as voting capitalism outand socialism in.”

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN RAB ANDCANTER, FEBRUARY TO NOVEMBER 1949

Sunday, February 13, 1949

Dear Rab,

Don’t look now, but you are writing a book on economics. That is, ifyou are agreeable to it, to working on a “Primer for Students of MarxianEconomics” along with me. Of course, I am assuming that you are notwriting one at present, and that is the reason I have taken the initiativein this project.

The way to begin is to begin. For this reason I am typing up my out-lines for the elementary and advanced classes in economics, just to giveus something to go on. As you can see, they are written hurriedly, needdevelopment (which I always give verbally in the class) and perhaps cor-rection, so do not be too severe in your criticism. I am just trying toget something down on paper the fastest and most convenient way Iknow how. I have our classes, and writing for the WS, and also wantto try some “literary” writing, and then it will be time for our open-airmeetings soon, and on top of it all there is the “divertissement” side ofeducation.

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

We can change the material around any way we see fit, but the importantthing, and the hardest, is to begin. In German I learned a proverb, andlearned it well: “Im Anfang, alles ist schwer [In the beginning, everythingis difficult]. Even if I merely provoke you to refute me or criticize, I shallhave served my purpose, which is for us to get out of this damned leth-argy, and break the ice thaw, so that the torrents of socialist thought willroll over the capitalist landscape, flood it, and with the recession of thewaters, bring the new soil of socialism. Boy, is the corn green![[7]](#footnote-8)

I am really serious about this, and I believe that we can make a real con-tribution to socialist thought. I hope you can see your way clear to goingahead on this. If so, I shall continue typing up my notes, and sendingthem on their merry way. Let me know at once. Of course, I intend togo 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 yourknowledge of Marxian economics won’t hurt the project either.

On the question of labor and labor power, I am a little clearer on what Imeant in my last letter, and now I can see where my language could betaken erroneously — and in good faith. I meant to say that labor rep-resents the extent of labor power in use. Not extension, which impliesan addition. But I do not want to go into this in detail, as I am writingan article for the WS on “the price of labor,” as discussed in Hazlitt’s 25cent 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 beflippancy, make the most of it! So, if you read the WS (I do when certainarticles appear), you will get my treatment of labor and labor power. Inthis I want to trace Marxian development from Ricardo and Smith, andshow where this vulgar economist, Hazlitt, is a pygmy compared to theclassical 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

*Enclosure 1The 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 thematerial conditions are responsible for the political, religious, intel-lectual, social institutions, and that with the development of technol-ogy, the economic, which now embraced natural conditions, was thedecisive. It is the understanding of the economic that permits us tosee the different classes in society, the struggle between them, and theinstitutions of the state and private property.

It is the economic alone that makes socialism feasible and inevitable, nothumanitarianism or moral feelings. The two factors that made social-ism 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 — andthere has not been a major contribution to economics since Marx — inpolitical economy, as it is to understand Marxian economics itself. Thereason for this latter statement we shall develop presently.

Development of Economic Theory

Every new set of economic conditions brings forth economic theorywhich reflects that historical circumstance. This is the application of his-torical materialism. Marxian economics itself is a reflection of the adventand development of the industrial revolution. Before this were the classi-cal economists, and before them the mercantilists. Beyond the latter weneed not go, because it is not within the confines of this work.

Including Mercantilism there have been four principal schools of Eco-nomic thought, Mercantilism, Classical Economists, Scientific Social-ists, and the Vulgar Economists of the bourgeois school of econom-ics. Of course, there have been various schools in between, but sincethese were in the main branches from the main schools, we cannotgive them a separate and independent existence. Such a “school,” forexample, was that of the Utopian socialists whose economics was thatof the Classical economists, but who added developments which fore-shadowed 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 CapitalismA Primer for Studens of Marxian Economics

*Elementary*

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

Introduction — Place of Marxian Economics in Political EconomyIheory of \jalue

Function of the Commodity, MoneyLabor and Labor PowerSurplus \jalue

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 — Manu-facture 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 F allng Rate of Profit — Complementary Causes and Contradiction

Smergynce 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 theeconomic class.

Recall that Marquart raised the question of whether or not the worker didget back some of the surplus value he produced, in the form of cheapertransportation, parks, etc. Our answer, if I remember correctly, was thatwe might as well speak of the worker getting surplus value back frompolice protection, military defense, etc. which are in the interests of thecapitalist class.

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

In other words, the only way the worker could decrease his exploitationwould be by taking longer, more of the part of the working day, to pro-duce and reproduce his labor power, and thus take away from the surplusvalue 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 sur-plus value has already been produced. That is why you cannot speakof the worker being “exploited” a second time when he buys from themerchant. Value remains unchanged once it leaves the production pro-cess. 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 thanunadulterated bourgeois economics (purchasing power school, cheapertaxes for workers, low-cost housing, etc.). Realistically we cannot ignorethe market, but without the law of value, the workings of the latterare incomprehensible. And without the law of value, the question ofincreased exploitation, yet higher real wages; increased mass of profits,yet lower rate of profits, crises, depressions, wars — all this would be amass 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 anddemand, etc. A reformist who calls himself a socialist is, objectively, abourgeois “radical.”

What’s this aboutfille Ann adopting reformist policies? Am interested, notfrom 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 overit 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 andexport of capital situation in the U.S.. I think I can show that this isnothing but state-controlled. Want to blast the free enterprise advocates,as well as show the trend under capitalism towards the intervention ofthe 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 momentbut this serves to remind me to urge you to double-space your articlesand 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 impor-tance (such as a job), I’ve set aside today for a general letter to you onmany matters. My handicap since working as a proofreader on the news-papers is that it has been screwy hours. I’m only a sub and must reportevery day at “show-up time” to be assigned to go to work at some latertime, often as long as four hours later. Usually I have to work nights andmust sleep days and it raises havoc with everything. On my off days, I’veeither assisted Billie in his new venture in the printing shop, or helpedout with detailed work in headquarters, or attended to some activities.Strange as it seems, though I’ve been busy, somehow my conscience hasbeen bothering me in respect to spending my time to the best advantagefor really useful and important things.

In the midst of my soliloquizing on this anomaly, comes your call toarms: “Don’t look now, but you are writing a book on economics ... aPrimer for students of Marxian Economics.” Yes! I heartily accept. Pleaseallow me to comment on your notes on a separate sheet of paper after Ifinish this letter.

I’m enclosing herewith a book review from the financial page of thismorning’s Boston Globe reviewing: Saving American Capitalism, editedby Prof. Seymour E. Harris (Knopf $4.00). It is an attempt to draw up ablue print for Operation Rescue of American capitalism and capitalismgenerally. Note well that even the book reviewer mumbles “perhaps” inhis comments on the book. It occurs to me that this book might serve asa very useful and worthwhile subject for your “Economic Notes” in theWS. 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 accompa-nied by sample issues of the WS.

It occurs to me that I’m in a swell position to get economic articles intothe Typographical Journal. Now that I am a member of the InternationalTypographical Union, I’m surely entitled to submit articles to their

Journal like I used to for the Machinist’s Journal. I shall condense (andeliminate specific naming of socialism) your “Economic Notes” for theJournal. 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 “Eco-nomic Notes” succeeds in getting printed in the Typographical Journal,I’ll suggest that it be a regular feature of the Journal with requests forquestions from the reader. Good inspiration, is it not? If accepted, it willreach many more readers.

Surprising was the fact that the Shactman group challenge the Los Angeleslocal to debate the question of supporting a Labor Party. Gates is to rep-resent the Trotskyites and Fred Evans is to represent us. There was a closevote between Evans and Waldron. Many are disappointed that Waldronis not our representative, however majority counts and both were eager todebate.

It was also surprising that the Henry George single tax organization inBoston challenged us to a debate. This is rather unusual for them. Butwhat I personally like about it is that it is not just Single Tax that will bedebated, but socialist economics. Apparently some discussion must havearisen about the validity of the theory of surplus value so they desire apublic debate on: “Is The Theory of Surplus Value Valid?” Too many ofour debates, by the very nature of our being usually the challenger, focuson 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 lastnight’s meeting, the NAC approved of Mike Cooper’s application blank.Please extend him my congratulations on this milestone. One of ourweaknesses is we don’t utilize and harness the energies and enthusiasm ofnew comrades. This is very important. Their very applying for member-ship is a token of more than just mere acceptance of socialism but theexpression of a desire to do something about it. The most useful thingthey could do, aside from making new contacts, would be going house-to-house distributing old copies of WS and getting new subs. This ismerely a suggestion. Oh yes, please extend my regards to Comrade JohnSteel. I don’t believe I ever met him.

While on the subject of Detroit local, would you deem it advisable forme to write comrades Red Miller, Walter Kobus and Ashton Gordonregarding “reactivizing” their personal attention to the Detroit local?

Also would it be advisable for me to write them as well as Ramsay andGlicman regarding the ever-present plight of finances (a constant head-ache but unavoidable). Also, should I drop lines to such as Bill Daven-port and others. Write me what you think about my writing them. Icertainly don’t want to offend or irritate anyone. If you think it mighthelp and Chubby agrees that it might be a splendid idea, I’d be tickledto 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. Needlessto say, Comrades such as Chubby, Mardon, and yourself who carry on— patiently, persistently — in spite of disappointments and discourage-ments 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’trecognize it as truly descriptive of their reasoning), because their verypolicies revolve around reorganization of social institutions rather thanthe 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 classconscious one of a socialist majority. For further elaboration of her viewson this why not drop her a line.

So much for this. Now to rewriting your notes for the TypographicalJournal 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 proposedoutline, we should make a list of questions that dominate current eco-nomic thinking (including the popular Austrian school and college econ-omists) and organize them in some order, with the intent being submit-ting them to the crucible of examination. Likewise the same attitude toMarxian economics — i.e., not to praise but to reexamine in light of evi-dence. My first effort will be to visit Baker, Widener and Boston librariesand list the newer important economic works to examine. Your outlinewill serve as a useful reference guide for correlating the development.

We must not stress economics in a vacuum so much as interplay of mate-rial conditions, i.e. not only economics.

For material on state-controlled U.S. capital, there must be a wealth ofU.S. Gov’t documents. Important reading is Michael Young’s Planningfor Plenty, rationalizing Labor England.

I’ll send you a summary of what I discover in libraries as possible startingpoints. Now, I must lie down, as I have to show up tonight even thoughit is a holiday.

5 Dennison St.,

Roxbury 19, Mass.,

3/10/49

Dear Comrade Canter:

Report #1 on joint venture on Economics BookSpecifically on Government in Business (State Capitalism)

Information Please Almanac - 1949 EditionCharts: Table III, p. 349 - Gov’t Aid for Exports

Table IX, p. 350 - Gov’t Investments AbroadTable XV, p. 352 - Trade AgreementsChart on p. 235, “Impasse of Democracy” by E. Griffith outliningspheres 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 moderneconomic development are not generally recognized as being just that.Under the categories of state socialism, government ownership, national-ization, etc., will be found the material needed. I’ve noticed the Presiden-tial 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 Marxianeconomic doctrines, but rather a study of 1949 economics intended as apopular statement, from a scientific socialist point of view, of the worldeconomic forces in operation today.

Let me know if I’m starting off on the right foot; I don’t want us to beworking at cross purposes with each other.

A word of one personal difficulty I have. I am now a sub-proofreader onthe Boston Hearst newspapers, which means I must report at 9:00 everymorning 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 mustget 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 forresearch work. Besides, I’ve had to spend some time helping Billie get anew location for his enterprise. But, I’m determined to go through withthis project with you. I’ve not yet really bitten into the actual preliminarywork of organizing my share of the job.

rab

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 criti-cism and suggestions, and additions.

As you had emphasized, this work of ours must be in terms of 1949 reali-ties and not merely a rehash of socialist economic truisms, i.e., merely arestating of Value, Price and Profit and Wage Labor and Capital using 1949American figures. (There’s a difference, you know.)

Of course, I realize that it is not your intention that the whole study bedevoted to State Capitalism but rather a 1949 edition of Marxian Economics,which must include a review of Marxian economics, as such, and should bebrought 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 mehave 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 thisdata in a logical pattern to fit in with the outline enclosed herewith.

As I mentioned previously, my working schedule on the newspaper job Ihave raises havoc with any set plan of study and working on this project. Forexample, today I’ve spent well over 2 hours on this task of ours and must goto sleep (12:30 noon) so that I won’t fall asleep on the job if I am hired forthe night shift, which begins at 7:15 P M. I am only a sub and must showup 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 fromEurope, though she did visit Headquarters. She finally sent us a letter ofresignation stating that her visit to Europe, especially Czechoslovakia, madeher feel that the Commies do merit our support. She did say that she was suf-fering from mental indigestion and wasn’t sure of herself at present and wasnot 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

I. Why a popularized section of this study to be devoted to StateCapitalism.

1. Proof of the historic necessity for socialism
2. Capitalism has outgrown individual control ormanagement
3. Evidence of social cooperation
4. Doomed to futility
5. Not essential step to socialism

a. Only way capitalism can function in absence of socialistmajority

1. Effect of state capitalism on heads of workers
2. Confused with socialism both by “friends” and foes
3. Pressing demand for clarity because of its very nature
4. What is State Capitalism?

A. Control, direction, regulation and/or ownership through statemachinery of productive and distribution processes.

1. Common characteristics
2. With capitalism as a social system(1) Commodities; wage labor-capital
3. With all state-capitalist countries

(1) Legal measures and government agencies

1. Appearances of suspending “normal” capitalisticeconomic relationships
2. Concepts of Private Property
3. Variations
4. No two identical state capitalist countries
5. Totalitarian (Fascist) Countries(a) e.g. Russia
6. Middle Road “Socialist Democracies”

(a) E.g. England

1. Free Enterprise Countries(a) e.g. USA
2. American State Capitalism
3. Special study
4. Dominance of USA in world scene
5. USA real key to socialist transformation of society
6. Section in this phase to be devoted to:

(not in this order necessarily)

1. Collective bargaining

a. Industrial disputes—hours and wages

1. Utility rates
2. Railroads and communications
3. Trade policies
4. Atomic Energy Commission
5. T.V.A.
6. Currency
7. Banking
8. Agriculture10. Housing

References being examined:

T. Arnold - Folklore of CapitalismMeans & Ware - Modern Economy in ActionPresidential Economic Report

E. Freund - Administrative Powers over Persons and PropertySharfman - Interstate Commerce CommissionV.U. Key Jr. Administration of Federal Grants to StatesJ.H. Bitterman - State and Federal Grants in AidAuthority 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 CivilizationBearle and MeansNational Resources CommissionTechnical Trends and National Policy

L. Rogin - Significance of Marxian Economics for Modern Trends,Amer. Economic Review. March 1938.

2155 AndersonDetroit 13, Michigan

May 27, 1949

Dear Rab,

Please, excuse this interminable delay in answering your letter of — Iam 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 alreadyhave done a good deal of research on the international phase of statecapitalism, as you know from the articles I have written for the May andJune WS, and the final one I have in mind for the July issue, in which Iwill draw the political conclusions.

You see, I have a definite plan in mind: Not only to utilize this materialin a book form, but also to write articles for the WS as we go along in ourresearch. So many books are contemplated, but are not finished, espe-cially if the intended authors are working in the shop and also active insocialist work. Therefore, I am certain this material will be used, when Icompile it into articles for the WS, whereas the book remains a questionmark. After all, the important thing about knowledge is to get it intothe hands of the workers, and if this can be done in WS article form forthe time being, so much the better. The book will work itself out. Butit looks like a several year proposition to me, unless we can drop every-thing, 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 researchuniform. I put all my research on 5x8 index cards. In this way I canincorporate them into a filing cabinet, and use them in my classes, forwhich 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, ifsomeone wants to take up the research where we have left off, they willhave all the previous research catalogued and in available form.

Now, another suggestion: let us divide the research, each one taking thosesubjects and fields with which he is best acquainted, or can most easilywork in. For example, I have already done quite a lot on the internationalphase of state capitalism. As a matter of the fact, the three articles I willhave written will pretty much cover the subject for American capitalism,although we will have to deal with British Labor capitalism also in thisfield. I am also going to investigate to what extent American capitalism isbeing financed by government bonds, which will show the trend towardstate capitalism. The results, which I will write up for the WS, should bevery revealing.

Now, in order to get down to cases and divide up the material, it is impor-tant to know what we are looking for. While your outline contains muchwe will have to deal with, I think it is not very logical in its sequence. Youstart off with the necessity of socialism; I think we should end on thispoint after proving that capitalism, even under its state form, cannot solvethe contradictions of the market. What we should do is to accumulate thematerial first and let the conclusions work themselves out.

On a separate page, I am jotting down a few notes to give you my idea ofthe 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 verypopular 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 willbring in Russia, England (German and Italian state capitalism also) andthe U.S. I can take Germany and Italy, because I already have some mate-rial on it. You take Russia since you have the material in Boston, and wewill halve the British question, if you like. I can take the internationalphase, you the national, the domestic economy.

The U.S. will be the major point, as I agree that socialism is not highlyprobable throughout the world, until American capitalism is brought toits knees. Here again we can make the same division as on the Britishquestion: I have the international research well in hand; that leaves thedomestic 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 eco-nomics, such as the Keyserlings, etc. They raise questions about the possi-bility 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 theheads of the workers. Good. This deserves a separate chapter, perhapsright after the economic presentation.

I still think that the best procedure, and one I follow in my research, isto go on accumulating the facts, and then let the headings and divisionsfall out in the process.

Let me know what you think of my divisions of labor, as marked on theseparate page.

Comradely,

I. B. CANTER

OUTLINE

I.

Introduction:

Altho Engels pointed out the development toward state capital-ism, since his time many complex forms have arisen,which means7 ^l)Theymust be investigated and stated

. {2)Restatment of Marxian economical answer to critics that(Marx must be "re-examined"(that is,revised]

1. Marx and his times
2. Development of capitalist economy at that time
3. Summary of Marxian economics
4. Development since Marx and EngelsState Capitalism in various forms

v- Russia

—B. Germandy and Italy( "Fascist" forms)

Tr-C. British labor government rr< -r

fix.

American capitalismi\_———''Key to world situationjtransformation to socialism' . ^^Somestic economy

TVA,Agriculture,military expenditures,bonds,etc..Position in world economy

ECA, Foreign trade and capital exports,etc.

1. Schools of economics

P Planned capitalist production

- Purchasing power school

V. Conclusions

Necessity of socialismTrends of state capitalism.

Transitional, or progressive" labor governments

August 4, 1949

Dear Rab,

.. .I am pleased to learn George [Lynch] would like to settle in Detroit, asthat would give us the one person necessary for the NAC, as well as supplyanother teacher of our classes. In this respect, I extend a welcome handto him if he wants to come and stay on the place until he can get locatedhere. I cannot myself obtain work for him — there is much unemployedin Detroit — altho he could probably get on where I work if he wants towork hard on production. Tree surgeons around here are mainly employedby the city, I believe, although there are some private concerns.

Comradely,

i. b. canter

2155 AndersonDetroit 14, Michigan

Wednesday, November 30, 1949

Dear Rab,

I have finally drawn up a rough draft for the class on economic theoriesof today, and would like to get your opinion on it, as well as the opinionof 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, whichmeans going into the present day theories of economics and also thepractice of nationalizations, state capitalism. This is the criticism whichhas 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 thelaw of value. Now I am not interested in answering the critics, but indeveloping Marxian economics into the present period of history. I agreethat to remain steeped in Value, Price and Profit is not to carry forth theessence of Marxism, namely the changing material conditions, and thenecessity of constantly examining, probing and proving.

This was the attitude with which I approached the subject at the con-ference. Incidentally, in drawing up this outline it occurred to me thatthis is the book that has to be written, Economics Since Marx, the onebook 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 isonly the WSP, with its principles, that can do the job correctly. I am notproposing that we start writing a book, but perhaps in drawing up thisclass, 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 assigningthe individuals to do the work.

1. - To begin with, I thought it necessary to state the law of value, bothin its evolution from classical economy, and also the full implications ofit as a key to understanding capitalism. Dobb does this in his PoliticalEconomy, but it is not very well done, too obtuse, or perhaps it is I whois responsible.
2. - Then, a criticism of the law of value, especially by such authors asBoehm-Bawerk, von Mises, and the Austrian school, also any of themodern economists who have seen fit to criticize the law of value. Blakehas some good stuff on this, but I think we can improve on it. Boudinalso is good.
3. - Now, the economic developments since Marx wrote, nothing in theway of analysis, but just presenting the changes, as indicated in the out-line. 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 notdone too good a job on the “three schools.” Where do Schumpeter andSweezey fit in? I have Schumpeter’s Capitalism, Socialism and Democracyout 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 willeach have to take additional ones.

1. - On the analysis of present trends, I have put theory in with prac-tice under all three countries, Russia, England and U.S.; but it is fairlyobvious to me that theory in each could well be a separate item, espe-cially so in the case of Russia, where they have gone into this quite thor-oughly, calling wages “social return,” etc. Leontiev has some of this, butI know there is much more available from that outfit in New York whichtranslates Russian textbooks.

What do you think of this? Separate theory and practice, combine themin one lecture (a gigantic task), or deal with Russian theory and practiceseparately, and combine the other two?

1. - Finally, we should end with a re-examination of Marxian economicsin 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 Sweezey 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 thesubject matter.

5 - Whether it wouldn’t be advisable to write these up as articles oressays, so they can be published (mimeographed or multigraphed) as atextbook: Economics Since Marx.

This is our contribution, or rather, our chance to make a contribution toMarxian 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 oneof developing Marxian theory in preparation for the activity which willcome later.

One other thing. You are familiar with articles that have appeared inthe Western Socialist. Has there been one on “the meaning of property”? Ifnot, I would like to attempt same, going into the difference between per-sonal and private property as socialists understand it (Anti-Duhring), andalso the changes in property relationships, especially the present form ofstate property. Also, has there been an article on “the meaning of statesocialism”?

I am handicapped in writing in that I am afraid to duplicate. I know Imentioned the necessity of writing an article on fascism while I was inNew 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 oneconomics, but I think we can do it before the next conference.

As I wrote GG, I will go with Mardon tomorrow and seek a headquar-ters. We have five for the NAC now, Mike Cooper having passed twoweeks ago. Hope we can get the NAC here within the next two weeks, aswe are all “raring to go.”

Comradely,

i. b. canter

ECONOMICS SINCE MARX(Class on Advanced Economics)

Part I: Law of Value, Criticisms

I. Labor theory of Value

1. Historical development, primitive origins in “socialphilosophers”
2. Approach of classical economists
3. Departure taken by Marx and full implications of theoryII. Criticisms of Law ofValue
4. Boehm-Baewerk, Austrian Schools, and others
5. Modern economists and their criticisms
6. Economic Developments since Marx
7. Monopolies, state capitalist forms
8. Expansion, contraction of imperialism; the newimperialism
9. Changing economic nature of wars (nationalist-markets-domestic economics)

Part II: Present Day Economic Theories; Three Schools

1. Orthodox Bourgeois Economistsa. Schlicter, Hansen, and others
2. Keynes Schools of Economics
3. General Theory of Employment
4. Variations among followersVI. Other schools
5. Liberal-CIO school of Keyserling
6. Social Democratic: Sternberg, and others

Part III: Present trends; Economics of State Capitalism

1. The Soviet Union
2. Theory of the USSR economists
3. Practice: accumulation of capital, export of capital, statisticson existence of classes, distribution of wealth, etc.
4. Economics of British Nationalization
5. Theory
6. Practice: government bonds, administrative boards, “equal-ization” of incomes, limitations of taxing profits, welfareprograms
7. Trends in American Capitalism
8. Theory of New Deal, Fair Deal
9. Welfare state
10. Planning full employment

Part IV: General Summary

1. Re-examination of Marxian Economics
2. Law of value valid today?
3. Changes in theory necessary?
4. New terminology?

*[NB. Some of the articles on economics that Canter speaks of in thiscorrespondence about a book were published in* The Western Socialist *underthe by-line “Karl Frederick. ”*

*See, for example:*

WS *Vol. 15 No. 146 (March-April) 1949, “Economics Notes inReview: Two Bits Economics, ” pp. 8—11*

WS *Vol. 15No. 147(May) 1949, “EconomicsNotes: U.S. Capitalismand 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 GlobalConcept),” 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 early1950s. Some of the subjects included a careful analysis of the economic role ofunions in capitalist society.* — *KDR, 2010]*

**SELECTED LETTERS**

*The photo above was taken by WSP Comrade Mardon Cooper in the backyard at 62 WoodcliffRoad, Newton, MA, Rab’s home from 1950until 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 donewithout emasculating principles.” As a matter of fact, that is exactly whathe 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 themovement as his priority.

Referring to another comrade, Rab once wrote: “He is a fluent writerwith a facile pen. I envy his ability to write so clearly and effectively. Isweat blood even writing a letter, not to speak of serious articles, etc. Irewrite several times and then it is not always satisfactory.” Indeed, forseveral of the letters selected for this publication, more than one versionexists in the WSP Archive. I have generally transcribed the final versionhere; 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 lettershe wrote that he thought I might be interested in reading, and I keptthem. Later on, he asked me if, some day, I might do something with theletters, and I promised I would. My desire to keep that promise is whatoriginally got me started on this project; but I have not limited its scopeto only the ones he gave me. Below is a just small sample of the letterswritten by Rab which are now in the WSP Archive.

These letters are arranged in chronological order, rather than by cor-respondent or by subject matter. Some have been excerpted here, andsome have been edited. All the original letters are available in the WSPArchive, 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 Ihave included some of those here), there is only one instance where Rabactually requested such a thing: He copied out a quotation from a lettersent him by Serge Huard (a Canadian comrade) on a scrap of paper,with a note to me: “include in letters.” Judging from the shakiness ofhis 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, thereis only one way to go as a socialist, even if I must go that way slowly forthe 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 theSLP and why.” Were you to spend a week in headquarters and observethe busy bees devoting their enthusiastic cooperation, voluntarily, to themany details connected with the carrying on of socialist activities in allits facets, you would realize how precious time is. There is an increasinginterest in socialism and this has increased the burden of work. While weget quite a thrill out of this healthy situation, it does not ease the tasks.

But of paramount importance, is discussing the various questions wereceive from readers of The Western Socialist. The material conditions ofproduction have made the world overripe for socialism. The one factorthat is standing in the way of the speedy introduction is the confusionin the minds of the workers. Once the majority of the workers becomeconvinced of socialism, the capitalist class will have no alternative butto submit to the will of the people, whether they like it or not. For thatreason, 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 itis, as you say, differences in “programs.” But, the “programs” reflect the dif-ferences 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 objec-tives. The difference in the theoretical understanding of the social forcesworking 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. Ifanother socialist organization appeared on the scene, then the only pos-sible action that we could take would be to make immediate overturesfor a merger. We would offer them the open arms of comradely greet-ings and unity. The Workers’ Socialist Party and its companion party inCanada, the Socialist Party of Canada, are not organized to do some-thing for the working class. In fact, we are not organized in the interestof and on behalf of the working class. Sounds strange, does it? This isjust 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 theworking class. Its small membership merely reflects the small number ofclass-conscious socialists. The real test of whether the WSP is the party ofthe working class is to be found in examining the position of the WSP todiscover whether it is the sound, scientific analysis of the laws of motionof capitalism and the correct statement of the workers’ needs. So, again,it boils down to the question of its understanding. It is the difference inunderstanding that prevents the 2 organizations from uniting.

1. You note — and we are very glad that you made this observation— that the SLP “campaigns for Industrial Unionism.” That is one ofthe major points in the SLP analysis that not only distinguish it fromthe WSP but demonstrate the unsound understanding of the nature ofcapitalist society by the SLP. If the SLP were content merely to statethat within the framework of capitalism industrial unionism might bea more effective form of resistance to the encroachments of capital thanthe craft unions, there would not be any serious quarrels and there wouldbe no justification for 2 organizations on that score, itself. But to themindustrial unionism is something far more than that. It constitutes anew contribution to Marxism. (Not that Marx is a biblical prophet andthat there couldn’t be further contributions to Marxian science, since hisdays.) But, industrial unionism does not constitute any new addition tosocialist science. In fact, it is erroneous, when examined scientifically inlight of the workings of capitalism.

Let us examine industrial unionism in two aspects: (a) as the road topower and (b) as the germ of the new society. As you know, the SLPmaintains that the ballot is as weak as a woman’s tears unless it is backedup by the economic might of the workers. This concept presupposes thatworkers who are clear-thinking socialists politically will not be socialistseconomically. It is inconceivable that people who are socialists in thepolitical field are not likewise socialists everywhere they may be, whetherat work in the shop, going to the movies, or wherever they may be. Peopleare not divided in half, one half of the body socialist and the other halfnot. Once they are socialists politically, they are by the same token social-ists economically. Whoever gains control of the state machinery (andthe gaining control of the state machinery is a political act) also, by thevery same act, gains control of the economic resources. The capitalistclass itself maintains its control and ownership of the economic resourcesthrough their control of the state machinery. The revolutionary act isthe political victory of the workers, which puts them in a position ofpower, with the resulting control of the army, radio, every organ of pro-paganda, the police, courts, etc. The objective of the socialist movement,i.e., a socialist working class majority, is accomplished, by the conquestof political power. This is the essence of understanding the nature of thestate, the central organ of power.

Furthermore, to talk of the economic might of the workers in theirindustrial unionism is not correct when society itself is examined. Onthe economic field, the working class is impotent. What do they possess,aside from their muscles and brains? They are propertyless. All that theworkers can do on the economic field is to attempt to slow down theworsening of their condition, so far as wages, hours, shop conditions areconcerned; but they cannot stop the direction: downward. If they go outon a strike, who starves first, the workers or the owners?

The trouble is not that the workers are not organized into the properkind of economic organization, but that they are not socialists. Socialistsknow what to do and will utilize all the tools and weapons that are avail-able. Actually, the essential thing is the realization that in order to intro-duce socialism, the workers must first gain control of the state machineryin order to transfer the means of living from the hands of the capitaliststo the hands of society — after which the state disappears and in its placewe have an administration of affairs.

But to make bad matters worse, the SLP, strange as it may seem, do notwant 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 notfighting for the same things we are.

Before I deal with their Industrial Republic of Labor, where everyonevotes from where he works, let me make a preliminary observation.Whilst we cannot make a blueprint of socialism, we can realize its gen-eral process because of our knowledge of the laws of motion of society.It is fundamental and basic to recognize that socialism would be but afantastic, utopian dream if it were not for the fact that man has solvedthe problem of production and has become potentially the master overnature. Mankind is not confronted with the problem of how to plan andorganize production. If he were, he would not yet be ready for socialism.In other words, the conditions for socialism would not be ripe, if theproblem was how to organize the productive forces and processes. Thisblueprint chart with the wheel of the various industries in socialism ismerely the projection of capitalism into socialism. This SLP wheel dem-onstrates that they have no concept of even the outlines of a socialistsociety. Even a superficial view of the world today, under capitalism,already reveals that the world is an integrated, socialized, interrelatedunit, economically, and is not divided industrially. Socialism means aclassless society (not an industrial union society), where the very socialinterrelationships are so closely intertwined that production cannot beconceived as functioning industrially.

History has passed the SLP by. The problems of a socialist society areeverything but that of production, in spite of all those detailed charts ofthe clairvoyants. In socialist relationships the arrangements are for leisure,culture, refinements, sanity, each day being an adventure in living, squarepegs in square holes, social behavior; in short, the identity of interestsof every individual and of society as a whole. How ludicrous to thoseliving in a socialist society will appear the SLP worries about industrialdivisions and voting from where you work. The SLP doesn’t realize thatwhen plenty and abundance become the order of the day, it completelychanges people’s behavior and attitudes. But to show how far from havingany grasp of socialism the SLP are, and how they are thinking in terms ofcapitalism, consider their notion that workers, under socialism, get thefull product of their toil. In the first place, there are no “workers” undersocialism. There is no working-class section of society, but all are equallymembers of a classless society. No problem of equal share with equalwork could possibly exist in socialism; people in a sane society wouldnot be that limited in vision or behavior. Just the reverse, the inspirationof socialism is that, being social animals, people give according to theirabilities and receive according to their needs (without any thought ofgetting their “full” share — a meaningless concept in a sane society).

Further criticisms of the SLP are their position that religion is a privatematter and not a social concern, thereby ignoring the scientific, mate-rialistic basis of socialism; their “reverence” for the American foundingfathers; and their dogmatic sectarianism, in the sense of ignoring realityand looking at history to prove their ideas instead of making their ideasharmonize with an understanding of historic forces.

Sorry but I must close now. I am forwarding you some WSs that have somearticles on the SLP. Be sure to let me hear from you again and soon.

Yours for a world fit for human beings,

1. Rab,

National Organizer, Workers’ Socialist Party

**MAY 30, 1955**

*[This open Letter to Comrades Evans, Parker, Rowan, Turner and all othersinterested, 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 seemsto me that you have lost sight of the general panorama of modern capi-talism because of your enthusiasm for the incipient socialism you observetaking place. You have become so beguiled by the alluring trees that youdon’t see the putrefying forest.

Here’s how I see these same incipient socialist developments. If youwant to see evidence that socialism is practical and possible today, seewhat modern capitalism is compelled to do in order to function. Withall the “socialist” aspects of highly developed capitalism, it has not andcannot do away with the private property aspects of its inherent rela-tionships. The very transformation of capitalist private property formsfrom owners, intimately and directly associated with products and theirproduction, into the gigantic private property forms of today, which aremore or less typified by varying aspects of state capitalism and absenteeownership describes the process satisfactorily enough. Especially notethat state ownership as well as cartels, monopolies, huge corporationsand other highly socialized appearances of ownership are but factors ofa system in which the proceeds of that society (surplus value, in the lastinstance) belong to the “eaters” of surplus value. What I would empha-size from the observations of incipient socialism that you stress is thathere is evidence that men are social beings and can cooperate in theircommon interest. Even in capitalism, observe how human beings canfunction. More particularly, we see increasing demonstrations that thehighly developed technologies, the tremendous productive processes, theshrunken globe, the present day problems of management and needs ofefficient production bring into being the introduction of vast social mea-sures. Most important, we see the conclusive proof, as it were, that thechange from capitalism into socialism is a relatively simple matter, ratherthan requiring intricate, complex involved measures. In fact, haven’t wealways maintained that if ... [capitalism had not developed the tech-nology for producing potential abundance], the conditions would not beripe for socialism. The evolutionary changes laying the groundwork forsocialism have taken place within capitalism.

IDENTIFICATION “WITH”

There are two key words in your article that illustrate my criticism of yourstatement. At the close of Section L you say, “...we can make people seethat this is the general and significant direction of social change.” I couldwholeheartedly agree with this view, i.e., the identification of incipientsocialist developments taking place today. However, quite a different atti-tude is presented in the concluding paragraph of your joint statement.There you urge “identifying with society’s incipient socialism.” If wordshave meaning, it appears to me that you actually propose, in essence,that we participate in the administration of capitalism. To identify withcan only mean, in my book, becoming associated with these measures inan active, direct fashion. What becomes of our socialist responsibility associal scientists to study these developments, draw the significant lessons,and arouse our fellow workers and fellow humans, for that matter, tounderstand and then act! Look now, by “plugging their socialist-leaningelement,” aren’t we rationalizing and condoning the status quo, and evenjustifying the glowing apologetics of those who prate on the virtues ofcapitalism?

Capitalism must, of necessity, introduce these “socialist-leaning” measuresfor its own functioning, whether for better or for worse. It has become toogigantic to be operated otherwise. There is no need for our active partici-pation, except, of course, as individuals making a livelihood in this societybeing compelled to sell our commodity, labor power, on the market.

I certainly do not want to do you any injustice. If I misconstrue yourmeaning of “identify with” please clarify it for me.

SNOWBALL VS. AVALANCHE

You contrast two quotes from Comrade Gilmac and myself as thoughone were an “avalanche,” and the other a “snowball” approach. Gilmac’sarticle in Forum had for its theme that there was taking place in the headsof the workers a gradual evolution of ideas which also “involved the coop-eration of everybody” for the change of society. He deprecated the gradu-alism based upon an assumed coexistence, as it were, of a partial socialistand a partial capitalist society; what is sometimes referred to as a mixedeconomy. The conditions propitious for socialism and making socialismmandatory include the “socialist-leaning” aspects of capitalism. I’m surethat Comrade Gilmac would not oversimplify the transformation of cap-italism into socialism by saying that on one Friday at 2:15 PM we hadcapitalism and presto, one minute later at 2:16 PM, socialism was intro-duced via an avalanche. Comrade Gilmac is fully aware that the seed ofsocialism is fertilized within the womb of capitalism and after a period ofgestation, the new society is born. The essential core of the process is thatthe predominant social relations of capitalism give way to the predominantsocial relations of socialism. As for me, personally, I lean very heavily tothe view that it will be a very brief and a very simple matter. Not only arethe conditions now overripe for socialism, but the only stumbling blockI see on the horizon is the lack of a socialist conscious majority. That wasthe point of my statement that you quoted. Project yourself into the cir-cumstances of a 20% minority and you can easily visualize the behaviorof those in control and the concessions they would offer. The momentumand geometric growth from a 20% minority to overwhelming, stirring,enthusiastic, inspired majorities staggers the imagination. To me, thisis but a short step. The mechanism or modus operandi of the socialistchange presumes the socialist consciousness and socialist majority ratherthan participation in “socialist-leaning” measures. The only validity I seein the terms “snowball” and “avalanche” are as descriptions of capitalismand socialist transformation. Capitalism is the snowball, and the socialistrevolution is the avalanche.

SOCIALIST FERMENT

It is your contention that our task has become that of encouraging andaccelerating the incipient socialism process taking place today by identi-lying ourselves with it. It raises the question: for what object. The answeryou give, of course, is to “precipitate” socialism. Aside from the criticismabove, this presupposes that the ideas of mankind are not affected bydevelopments themselves. Is it possible you are not aware that man is,also, a thinking animal, affected by his environments? Are you not awarethat, imperceptibly and unwittingly, in response to the very incipientsocialism you observe, a ferment goes on in the back of everybody’s head?It makes what had been taken for granted quite questionable. Formerlyheld ideas are transformed from being reasonable and rational into thevery opposite. This ferment of ideas results in crystallizing socialist view-points. In a sense, this is the real strength of socialism. Science, truth, andnecessity are all on the side of socialism.

EQUALITY

You “emphasize” efforts at equalitarian, cooperative endeavors as “a con-tribution to socialism.” Aside from the capitalist limitations (and whatlimitations they are) that you have recognized yourselves in the article,there is another aspect, it appears to me, that you are overlooking. Wehave no need to train men or encourage men to behave socially. Thatis the ever-normal behavior of homo sapiens, even in property societies.For an outstanding contribution to the soundness and validity of thissocial phenomenon, I highly recommend a new study that has just nowbeen published (1955), The Direction of Human Development, Biologicaland Social Bases, by M.F. Ashley Montagu, published by Harper andBrothers, New York. It is a valuable, scientific contribution that showsthe basic cooperative nature of Man. The book’s documentation, its foot-notes, appendices, and comprehensive bibliography make it a must inevery socialist library. Montagu is not a socialist, and we would quarrelwith 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 ofsocialism and the ferment at work.) I can’t help noting another illustra-tion of the fallacy of your reasoning on this point. The transformationof backward areas into a predominant socialist society doesn’t requirevast changes in their social behaviors. The vestiges of early communalexistence have never been completely uprooted.

It is an illusion to imagine that we must actively work for the “further-ance of human cooperation.” What we must work for is to help speedilyinaugurate favorable environments where human cooperation can reallyfunction. I fear that you are confusing the efficient harnessing by highlydeveloped capitalism of man’s innate gregariousness and sociability, withmanifestations of growing “equality.”

CONCLUSION

You correctly say that “the Party . must apply itself to the presentationof socialism as a science and as a way of life.” However, “encouraging thegrowth of socialist tendencies in attitudes and institutions” by “identi-fying with” the “incipient socialism” mistakes the function of socialiststoday. Our task is primarily that of arousing socialist consciousness, onthe basis of evidence and unfolding events, that capitalism has outlivedits 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 dosomething about it as speedily as possible.

I hold that greater understanding and a better grasp of the socialistanalysis results from the constant thrashing out of issues. A healthymembership is the reward of objectivity. For this reason, I deplore drop-ping members because of differences or disagreements. In practice, thismakes it quite difficult to thrash out issues, because members may feardire consequences. Also, it would prevent any democratic changes by amajority of the Party, should they be convinced of the validity or need.Especially, I find it unwarranted to base actions against comrades uponarticles written in Forum, the journal established for the very purpose ofinter-party discussions. To those who ask, “Why do you want to be inthe Party if you disagree?” the reply is that socialists want to be bandedtogether for socialism. The Party is not a competitive rival with others ina struggle to establish socialism.

I do recognize that there can be justifications for dropping a memberwhen an overt act hostile to the Party is committed, but thinking thingsthrough and re-examinations are not “hostile overt acts” in that sense.It is still fresh in my memory how the “dissidents” behaved while I wasin England. Their behavior was just the reverse of “hostile.” They wereselling literature on the streets, speaking on the platform, active in theirbranch meetings, etc.

Finally, specifically, in this very article that I am criticizing because of mydisagreements with it, appears the following comment: it is the hope ofthe four signers that their statement will “enable the issues involved tobe more widely discussed and with as little as possible of animosity orinterruption of current Party work ... The changes we suggest in outlookor activity are not put forward as an ultimatum, or as a programme nowto be adopted.”

**OCTOBER 27, 1958**

*[Rab was an active member of the International Typographical Union from1949 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: thatlabor and management have a community of interests that can be jointlyand intelligently settled ... over the bargaining table.

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

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

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

I am writing this because I believe you are honestly mistaken. The mere factof your refusal to sign a contract with the Herald- Traveler without a provisothat, in case of a strike, you will have the option of joining the men andwomen on the picket line speaks volumes for your good intentions. Unfor-tunately, 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 respon-sibilities. Already you have stated: “The newspapers have financial prob-lems,” and “The day of flag waving has passed.” Unwittingly, militantunionism is easily transformed into “flag waving.”

After listening to your comments at the last union meeting, I refrainedfrom taking the floor for fear of seeming to imply that you were “sellingout.” I am positive that you had no such idea in mind. But at the sametime, I did want to emphasize to the membership my disagreement withthe principle that you stated, which should be voiced. I only wish I knewhow to make these remarks without making it seem to be “personal” oran “attack,” but merely as a statement of a basic principle of unionism.

I would appreciate it if you would recommend that this letter be pub-lished 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 ofeach 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 Marxistand Bolshevik at the same time. But Press goes much further in itsattempts to be all things to all men — well symbolized on the cover pageof its last issue, which includes such figures as Nkrumah, Nasser, et al. asheroes 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 advo-cates the ballot but sympathizes with anarcho-syndicalism; it bemoansreformism and urges immediate demands on the political field; it allegesitself uncompromising on principles (shades of dogmatic sectarianism?)but panders to all sorts of bourgeois confusions. The one thing Press failsto do is spread socialist understanding. Press places its emphasis more onemotions than on science.

Ironically, I’m writing as an emotional guy myself. Even Press, with onlya surface appearance of revolutionary fervor, having as its only asset, sin-cerity, at times gives me a tingle down my spine. But, unfortunately, Pressis divorced from socialist agitation and propaganda in its very essentials:its scientific sense. The socialist movement is not only heart, but is acombination of heart and head. It is almost a truism to say that when theworkers, as a class, couple their latent revolutionary fervor with socialistunderstanding, they become an indomitable force sweeping everythingbefore it. “Nothing is more powerful than an idea come of age, it is morepowerful than the strongest armies.”

One day I’ll write a short article for Press on the theme that there isnow in existence, in Canada (and has been for years) a socialist partydedicated to the proposition that the workers, as a class, must organizeconsciously and politically to introduce socialism.

By the very nature of the socialist movement, there cannot be two socialistparties in one country. If, perchance, there were, steps would be taken tomerge. Socialist parties are not rivals in the field, competing to emanci-pate 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 basedon 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 effortsas Press. But experience is the best teacher. Press is but repeating already-exploded errors and confusions. The acid test of scientific revolutionarysocialism, in theory and in practice, is the unfolding of history. There isno royal road to socialism. The crying need of our time is for class con-scious, revolutionary, scientific socialists. Ideas are the battlefield of today,and capitalism itself is our greatest ally. The workers are not dumb, merelyconfused. 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 youwhich gives factual evidence of the real economic prospects of today’scapitalism. It is very useful research, uncovering data and raw materialsfor 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 bethat you are counting on the awareness of the Dissent reader to recognizethe analysis inferred by your findings. In the context of Dissent’sgenerallysuperficial views on current topics, this is unwarranted.

Unfortunately, the type of research to which your article is limited canbe and is being done by able bourgeois economists, objectively seekingfacts, as such. Useful, valuable, and important as are these findings, theyuncover no answers to basic questions even though they reveal the basesfor real answers.

What is particularly distressing is the unfulfilled promise anticipatedfrom 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’seconomy — than arousing the understanding realization that capitalismcannot be reformed, managed or administered in the interest of society,mankind, or the working class? In a day and age when resistance, rebel-lion and abolishment of the status quo is the pressing need (i.e., theintroduction of socialism as a social system), would you, like so manyof the Dissent fellows, dismiss this conclusion, sneeringly and with con-tempt, 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 notand never has been a violation of socialist discipline. Socialists are notdogmatic sectarians who are blindly and religiously faithful to socialistconclusions despite the lessons of unfolding experience. Should anexamination of the real world prove the case for socialism to be invalid,it would be a serious reflection on those who continued to be social-ists. That is why socialists are open-minded, in contrast to being broad-minded. They do not tolerate exploded myths and superstitions. Yet theyshould be patient with individuals groping to find out what the scoreis. Especially is this true in a day and age when the material conditionsof existence are ripe for socialism with the sole exception of maturity ofsocial 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 berammed down the throats of the workers against their wishes. By its verynature, socialism is inherently democratic, i.e., it requires a conscioussocialist majority. This cannot be overemphasized for it is the clue tosocialist tactics and programs on the basis of historic necessity.

Socialists are leery of the word, “radical.” Actually, socialists are not radi-cals in the common usage of the word. We are, rather, revolutionary.Under the heading of “radical” must be included a hodge-podge of con-fusions 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 forit. What a company is included in the term “radical”! Of course, thereis no question whatever that there is a need for “some sort of unity ofunderstanding,” as you put it; but that is the function of a socialist orga-nization, i.e., a socialist party. It is clear that in the contents of such anorgan as Press, the only possible result could be greater befuddlement asto what it is all about. Press reminds me of the Arthur Morrow Lewisbook on “Blind Leaders of the Blind.”

There is no question that the same criticism I made of [the word] “rad-ical” might be applied to the word, “socialism.” That word also meansall things to all people. Hence, my letter to Dissent. The problem hereis 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 processof 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 exis-tence of the WSP and SPC. I will not quarrel that there are secondaryfactors that have mitigated against socialist organizational work. Someinstances are personalities, smugness, intolerance, disgust and a host ofothers. But, these are secondary factors that apply to all groups. We arevictims of a capitalist environment. If you want to see a cross section ofmankind today and what a terrible indictment it makes of our society,examine the socialist movement. Yet, it is remarkable and outstandingthat, taken as a whole, there is more genuine humanity, more inspiringbehavior, more real people to be found in the socialist movement thananywhere else. The bond that ties us together being what it is: foreverputting an end to poverty and insecurity and all the ills that flow from adog-eat-dog jungle and inaugurating a sane society, fit for human beingsto live in, in and of itself, reflects itself on socialists and their behavior, ina marvelous fashion. Not that socialism is to be judged by the behaviorof socialists. It is not. Socialism does not stand or fall on the basis of thebehavior of socialists.

But as to the “narrow, rigid, doctrinaire workings of the WSP” andits sister parties, this is only an appearance. To be uncompromisinglyopposed to the nonsense of Genesis as against the soundness of organicevolution is not being doctrinaire or rigid, by any stretch of the imagina-tion. Even at this late date, outwardly it appears as though the prevailingthinking is in support of Genesis and that evolutionary concepts have“failed” to convince the great majority. But, in spite of this superficialobservation, actually no one really quarrels with Darwinism anymore, inspite of all the lip service contrary-wise. The testimony of the museums,popular magazine articles, school and college courses, etc., speaks vol-umes to the effect that Darwinism has become the established point ofview, even though it is not always the accepted point of view. In spiteof all the daily and repeated annihilations of Marxism, it is now morewidely and firmly established than ever. Every basic explanation of his-torical processes in the universities is rooted in Marxism; all the analysesof sociological studies are based on the Marxian approach. The morethey scorn and ridicule Marxian materialism, the more does it serve asthe rationale of conclusions reached by the scholars. Gordon Childe,the social psychologists, even contemporary novels and plays reflect theimperceptible influence and recognition of the Marxian point of view.With Louis Boudin, we can repeat with more justification than when hesaid it: Marxism has become the established explanation but has not yetbecome the accepted explanation. Whenever current thinkers deal withtheir subject matter scientifically, it is done on a Marxian basis.

Just ask yourself: in the past 50 years, aside from the SPGB et al., whatwork 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. Notby the CPers or their splinters. These are the very ones who moan thatsocialist propaganda has failed — but they never tried it! They have beenso immersed in “fresh” thinking (not that there is anything but praise forfresh thinking), that they have had no time for sound thinking. If only allthese energies that have been devoted to immediate demands, especiallyto get into a position to administer capitalism through election victories,had been devoted to socialist agitation — just imagine the progress of themovement. The workers never hear the socialist message.

You bet there are plenty ways of improving our propaganda. The socialistmovement desperately needs fresh blood and fresh ideas for spreadingknowledge. Once it has been established that the principles are soundand valid, then the drive becomes — in your accurate words: “how topromote them?” That is where our thinking and discussion should beconcentrated. Junking truth and understanding in favor of erroneousand wasteful activities that only divert workers from coming to gripswith 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 requiresa different objective than the abolition of capitalism and the establish-ment of socialism? What is the new short cut that can bypass the neces-sity for convincing the great majority of the necessity for socialism? Whatother steps can be taken today that will alter the workings of present-daysociety to something other than exploitation and a continuation of thepresent class relationships?

Finally, you ask in regards to my Dissent piece: “Was capitalism everadministered in the interest of society or the working class?” Yes, mostcertainly it was, in the historical sense. Although capitalism has now out-lived its historic usefulness, social evolution could not have skipped capi-talism. 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 revolutionizedtransportation and communication; it spread literacy from 5% to 90%of the population; in a word, it laid the groundwork for socialism. AsThe Communist Manifesto emphasized, the best interests of the workersin 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, indefense of compromise with the bourgeoisie and reforms.) In anothersense, let us not forget that capitalism is our greatest ally in makingsocialists because of its very workings.

**MAY 23, 1959**

*[Ben and Fanny Cosor were both active members of the New York SocialistEducation Society in the 1920s, and were among the first comrades to jointhe 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 havebecome caught in a web of circumstances.

The entire socialist movement, on the surface, is at a low ebb. There isa stultifying apathy pervading not only the socialist movement but eventhe labor movement as well as popular and accepted causes. This is areflection 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 anundercurrent of stirring and awakening. Movies like He Who Must Dieand Roots of Heaven are symbolic, even though they are not socialist incontent. It is very significant that when socialism is explained to almostanyone in a scientific, objective manner and without mentioning theword: socialism, it invariably meets with agreement and acquiescence.Just try it and see. The power of words as instruments of propagandacould not be better illustrated. In Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, Engelsmakes the point that when concepts that had been taken for granted asbeing reasonable become obviously unreasonable nonsense, you are onthe verge of a social change. Nothing is more powerful than an idea comeof age, it is more powerful than the strongest armies, sweeping every-thing before it. Furthermore, ideas may crystallize overnight after a slowprocess of accumulating changing concepts.

By the very nature of their understanding of social forces, socialists are opti-mists. They see the panorama of interrelationships. They may and do errwith respect to dates, etc., but they are not wrong about the process of socialevolution into revolutionary changes. History, science, and above all elsenecessity is on the side of socialism. It can no longer be denied that society,today, is faced with the alternative: chaos — extinction — vs. survival. Con-fronted 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 alternativesave doing socialist work, especially in light of the fact that the primaryneed 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 TheUgly American in the Summer 1959 issue of Dissent. After reading thearticle, the following questions come to mind:

1. What is the “merit in criticizing the people and methods our govern-ment employs in order to implement ourforeign policy,” and what is “theneed that exists for a book to castigate the shortcomings, sins of omissionand 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 gov-ernment of the American capitalist class? Does it represent the economicor political interests of the working class?

Aren’t the basic issues involved in American foreign policies rooted inthe economic rivalries between competing national sovereignties (rivalbandits) for spheres of influence, markets and economic advantages?

Aren’t the shibboleths of “freedom, justice and economic progress” butpropaganda slogans to rally workers (the vast portion of the population)to fight a war alien to their interests? Who is falsifying “America’s realpolitical will,” its real aims?

1. On what grounds does Mr. Buttinger contend that “on the skill withwhich we use . the weapon of foreign aid in the pursuit of politicalaims in the international arena” hinges the question of “survival orannihilation”?

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 com-modity society)? Inexorably, international conflicts of interest result inwar when they reach the explosive stage. Such “weapons” may be con-summated in annihilation by one or the other of the imperialist camps.

Are you deceiving yourself that the alternatives of survival or annihila-tion have any meaning in terms of “Communist” Russia and the “FreeWorld”? The alternatives confronting mankind today are: socialism (sur-vival) or capitalism (annihilation).

1. Mr. Buttinger is correct in condemning Lederer and Burdick for neglectin producing any evidence in support of their contentions. But can he pro-duce any shred of evidence to demonstrate that American foreign policyis a matter of concern to the American socialist movement and worthy ofsupport? Can he show how capitalism — which he does support — can beadministered in the interests of society or of the workers?

**august 8, 1959**

*[A letter to Rab from Frank Marquart. There is more information aboutMarquart in the Chapter Note for pp. 74—75; much more can be learnedabout him from* An Auto Worker’s Journal, *and his papers are to be foundin the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne StateUniversity, 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 aboutsomething 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 canwrite and let me know; if I do succeed, maybe you can give me a clue asto where I can find what I want.

Where can I get hold of an article or a pamphlet or a book or even achapter in a book which goes somewhat into detail on human relationsat the point of production?

I would like to make a study of unionism in this context. Many bookshave 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 atthe point of production as given. They do not analyze these social rela-tions in order to show the limitations of collective bargaining within theframework of those relationships.

Workers are divorced from the means of production. Unions functionto offer workers some protection within the limits of this divorcement.Therefore unions do not and cannot give workers an opportunity to havea real say in the vital processes of our society; unions, like the workerswho 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 anymore I’m afraid I will only search for words which will say the same thingin 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, orknows of someone who has.

Much is being written about unions these days, but not from the stand-point I mention here. You read about new dimensions in collective bar-gaining, about the role of government in collective bargaining, aboutracketeering, about labor’s political action program — but you don’t readabout the real meaning of exploitative work relationships at the point ofproduction — 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 WilliamMorris’ Factory Work, As It Is And As It Might Be that are relevant. Also, Ican recall references by Kropotkin dealing with the attitudes of workersamong themselves, and making a comparison with the behavior of capi-talists among themselves.

Another thing: I anticipate a pitfall in dealing with “human relations atthe point of production.” After all, “point of production” is not synony-mous with “mode of production.” The point of production is not a socialrelationship of production but a basic facet of this social relationship.The pitfall lies in “economic determinism” answers, i.e., equating behav-iors with the means of production. Social relations among humans arenot limited to the point of production, even though the only source ofsurplus value production is to be found at the point of production.

That said, however, many evidences of solidarity and militancy canbe observed in times of stress, in wildcat strikes, etc., at the point ofproduction.

The real key to “human relations at the point of production” lies in theexamination of the class struggle.

**NOVEMBER 7, 1959**

*[This next letter was written to my then fiance, who was in England (asdescribed in Chapter Five above).]*

My very dear George:

I’m the world’s champ in procrastination in writing letters. It takes anurgent matter (to me, at least) to get me to the typewriter. Not that I’mnot genuinely concerned about the personal interests and problems ofcomrades and close associates but, somehow, it is difficult for me to thawout on such matters unless someone takes me to one side as a confidantor as a “father confessor.” I suppose that’s one reason that for me to bea conversationalist or correspondent is a difficult proposition when itcomes 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. Iacknowledge my defeat to a better man. Because of my atrocious hand-writing, I resort to a typewriter. Even on this score I’m both a poor anda slow typist. (Incidentally, I suggest you get a cheap portable typewriterfor the benefit of those having to read your manuscripts.)

So, I’m the last person in the #62 domicile you should expect a letterfrom — this speaks volumes for my very special regard for you.

I’m particularly interested in dealing with your comment on “inflex-ibility” in socialist parties of the stamp of the WSP. I am well aware thatthere is an element of truth in your impressions. There are occasionswhen the attitudes expressed surely give such an appearance.

If I didn’t feel that you were sympathetic to the socialist case, I’d notbother writing these comments.

There is a distinction between “inflexibility” meaning rigid conclusionsretained despite the weight of evidence, which is dogmatic sectarianism,and “inflexibility” meaning holding to and fighting for conclusions basedon the corroborations of evidence.

Another way of saying the same thing is to realize that open-mindednessand broad-mindedness are not synonymous terms, though both havethe connotation of “flexibility.” You will admit, I trust, that broad-mind-edness is far from being a virtue. The earmark of broad-mindedness istolerance for all sorts of superstitions, quackery and nonsense. (This hasnothing to do with the democratic right to express views, which is basicand for which we always fight.) Your liberal intellectual is a good exampleof broad-mindedness. He has the serious limitation of lacking convic-tions, merely straddling all sides of all questions. Especially in today’sworld of confusion worse confounded by the prevailing political igno-rance, we find the broad-minded acceptance of untenable apologetics forpoverty, war, patriotism and a welter of notions in support of the statusquo. Many “profound” thinkers on radio and TV panel discussions stub-bornly 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 virtuegreater than open-mindedness. The open-minded person does not closehis mind to evidence. If unfolding developments prove his conclusionsuntenable, he has the courage to discard those conclusions. He is not loyalor religious concerning his views, come hell or high water. This appliesas well to socialism. If the socialist case proves to be all wet, it would be aserious reflection on us to cling to it. On that score, suffice it to say thatscience, truth, and social necessity [are] on the side of socialism.

Enclosed you will find a copy of an article I wrote for Forum, the discussionjournal for SPGB members to thrash out moot matters. This very journalitself is evidence that socialist parties are not inflexible. Note well the title ofmy 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. Thisway your experiences become really meaningful. When you return to theenvirons of Boston, I’m looking forward to discussing your experienceswith you — personal, literary, experiences and observations.

I’m especially happy that you were able to spend some time with such asGilmac, 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 McPhailand Holt my best.

Unfortunately, I do not have your letter in front of me, so I’ll reserve anyother comments for another day.

By the way, the newspapers in Boston are on strike. This includes yourstruly. One thing stands out: when the chips are down, the only weaponthe 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 Standardwith its comments on the British elections. (The new format and policiesmay induce you to renew your expired subscription.) The recent BritishLabor Party campaign, coupled with the recent pronouncements of theGerman Social-Democrats and the Australian Labor Party renouncingMarxism and the class struggle, which received such worldwide publicity,should make it abundantly clear how bankrupt of socialist objectivesthese alleged “socialists” are. The popular fad of the day is that recentdevelopments 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 freedfrom the “obsolete theories” of Marx. Capitalism, they insist, can func-tion in the interests of progress and mankind. For the sake of the record,this is nothing new for the Social-Democrats and Laborites. They neverdid give more than lip service to the Marxian analysis. Actually, the expe-riences 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 capi-talism, such as Adolf Berle. Too often Marxism is identified with Russianstate capitalism, which only beclouds the issue.

The only genuine concern of either the Laborites or their comrades, theadmittedly 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 exposedby listing a few prevailing characteristics of the present scene:

* The inexorable “moral decay” (to use their phrase) that flows fromthe commodity dog-eat-dog jungle.
* The exploitation of the workers through the extraction of surplusvalue out of the sweat and hide, the brain and brawn of the workers— the big, all-pervading robbery that is so completely ignored andwhich puts to shame the petty crooks so much in the news.
* The worship of “success” with the widespread acceptance ofcheating and lying. The Congressional investigations reveal thatthe real crime is: getting caught. What a shining illustration ofthe truth of the old cliche: the one word that typifies capitalism is“hypocrisy”!
* Juvenile delinquency.
* Ever-increasing mental breakdowns, largely tied up with increasingfears and insecurities.
* Lack of meaningful leisure, especially with material security.
* Inability to harness the marvelous potential in the tremendousstrides 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 inDissent.

I liked it very much. It was meaty and contained a great deal of impor-tant 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 thatthe subject is so broad that you could not cover the whole field. Yourtopic was: “New Problems for the Unions.” All you did was to presentthe facts that constituted the raw materials for making some conclusions.You were content to list the problems. Such an article as you wrote couldhave appeared in Fortune Magazine, or in some economic or sociologicaljournal. In such a magazine as Dissent claims to be, it was expected youwould go further.

Of course, it is fine that you pointed out the limitations of unions beingconfined to a “job-oriented framework”; the use of rhetoric relatingunion goals to “national interests”; conflicts between membership and“bureaucracy” and the anti-working class interests of many union pro-cedures. Much of all this is well known, and admitted with remorse andregret by the very unionists caught in the trap of functioning as a “stabi-lizing force.”

We have an overproduction of such “analytical” articles. What is neededis articles coming to grips with “So, what about it?” The nearest youcome is: “... by a labor movement I mean an association of trade unions— more important, of trade unionists — who.. .feel that in some sensethey are committed to a vision of ... a more selfless and devoted life thancan usually be provided by our commercial society.”

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

I cannot resist the temptation to note that your article does indicate yourearlier exposure to socialist influences. You went a little further than theother contributors to the issue in stating that the “new problems” shouldbe met with “purpose with strength, spirit with the flesh.” As in thequote above on the vision of life, you become lyrical when dealing withthings that are really close to your heart. You are not really happy in thecompany you are keeping. The pessimistic and gloomy tone of your con-clusions is readily understandable to me. Here is Dissent, a journal whoseconcerns include advising the U.S. Government on better ways of con-ducting their foreign policies, and a primary interest in smoother opera-tion of capitalism that they describe as “the socialist approach.” Dissentpolicy is far more concerned with the evils of Russian dictatorship thanwith the evil of poverty amidst potential abundance. Because they thinkonly of practical measures within the framework of capitalism, socialismappears a long way in the distant future.

The advantage of a socialist is that he has the knowledge and under-standing to think outside the framework of capitalism. That is why asocialist can be an optimist on the basis of historic necessity, truth andscience. The answer to that question: “So, what about it?” is What isneeded are Socialists. Hindsight is always brilliant but it is far moredifficult 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, espe-cially when they make their own mistakes. Workers, under pressure ofcircumstances, do act. The descriptions of the day-to-day experiences andbehaviors of workers in the Detroit auto factories hint at what workerswill do when they wake up to the facts of life. Of one thing you can besure, when workers find out the real score, they will act intelligently intheir own interests. Woe betide the “friends” and “advisors” of workerswho 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 TypographicalBulletin. It contains my advice to my fellow members to read this issueof Dissent devoted to Workers and Their Unions. The information isimportant for unionists to read, even if it doesn’t go far enough. I havehad several items in the Bulletin, such as: “Is Labor the Cause of Infla-tion?”; “Wages and Prices; Who Are the Featherbedders?” and reprintsfrom The Western Socialist. So, you can see I’m not commenting from anyivory tower or in an academic sense. Let me tell you, the really seriouslimitation — far more serious than the limitations of unions, themselves,as adjuncts of capital — is the behavior of those alleging to have socialistviews inside unions.

*[Marquarts response, on a card postmarked Dec. 1, 1959:]*

Dear Rab — Just a word to thank you for the best thought-provokingletter 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 theDarwin issue of SS. Yes, when I return to Detroit at end of Jan. I willsubscribe again. How come Gilmac did not talk in Detroit? Why didn’tthe deadheads arrange a meeting?

**DECEMBER 15, 1959**

My very George (Gerell),

Some time ago I mailed you some copies of the WS having articles onCanada. Not being sure if you had something specific in mind, I sent afew issues. Not only that, but I pulled a fast one by taking advantage ofyour good nature to send you complete issues, instead of just clippingout the specific articles. I’m trusting that you might find other articlesthat 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 crossedin the mails. This shows where our thoughts were, independent of eachother. 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 preju-diced, but on the basis of some 43 years attachment. First of all, sheunderestimates herself and is the acme of modesty. She is free of anysham of any kind. When necessary, she can be brutally frank, yet veryconsiderate for the feelings of others. She has a remarkable way of sizingup people. (Personally, I’m very naive and I tend to judge people at facevalue. I’ve often been disappointed but, in the long run, I’d rather not betoo quick to misjudge or condemn.) She has been a significant influenceon her children, in exposing them to socialist concepts and viewpoints.Note the distinction between “exposure” and “duress.” She is a won-derful mother and grandmother.

One recent development gave me a real pleasure. In past years, there usedto be boys clubs, science clubs, and party activities that exposed a genera-tion of young people to a socialist outlook. Now that generation havebecome parents themselves. They realized that they were not helpingtheir own youngsters to formulate healthy viewpoints about the worldthey live in; and they were becoming nervous and conscious-strickenabout those youngsters being exposed to patriotic, religious and similarenvironmental forces (which cannot be avoided). So, on their own, theyorganized 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 orby the parents, etc.

I’m enclosing a copy of a letter I wrote to Frank Marquart of Detroit. Heis 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 Reviewof London. It is an intellectual journal written by and for intellectuals andthe academic world of the universities. It claims to be rooted in socialistapproach. It is a quarterly, and its last issue was devoted to “Workers andthe Unions.” It had several interesting articles by about a dozen writerson that topic. Marquart wrote me to send him any comments I mighthave had on his article, which accounts for the enclosed. A word aboutMarquart. He was confined to a consumptive hospital [i.e., a TB sani-tarium] in Rochester, N.Y. for some time, many years ago. Out of a clearsky, I received a letter from him telling me that he was in my everlastingdebt for having introduced him to socialism and making a socialist out ofhim. I couldn’t even recall him. He mentioned how he met me on a parkbench in Grand Circus Park in Detroit and we struck up a conversationwhich changed his whole life. (One thing I’m proud of is the number ofseeds I’ve sown that have taken root all unbeknown to me. You have noidea how many times I’ve been approached by strangers thanking me forarousing their better concept of society and the world we live in. Overthe years I’ve contaminated plenty.) At all events, he asked a series ofquestions and asked me to correspond with him. I first met him over 40years ago and he contacted me about 25 years ago. Marquart can write,he has an excellent style. He has been educational director for the UnitedAuto Workers Union and an editor for union papers. He has been in andout of both the WSP and the SPA at least twice. In 1947, he representedthe WSP in its debate with Scott Nearing on Russia. He was superb. Hisone handicap is that he lacks both a formal academic background and atrade of any kind, which means his choices of work commensurate withhis abilities are limited, especially since he has no “business acumen.” Sohe finds himself in the awkward position of having to compromise withhis better knowledge on the jobs he has had as educational director andeditor. At times, he has really shown amazing courage when the chipswere down. (He is troubled with a conscience.) But the pressure of eventsand the nature of his associations have told on him. He foundered onquestions of reforms and so-called “sectarianism” and “dogmatism” ofthe companion parties. He is never sure of himself (which is OK as far asit goes) but he seems always swayed by the last book he has read. He usu-ally writes me for analyses on current items, such as Keynes, for example,or for material for articles he is writing. As an illustration, after receivingthe criticism of his Dissent article, he just wrote me: “Just a word to thankyou for the best thought-provoking letter I’ve received . Actually, yourletter provides an outline for a sound talk on socialism.” Yet, the letter Iwrote him did not contain anything basically new, only a restatement ofthe very points he has rejected for some time.

.I believe you may find that this letter to Marquart has a strong bearingon the primary purpose of this letter: what constitutes the nature of asocialist party.

The nature — the very heart and core — of a socialist party is that it isnot for the workers .The party is not going to emancipate the workersor do anything for them. There is no dichotomy or separation of the workersand the party. Whilst Abe Lincoln was on flimsy ground when he spokeof “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” becauseall governments are rooted in antagonisms of interests, it would be quitevalid to say that the socialist party is the party of the workers, by theworkers, and for the workers. (Note well that I spelled “socialist party”with lower case letparties that may call themselves “Socialist.”) The realsocialist party cannot be apart and distinct from the working class; it hasto be comprised of the whole human community. That is the generalnature of any socialist party. Without in any sense implying that quotingThe Communist Manifesto is, of itself, proof of anything, nevertheless,the Manifesto phrases this matter very well: Section II starts off that (theparty) “always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement asa whole” and ends with “the first step in the revolution by the workingclass is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win thebattle of democracy.”

In other words, the work of emancipation, the transformation of capi-talism into a socialist society, the transfer of the means of living from thehands of the parasites into the hands of society as a whole, is the con-scious, majority, and political action of the working class — the socialistparty. The state does exist; it is the central organ of power. Title and deedto its ownership rests in the political control by the ruling class. The stateis the instrumentality of class control. When the workers finally wake up,they will use their party to change the “civitas” of propertied society intothe “societas” of communal society. Today, working-class understandingis at a very low ebb, therefore the membership in the party is puny. Itis fantastic to think of a rivalry between socialist parties competing toemancipate the workers. Should another genuine socialist party appearon the scene, immediate steps would be taken to merge. Herein lies theemphasis 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 forthe abolition of capitalism by the workers.

(In passing, let me mention that not all socialists are members of thecompanion parties. There are many, many socialists who are not attachedto any socialist party. But this has no bearing on the historic nature of thesocialist party. There are innumerable factors to account for individualsocialists not being members of a socialist organization, but to focus onthis out of its context is only to confuse and confound the understandingof 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 canbe traced to personality clashes, personal problems, disappointmentsleading to discouragement, and the fact that we are all human beingswith human failings and limitations. Possibly the biggest factor is thatwe are few in numbers and turn in on ourselves, instead of outwards inmuch-needed organizational and propaganda activity . Situations doarise because of emotional stresses and strains. Differences have assumedparamount importance.

As you must know from reading my article on “Is There Room for Dif-ferences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?” I certainly do not condoneheresy hunting. But I stand far from alone. The New York comrades,after reading my article, pointed out the tyranny of words as tools. Noone in the companion parties really disagrees with the sentiments Iexpressed. You should remember that the companion parties are demo-cratically controlled by the membership. They are genuinely democrati-cally constituted parties on the basis of their principles. The objectivesof socialism itself are reflected in the very nature of our organizationalprocedures, in much the same way as the other “socialist” parties’ organi-zational procedures reflect their concepts of leadership, dictatorship, etc.This is the salient item to bear in mind: there is a justifiable fear of emas-culating scientific, socialist principles, based upon the evidences of thereal world. Were the doors opened wide to mere sympathizers and wellwishers, or those with non-socialist or even anti-socialist concepts, wewould soon cease being a socialist party. Above all else, it is mandatory thata socialist party be made up of socialists. The criterion of what consti-tutes a socialist is very simple. One does not have to be a Marxian scholarto be a socialist. Recall my definition in the article I sent you on whatconstitutes being a socialist. (It might be well to reread it right now.)[[8]](#footnote-9)

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 misconceptionthat the WSP is small because of our procedures. The Socialist Party ofAmerica, the CFF in Canada, the Trotskyites, the Commies, the SLPthe Laborites, and so on, all have serious declines in membership. It wasnot due to lack of activities, or intolerance of really unsound, unten-able ideas, or any of the favorite criticisms of the WSP; it was not forbeing “dogmatic and sectarian” that they lost members and influence.This is a historic and social phenomenon. Mainly, I would ascribe itto a public apathy that arises when high hopes raised by social reformprograms only lead to disillusionment. The “socialist programs” advo-cated by the “socialists’ of the Left were incapable of solving the prob-lems confronting society, because they never even came to grips with theroot causes of those problems. (To do so would require a real socialistanalysis.) The appeal of the “socialist programs” was easily adopted bythe Tories and Conservatives. All the “socialist” organizations bemoaningthat the capitalists were stealing their programs only accentuates disgustand apathy with politics and politicians. It has become obvious that suchprograms are bankrupt of any accomplishments except winning a chanceto administer the status quo.

On the other hand, the workers never (or hardly ever) hear the socialistcase. Funny, on those rare occasions whenever they do, it often makessense to them. A ferment is at work. What used to be nonsense is begin-ning to make sense. Socialist ideas are rising into view — not so muchbecause of socialist propaganda but because of the lessons of experience.It is notorious indeed that more and more books, more and more articlesappear constantly to refute Marxism (and I don’t mean the Russian dis-tortion). We even find the so-called “socialists,” ever looking for sheervotes, joining their bourgeois comrades in opposition to Marxism.

You see the angry young men. These are healthy signs of groping, eventhough it is groping in the dark. You see growing signs of refusing to beconformists, of resentment and resistance. I’m not going to belabor theobvious awareness on the part of many, if not most, that something isrotten in society. But you don’t see them joining up with the socialistmovement.

.Our strength is the necessity of socialism; our weakness is our ownlimitations. I, for one, am well aware that if we did a hell of a lot morework, we would see a great deal more encouraging results. But, this muchis sure: Experience is the great teacher. Marx put it beautifully: 20 yearsgo by and you seem to make but the progress of a single day, then comesa day in which are crystallized the experiences of 20 years.

That is where you come in! That is where the youth come in! The onlyreally useful thing that makes life worth living is to spend it in con-vincing your fellow youth that it is about time to put an end to povertyand insecurity in a world of potential abundance. Life fit for humanbeings is possible here and now. The most inspiring task in all historylies on your young shoulders. It is, at long last, possible to put an endto the evils of modern society because man has become the master overnature, potentially, if he would only free himself from the shackles of thecommodity society — the dog-eat-dog jungle.

I close this portion of the letter with two quotes:

The first one is fromVictor Hugo: “There is one thing stronger than allthe 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 VernonWard, Exposition Press, N.Y., 127 pp., $3.00 (An anarchist)

“I shall not enslave myselfI 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. Thisis not my forte. The spirit is willing but not the body. However, don’tever hesitate to write on any specific problem or question that might beof concern to you.

With deepest affection,

Rab

PS. Not one word about the contacts you met in London! I envy yourassociations with the likes of Hardy, Kersley and the rest. You might dowell 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 theWSPs position on violence.]*

My very dear George:

First of all, to answer your question: On Violence and Marx. (You’rea wise guy, you know how to get me to write.) Speculations on futureevents in specific details always impress me as crystal-ball gazing and areactually irrelevant to the validity of scientific socialism. Especially is thistrue when such speculations are raised to the dignity of a principle ... Inapplying this attitude to your question, two things become revealed.

1. Of prime importance is to come to grips with social processes thatgive rise to social changes and revolutions. The general nature of thesocial transformation of capitalism into socialism is democratic, i.e.,conscious, majority, and political. (Only in this context does the expres-sion “inevitability of socialism, barring a catastrophe,” make sense.) Thespecific details of this democratic change will depend on the conditionsand circumstances that exist at the time. Though I personally feel it ismost unlikely that there will be any need for violence, I cannot dictate tohistory what to do. Especially do I find it difficult to visualize a violentrevolution, just because socialism does require majority consciousness,yet who can foresee the rise of unanticipated and unavoidable circum-stances. Socialists will know what to do in special circumstances and whatthey do and how they do it will be determined by the prevailing condi-tions. Suffice it to say that socialists do not advocate violence; further, amajority does not require violence but the final resort of a minority mustbe to violence. The WSP advocates the ballot.
2. Antonio was not off the beam when he said, “The devil can cite scrip-ture for his purpose.” The same with Marx. I would go a step furtherand say that to quote Marx as proof and court of last resort would bedogmatic. This is especially obvious in the many Bolshevik emascula-tions of Marx, many of them taken out of context. The essence of theMarxian analysis is summarized in the paragraph above. A case in pointis the Communist Manifesto. The last chapter of the Manifesto is possiblythe most quoted reference for rooting an advocacy of violence in Marx:“The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openlydeclare that their ends can only be attained by the forcible overthrow ofall existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Commu-nistic 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 theemphasis in the Manifesto, itself, especially in Section II, is inexcusable.The classic message of the Manifesto is: “All previous historical move-ments were movements of minorities. The proletarian movement is theself-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority,” and“We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the workingclass is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win thebattle of democracy.” Ironically, the very quote cited by the advocates ofviolence (who are also advocates of minority action and vanguards) is notof much comfort to them, really. Consider the force (not a synonym forviolence) of numbers, the force of necessity, and above all, social forces inthe essence of Marxism.

Whether resort be had to violence lies in the lap of history, but I’m opti-mistic enough to have faith that mankind (including many capitalists) arebecoming aware of the necessity — the urgent necessity — for socialism,and that the inspirations of socialism spread like wildfire when the inad-equacies of wars, poverty, national sovereignties and the capitalist junglebecome 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. Theyare a well-known firm and you won’t have any difficulty locating them.They are the publishers of Pannekoek’s Anthropogenesis. Will you pleaseask them for Anton Pannekoek’s home address and visit him, if at allpossible. I’m not sure if he’s still living. He must be over 90, now. Heis one of the greatest scholars you’ll ever meet. In fact, when Harvardcelebrated its Tercentenary, they honored the 39 greatest scholars withspecial honorary degrees. Pannekoek was one of them for his work onastrophysics at the University of Leyden (I believe). He wrote Marxismand Darwinism, which is one of the socialist classics. He does not agreewith us on the question of the ballot. He thinks the industrial workerswill organize Workers’ Councils and take and hold industry and intro-duce socialism. But on Marxian economics, reforms, and especially thequestion of leadership, he is crystal clear. When he was in Boston to gethis Harvard degree, he preferred the WSP environments to his Harvardintellectuals. 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. “Isthat not so?” Lenin, in his State and Revolution, deals with Pannekoek,who opposed the Bolsheviks at the very beginning on the basis of theDictatorship of the Proletariat vs. democratic majority. Be sure to makea special visit to him and please give him my regards, also the BostonComrades and also give him greetings from Paul Mattick, in Boston.By the way, did you notice my reference to Pannekoek in my article onevolution 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 isWatkins’s formal request to join the WSP(US). (Watkins, a Canadian, livesnear 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 giftedstyle of writing. Unfortunately I do not have it with me, as ComradeMorrison 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 theWS. We need humorous articles that can use satire a la Anatole Franceand Will Rogers. In my opinion it makes effective propaganda. Also,your letter brought back fond memories of our brief meeting together inBoston, and I mean the both of you.

It is thrilling to observe the socialist enthusiasm in your letter. I havebeen associated with the fringes and heart of the socialist movement allmy life. Away back in l893, my father was a member of the SocialistLabor Party, then he jumped with the other Kangaroos into the SocialistParty of America when it was formed in the 1899 - 1900 period. In the1919 period he became a charter member of the Communist Party, towhich he belonged until his death. I was far more fortunate. I joined theSocialist Party ofAmerica in 1909 and was a member until 1916. Luckily,in Detroit, I came into contact with so-called slackers escaping militaryservice in Canada and England. They changed my whole point of viewfrom reformism into revolutionary socialism. These comrades from theSPC and the SPGB wielded a great influence in Detroit with their studyclasses and street meetings and public lectures. When the WSP was orga-nized in Detroit, Comrade Adolph Kohn and I sent out the post cardsinviting those interested to form the WSP I am the sole charter memberstill remaining in the organization, since its inception in 1916. All thisjust to tell you that, in spite of trials, tribulations, disappointments (andthere have been many, many of them) I have never lost my enthusiasm. Iam often called “the eternal optimist,” by those who have become cynicaland lost their enthusiasm for socialism because of discouragements anddisappointments. It might even be said that to retain your enthusiasmis an acid test of your socialist understanding. It is so easy to fall bythe wayside because something happens to dampen one’s enthusiasm forone reason or another. The fact still remains: There is no other solutionexcept socialism. Who can deny that socialism is in harmony with socialnecessity, and the evidence of unfolding experiences?

Now to come to grips with your desire to form a Vancouver local of theWSP. For convenience I will number the points I wish to make.

1. Not because it is contained in the Communist Manifesto or because itwas written by Marx and Engels (either reason for quoting would makeus not only authoritarian but dogmatic sectarians) but because it sum-marizes the very nature of socialist political parties, the following para-graph in Section I of the Manifesto is very pertinent:

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them whatthey have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire politi-cal supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, mustconstitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not inthe bourgeois sense of the word.

Stop to think of the predominant objective of all our activities: arousethe workers to vote for socialism. Immediately, we are barred from theballot because we disqualify ourselves because we are an internationalgroup on the political field and not a Canadian political party. This doesnot mean that we aren’t essentially and basically an international partybut we are compelled for “democratic” reasons to be companion partiesrather than an integrated whole. There is no other alternative, if only toregister the growing sentiment for socialism via the ballot.

On this score, I have a strong hunch that in due time the names of thecompanion parties will be changed to World Socialist Party of Canada,World Socialist Party of Great Britain, etc., etc. Already, in several con-ferences of the SPGB this proposal has been discussed with a seeminglygrowing sentiment in its favor. I seem to sense a ground swell in thatdirection. But, let me emphasize, this is a matter of opinion and not abasic principle whether the name should be changed or not. It would beno cause for a schism, as it were. After all, there is room for differences ofopinion 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 samecountry with the same socialist principles? We are not competing withanybody for the privilege of inaugurating socialism. Should circum-stances see another genuine socialist party appear on the scene, the firstthing on the agenda would be steps to merge together. We do not rootourselves in leadership or in personalities, either.

1. Let me refresh your memory on an important matter that you knowas well as I do. I’m not telling you anything you don’t know. Nothingis more democratic than a socialist party. The very organization of asocialist party brings into being procedures that flow from its socialistunderstanding. Its organization reflects its principles. Consciously anddeliberately, every socialist party is controlled by its membership. (Thatis why so much emphasis is placed on the Application Blank, so as toassure a socialist membership.) No party conference has the power tomake motions (other than purely procedural ones) that are not first sub-mitted to a referendum of the membership for acceptance or rejection.That is why we in the WSP changed the name of our central committeefrom National Executive Committee to National Administrative Com-mittee — in order to emphasize that the national office only carries outthe wishes of the membership; it merely administers the work of theorganization between conferences and referenda. In every sense of theword: the majority rules. There is no obstacle standing in the way of theVancouver comrades to affect any procedures or policies they desire inthe Socialist Party of Canada, providing they convince the majority.
2. As a statement of historic accuracy, the Socialist Party of Canada wasreorganized in 1933. [NB: Rab is in error here; the SPC was reorganized inJune 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. How-ever, 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 WesternClarion, but they established a real tradition of socialist work. They werethe products of peculiar social circumstances which made it possible tocarry on a great deal of valuable socialist work that was very inspiringindeed. There was a hodge-podge of all kinds of rubbish permeatingthrough elements in the old SPC, but the valuable work of revolutionarysocialists still dominated the scene and we owe a great debt to them. Weshould pay tribute to the groundwork they laid down. It has left its markon Vancouver.
3. In the last two conferences of the WSP, I presented as an agenda itemthat the SPC be urged to initiate a referendum of their membershipto establish the procedure of sending delegates every year to the annualWSP conferences. There are matters of joint and mutual concern thatdo 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). Yetthe WSP, alone, decides on vital policies, etc. A case in point: the WSP isright now running off a second referendum on such an important ques-tion as to whether non-members may write for the WS. (Personally, Ifavor it.) To my great regret, the conference voted against my motion onthe grounds that such a procedure is not feasible at this time on accountof distances and expenses involved. Incidentally, I also wrote to indi-viduals in the SPC on this matter. I’m going to bring it up again at thenext conference, for I consider it important; but in one way, such an itemshould emanate from the Canadian comrades. However, I mention itbecause it falls in line with your thinking.

I had never intended to be so long-winded. I want to close with thisthought for your consideration: The best interests of the socialist move-ment would be served by the organization of a healthy, active local inVancouver-- the sooner, the better. It would be inspiring and encour-aging indeed to socialists everywhere, to see young blood with enthu-siasm and eagerness for work following in the footsteps of what there isof revolutionary socialist traditions in Vancouver.

Enclosed you will find a copy of this letter for you to show the comradesin Vancouver — Roddy, Ahrens, the new comrade in Vancouver (I hateto admit that his name escapes me, I owe him an apology) and variousand 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 Ahrenses:

Your letters touched me deeply. Here’s a hug and kiss for all of you. I’mlooking forward to the day when I can deliver them in person. I hopenone 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 inJuly 1916, there was no such thing as a genuine socialist party in theUnited States. There was, however, a well-known and influential orga-nization calling itself the Socialist Party of America. In our naivete, wecalled ourselves the Socialist Party of the United States to demonstratethat, at last, there had appeared on the scene a real socialist party in theUnited States. Within three months the SPA challenged our right to thename. They even produced evidence that, on occasion, they had used theSP of US title. We simply had to change our name. We made a grievouserror because we should have realized the inevitable confusions that werebound to develop. The membership voted on several alternative namesand settled on Workers’ Socialist Party of the United States.

Time marched on and in the ’30’s the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Partyemerged. 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 wouldrefer to our organization as Socialist Workers Party through a curious slipof the tongue. (One thing, at least, the U.S. Attorney General knewthe distinction. At no time had he ever put us on any subversive list.)An interesting sidelight, I once met a disgruntled Trotskyite who toldme that at the organizational inception when the proposed name wasdiscussed, they were advised not to use the name they selected becauseof our existence. They pooh-poohed us with sneers and adopted theSocialist Workers Party name. After all, their stock in trade is strategy andconspiracy. When you consider that their emphases are on infiltratingunions and other organizations to gain control, to foster and participatein all and any public demonstrations, to prate on fantastic immediatedemands and to critically support the “Degenerate Workers State” inRussia, we had no alternative but to again change our name, this time toWorld Socialist Party of the United States.

No happier selection could have been made. The irony of events beyondour control brought forth the title which truly expresses in a few wordsboth our object and our policy: the global nature of socialism as a socialsystem and the working-class political victories to inaugurate socialism.

My purpose in reviewing the history of the WSP name was to indicatethat, in my humble opinion, there is no immediate or urgent need forchanging the name of the Socialist Party of Canada. Let me emphasizethat 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 SPCwhich are very embarrassing for socialists. Specifically, you refer to the1920 and 1944 Manifestos; to the lack of encouragement by Winnipegto inspire young blood; and the greater receptivity to our movement inVancouver that would ensue from a change in name.

As for the Preface to the 5th edition of the SPC Manifesto, I agree with youwholeheartedly. In fact, I would go much further and condemn the 4th edi-tion preface as worse, because of its emphasis on concepts such as “peacefulrevolution” as being illusory. I am not condoning the Russian slant of the 5thedition preface but most basic to socialist science is the democratic nature ofa conscious, majority political revolution. The socialist majority has no needfor violence. We surely do not advocate violence. There are interpolations inthe text of the 1920 Manifesto that are bad, also.

I can appreciate your feelings that it would have been advisable for thepreface to the 1944 edition of the SPC Manifesto to have made someclarifying statement on the limitations of the 5th edition. They didn’t.But this was an error of omission, not one of commission. What yourobservation does reveal is the obvious need for a clarifying statement bythe SPC explaining the events and background of the history of the SPCand its offshoots, etc. Such a statement would make inspired readingand would redound to the credit of the socialist pioneers who stimu-lated and stirred socialist consciousness in the early days and whose ideashave predominated over the long run to the greater glory of the SPC. Itwould also explain the reasons for the quarrels and confusions, etc., inthe immature soil of those days.

In this connection, I can think of a few fellows who could collaborateon such a task: Price of the SPGB, a real old-timer in Canada; there isJack McDonald, Jack Kilgour, Fred Evans of the WSP; there are manyold-timers in Winnipeg; there is Devore of Edmonton (see the enclosedWS article of his in No. 1 - 1959 issue); and a host of others. Pity thatwe missed the opportunity of harnessing old Bennett of Mexico, whodied recently at 92, he had the most remarkable and accurate memory ofanyone, 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, genuinesocialist movement. On occasions he lets the cat out of the bag. I sus-pect he not only knows better but regrets getting caught in a dilemma.Once one is bitten with the virus of revolutionary, scientific, Marxiansocialism, one never really discards it, in spite of themselves [sic].Theyare like those who, having become convinced of Darwinism and organicevolution, 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 thisover very carefully. Winnipeg is helpless if the majority does not see eye-to-eye with them. None of the companion parties can be dominated byany committee.

Your problem is not Winnipeg, by any means. We have comrades in theU.S. who make the Winnipeg comrades appear as whirlwinds, in com-parison. In fact, they have a very stultifying effect on me because of theirpessimism, lethargy and cynicism. Actually, in contrast, our Winnipegcomrades who, under great odds, do attempt to hold lectures, do hold reg-ular 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, ifthey were to witness a surge of socialist activities in Vancouver, they wouldreally be thrilled and inspired. I can see, in my mind’s eye, volunteers fromWinnipeg, straining at the leash to rush to your aid. A team of wild horsescouldn’t restrain them, if I know the Winnipeg boys.

Which reminds me, after interminable delays by our printer — (wecome first for him after all his other accounts, we are constantly in debtto him but happen, at the moment, to be in the most favorable financialposition we have been with him in years, thanks to using the Earl fundto pay him $750.00 recently) — at last he is getting around to finishingthe 100,000 leaflets we ordered. There are 10 leaflets and we ordered10,000 of each. Each one of them are superb, succinct, effective leafletsfor popular distribution. They are worthy of concentrating our efforts asthey constitute replies to popular superstitions.

On the matter of personal antipathies, antagonisms, etc., a word at thispoint might not be amiss. The socialist movement is made up of individ-uals who are a cross section of mankind, such as they are. They (I shouldsay “we”) are products of the workings of the capitalist milieu: victims ofthe vicissitudes and tribulations of life. Yet, it is amazing that, in spite ofall, when the chips are down, bitterness evanesces. I’ve seen this happenmany times. (There are exceptions, of course.) There is a bond that tiesus together closer than one realizes: the inspiring nature of our objective.Our task is to be a catalyst, the triggering agent that transforms majorityideas from bourgeois into revolutionary ones. What more glorious taskfaces mankind than forever putting an end to poverty and privilege. Andall the time, we have a powerful ally: capitalism itself provides the lessonsof experience.

When I was a youngster, my mother used to tell me: Behave so as notto reflect on the movement, everyone is condemning socialism becauseof the behavior of socialists. She had a powerful impact on me but stillshe was not quite correct. The validity of socialism does not hinge on thebehavior of socialists by any means. But I found that, somehow or other,their very socialist understanding does affect socialist behavior in waysthat anticipate the coming socialist society — as social human beings. Isay this in spite of some very sorry experiences.

As long as I’m rambling off the subject of this letter, there is another thingto consider. As the movement gathers momentum with the resultingincreased socialist activity and growth, personalities will become lessnoticed and less important.

Now, to return to the matter at hand. Socialist parties are not exemptfrom making serious mistakes. The socialist movement ... is a livingorganism. Members become impatient at the slow growth, disappointedwith results of hard work, disgruntled with behaviors and reactionstowards their pet proposals, discouraged with prospects, etc., etc. Theybecome enamored with lures of “short cuts” and royal roads to socialism.Every socialist party has skeletons, as it were, in its closet. (And there isno 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 thisvery topic, entitled: “Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in aSocialist Party?” The Forum has not been published for some time becauseof lack of funds. After all, propaganda activities take precedence.)

The overriding consideration is to bear in mind that the companion par-ties for socialism have been consistently sound on the general principlesof socialism. We can boast that — over the years — history, the realacid test, has corroborated and confirmed the analyses presented in theSocialist Standard, The Western Socialist and the party literature. Espe-cially in Canada, when the SPC is mentioned — in spite of the thingsyou mentioned — it is immediately associated with the SPGB, WSP,etc. On this very score, Comrade Luff, of Victoria, has some interestinginformation that I believe he has conveyed to you.

All of you emphasized that your prime concern is for a closer cohe-sion. You don’t stand alone. This very correspondence and the generalinterest engendered in the Vancouver potentialities speaks volumes forthis common concern for closer cohesion. Thanks to Roy’s “cut throughthe 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 ear-nestly believe are of prime importance. To my best knowledge, there arenot less than six comrades who already form the nucleus of a vigorouslocal in Vancouver. In addition, there are, on tap, comrades and sym-pathizers only waiting to be harnessed for socialist work. (That hodge-podge journal, Prose, with all its emotional confusions and straddling allsides of every question, seems to indicate the soil is ripe for a genuinesocialist local in Vancouver.) Can you fancy the James Kings, the RalphBrowns, the many other convinced socialists in Vancouver standing aloofjust because of the party name?

Finally (the clincher, I hope), Local Vancouver should give serious consid-eration to sending a fraternal delegate to the WSP conference in Boston,next Labor Day weekend. There are so many matters of common con-cern to be discussed and thrashed out: The Western Socialist, editorial,circulation, advertising, distribution, financing, format matters; waysand means of improving propaganda; review of the experiences and les-sons of the past few years; the question of the party name and other ref-erenda items that might arise from the conference for the considerationof the SPC. In fact, the last NAC meeting voted to invite Winnipeg tosend 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 ofMutual Aid. I forwarded your personal regards to him. Does he deal inradical literature?

Your sub to the WS has been referred to the circulation department. Ireceived a copy of the World Labor News. I imagine it was forwardedto me through your good graces. There has been a delay in getting outthe #1 - 1981 WS due to the printer having been rushed to the hospitaland the resulting havoc created in his shop. However, it now is readyfor mailing and will be in your hands within a week. You will note animprovement in the cover; it gives more room on the cover to feature thecontents and we hope it will increase store sales.

We are indeed encouraged by your kind words. The mail we have beenreceiving speaks volumes for the growing influence and prestige of theWS as an organ for revolutionary, scientific socialism. To me this is ahealthy indication of the ferment going on in men’s minds. You mayrecall Engels’ statement in the last section of Socialism, Utopian and Sci-entific that a revolutionary situation develops when mankind becomesaware that its unquestioned, accepted ideas no longer hold water. Thegap between the established ideas of revolutionary socialism and theaccepted ideas of capitalism is closing up. The imperceptible social forcesat work are the great ally of socialism, convincing the great majority ofthe historic necessity for socialism — else extinction. My short item inthe last issue of the WS, “Two Straws in the Wind,” had for its themethat the necessity for a sane world fit for human beings is now an estab-lished concept. On some level, the vast majority recognize that whatseemed sensible is no longer as sensible as they had thought.

It goes without saying that not only Views and Comments, but anyonedesiring to do so, always have the right to reprint items from the WS. Infact, the Industrial Worker has done so many times. Our only concern isfor revolutionary socialist knowledge and understanding to be spread aswidely as possible. No vanguard has a monopoly on socialist concern.The work of emancipation is the job of the entire working class, not ofany party or organization. Our whole position is rooted in the under-standing that the WSP is but the party of the working class — in thesense of the Communist Manifesto. The WSP is not going to do anythingfor the working class except to arouse their fervor, determination andenthusiasm for socialist objectives. The aroused class-conscious workerswill use their party as the lever of emancipation. (I’ll go into this more insome brief comments on Bakunin and Marx, later.)

I was happy to see your note that Harry Faunce had sent you a stack ofback copies of the WS. Thinking of Faunce reminds me of the impor-tance of persistent, patient, uncompromising work for socialism, regard-less of any disappointments and discouragement. There is no instrumentI know of for measuring the results of our work. By keeping on keepingon, we sow seeds that fall on both sterile and fertile soil. Our friendFaunce symbolizes the fertile soil. How often we find unexpected evi-dence confirming the importance of persistence, realizing that the acidtest of experience confirms the validity of the socialist case...

Realizing as I do that thrashing out the merits of the issues often leadsto clarity, I’m sure that a discussion contrasting the positions of Viewsand Comments and The Western Socialist would prove valuable. As for theWSP’s attitude, we are primarily concerned with issues, not personalities.Ad hominem arguments are meaningless and prove nothing. But suchdiscussions develop normally out of certain situations. Should you findan analysis in the WS that you believe should be repudiated, we wouldwelcome the opportunity to come to grips with your criticism. In fact,most issues of the WS contain an invitation to critics to submit theircriticisms to us.

Incidentally, I was amused by a slip of yours, namely your being enragedat Ashley Montagu’s plagiarizing “Kropotkin’s idea of mutual aid.” Youare not falling into Herbert Read’s category of British nobility, are you?Since when are Anarchists devotees of private property and copyrightlaws? The very essence of the book Mutual Aid is the recognition of socialcontributions to knowledge. Accumulated knowledge is not a personalprerogative. Are you saying that if it were not for Kropotkin there wouldbe no mutual aid? That is like saying that if it were not for Darwin, therewould be no organic evolution, or if it were not for Marx, there wouldbe no scientific socialism! Although there are variations of ability amonghuman beings, evolving knowledge is the social product of unfoldingsocial evolution. The Great Man theory belongs in the limbo of outwornsuperstitions. But then, you know that as well as I do. I don’t have toconvince you that the ideas expressed by Darwin, Marx or Kropotkinwere the products of their times. Conditions were ripe for their expres-sion even if Darwin, Marx and Kropotkin had never lived.

I can sympathize with your dilemmas of a home life immersed in Cathol-icism. However, inflexible, rigid Catholicism is not one whit worse thanflexible, wish-washy, Unitarianism with its cowardly, shame-faced “mate-rialism.” At one time, I had the very great delight of into being asked toa non-public debate with a Jesuit priest in the Sacred Heart church inNewton on Catholicism vs. Socialism, and as a result, two of the parish-ioners left the church and joined the party.[[9]](#footnote-10)

I would advise your contributor, Harold Henry, to read Wm. Bonger’sCriminality and Economic Conditions. In my opinion, this is the classicdevelopment of the socialist analysis of crime. It argues that crime is,basically, a violation of property rights. Surprising as it seems, Bonger,who was a Dutch scholar in the field of criminal law, was commissionedto write this volume by the American Institute of Criminal Law andCriminology. It can be obtained in the public library. Harold Henry’sarticle seems to stress that crime is the result of mental disturbances. I’msure that Views and Comments knows better.

Now for the Borkenau quote comparing Marx and Bakunin. Borkenausbasic misunderstanding of Marx is made clear by his statement: “Marx viewedprogressive capitalism as including parliamentary and political action ‘within’capitalism for purposes of administering capitalism.” This is a complete mis-interpretation of Marx’s writings. Re-reading The Civil War in France andThe Gotha Program will reveal that Marx made a distinction between therevolution overthrowing feudalism and establishing capitalism, and the revo-lution overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism.

Historically, socialism arises out of the conditions of capitalist develop-ment. Capitalism was a necessary stage in social evolution. Thus, in theconditions of the early and mid-19th century, when Marx was writing, itwas in the best interests of workers to support the speedy introductionand development of capitalism. Capitalism was to transform handicraftand individual production into the gigantic socialized machine of today,thereby creating an economy of (potential) abundance. It was capital-ism’s market economy, its drive for profits and its exploitation of labor,that made possible the shrunken economic world of today, with its rapidcommunication and transportation, and its high development of literacy— the very material conditions that give rise to the grave diggers of capi-talism: the class-conscious proletariat.

“Within” capitalism, is another question entirely. The capitalist state isthe central organ of power in the hands of the capitalist class. (Marxcalled it “the executive committee of the ruling class”). Whether we likeit or not, at this point in time, the state is the club that keeps us in sub-mission. 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 ofthe capitalist class. It is true that counterfeit socialists (including social-democrats and the 2nd International), holding attitudes of gradualismand reformism, have sought to administer capitalism in the name of“socialism,” but what has this to do with Marx? “Nothing could be moreforeign” to Marxism than to administer capitalism. (Refer to The CivilWar in France.) Borkenau has missed Marx’s point altogether.

Possibly what causes Borkenau’s confusion is his failure to distinguishbetween “parliamentarianism,” in the sense of using the parliament forthe purposes of administering capitalism, and the Marxian contentionthat the class-conscious proletariat must capture the state machinery forthe purpose of transferring the means of living from the hands of the par-asites into the hands of society as a whole. This is the socialist revolution:the working class, organized consciously and politically, conquering thepowers of government and transforming this instrument of oppressioninto the agent of emancipation and overthrow of capitalism. There is noimplication anywhere in Marx’s writings of the nonsense of parliamen-tary action “within” capitalism as alleged by Borkenau. With the socialistrevolution, the capitalist state will disappear, and in its place the people,democratically, will establish an administration of affairs appropriate tosocialist 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 surethat a new member is a convinced socialist. And being a convinced socialistdoes not mean being a Marxian pundit. It really boils down to the factthat a genuine socialist party, because of its objective and principles, is, andcannot be otherwise, controlled democratically by its membership. As Ishall try to illustrate below, its bond of comradeship and unity is rooted inthe barest minimum of socialist principles which may be summarized as:socialism is a product of social evolution; the socialist revolution is inher-ently democratic because of its nature of being conscious, majority, andpolitical; and that socialism is based on the social relations of a communityof interests between all the members of society and society as a whole. Therecan hardly be any compromise on these three general principles. Further, asocialist is one who recognizes and realizes that capitalism can no longer bereformed or administered in the interest of society or of the working class;that capitalism is incapable of eliminating poverty, war, crises, etc.; and thatthe times call for arousing the majority to become socialists to inauguratesocialism, now possible and necessary.

There exists the danger that if membership were extended to confusedsympathizers, alleged socialists, even non- and anti-socialists, then theparty could easily become transformed into such expressions as seenbelow. This will illustrate, I hope, the validity of the fear that the WSPwould cease being a genuine socialist party. (Incidentally, there is a bookreview in the next issue of the WS by Comrade Milne of Winnipegdealing with the history of the Socialist Party of Canada which is quitepertinent and revealing.)

1. The 2nd International. Under this category is included the parties ofSocial Democracy — the Labor Parties and “Socialist” Parties in Europe,Asia, the Antipodes, etc. Tolerance of every kind of confusion typifies theseparties. In common, they are all things to all men. In the acid tests, whenthe chips are down, they are revealed as supporters of wars and willingadministrators of capitalist governments. In a very tragic sense, they havediverted the workers from socialism and been the cause of so much disil-lusionment with socialist “futility” because avowed capitalist parties “stole”their programs. These “practical” parties have hindered the growth of thesocialist movement. The “Tory Socialism”’ of Churchill and the “creepingsocialism” of Truman and Kennedy proved more practical in success-fully accomplishing the goals of such organizations as the British LabourParty and the Socialist Party of America. And in these parties, policies aredecided by conferences and executive committees, rather than by referendaof the membership. The Companion Parties for Socialism can never growso large that they will not be governed by the membership. They delegateadministrative and procedural work to committees, but the membership,as a whole, pass on motions of conference dealing with principles and poli-cies (not routine matters), which are always submitted to referenda. Wedon’t have leaders, only spokesmen and administrators.
2. The 3rd and 4th Internationals. These Bolshevik groupings, includingthe Communist Parties over the world, the Trotskyites, and all the varioussplinter groups, usually revolve around personalities and “leaders.” They aredominated by the concept of a vanguard of “professional revolutionists.” Itis the responsibility of the vanguard to guide and lead their followers. Theyhave the appeal of being conspiratorial in nature. They stir the emotionswith their “grass roots” activities of organizing demonstrations and protestson any and all questions, ranging from cheaper milk, lower taxes, etc., toriots, etc., that will serve the interests of China or Russia.

Their concepts of the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat” and the “Transi-tional Period” are reflected in what they call “Democratic Centralism.”The control of the organization is from the top, who inform the mem-bership of “the line.”

1. The Socialist Labor Party. Prior to about 1903, the SLP was a truesocialist party. However, around 1903, DeLeon made the “discovery”that the Industrial Union is not only a more effective type of economicorganization for the workers, but that it is a revolutionary weapon andthe nucleus of the new society, socialism. Up until that time, with someminor and relatively moot exceptions, the SLP was sound on politicalaction, reforms, and Marxian economics . But this Industrial Unionconcept altered their concept of socialism and of the socialist revolutionin a way that is not borne out by either evidence or analysis.

(Note that prior to about 1903, there would have been no reason toestablish a WSP in the United States. The World Socialist Party is not incompetition with other organizations for the privilege of inauguratingsocialism, and the SLP was such an organization until then. Shouldthere ever appear, at any time, an organization dedicated to socialism,we would immediately make overtures for combining forces. How canthere be two socialist parties in one country? We recognize that it is notthe WSP, but the working class itself that will use its political victory tooverthrow capitalism. It is the politically organized conscious socialistmajority that will use the World Socialist Party as their instrument. Asthe Communist Manifesto emphasizes: it is the party of the workingclass. Note above the bond that binds us together.)

For purposes of this letter, let it suffice to say that the socialism the presentSLP envisages is but an extension of capitalist relations, even though theyretain the language of a “classless” society, much as do the Bolsheviks. Nowonder Lenin praised DeLeon’s “contribution” of Industrial Unions as thebasis for the “Soviets.” Their socialism is the Industrial Republic of Laborand they have a blueprint (the famous wheel) to illustrate its operation.The outstanding historic factor that lays the groundwork for socialism isthat socialism is based upon abundance made possible by the strides in themeans of production: technology. This very technology is no longer indus-trial but overlapping and integrated into a cohesive whole; production issocialized, in almost a literal sense, today. Socialism is not confronted withproblems of the organization of production, but rather with problemsof leisure, full lives and conditions worthy of human beings. (How farsuperior and more scientific is the Marxian projection of socialism.) Thepresent SLP and the WSP do not have the same objective.

Further, this misconception of socialism arises from their viewing theIndustrial Union as the revolutionary weapon. It can be conceded that theindustrial union has advantages as economic organizations of resistance forworkers within capitalism over craft and trade unions. But the SLP goeson to project the industrial union as a revolutionary weapon: “The ballotis as weak as a woman’s tears unless backed up by the economic might ofthe workers.” This splitting of the workers into two sections presumes thatthe majority of socialists who vote for socialism will support capitalismin their economic activities. In spite of some fine SLP pamphlets on thenature of the state, they have forgotten that whoever controls the centralorgan of power, the state, gains control of economic power, by the sametoken. Peculiarly enough, they have confused economic bases, economicinfluence, 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 riseto economic power. In order to get economic power, the new rising socialclass must first get in possession of the state powers. (The classic illustra-

tion, of course, is the revolution from feudalism into capitalism.) (Alsonote that no two revolutions are the same, but here we are dealing with theMaterialist Conception of History.)

Here is another distinction between the SLP and the WSP. It can truly besaid that the SLP is dogmatic and sectarian. Thinking is a violation of SLPdiscipline. Try to attend one of their classes as one interested in socialisttheory and see what happens. In about six weeks, you will be told you areno longer welcome unless you are sympathetic to their views. Try to get thefloor in discussion at one of their lectures. They will only allow questionsthat they approve. (It is true that they do not object to questions obviouslyopposed to socialism.) Arising out of their theories, like the Bolsheviks,they drop members for the most peculiar reasons, and the organization isdominated by the central body. They have for years refused to debate theWSP, though they did in 1918 and in 1936 or thereabouts, but will nolonger. They even refuse to exchange publications.

I had no intention of going into this in such length; I intended only toindicate 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 ofunfolding evidence, on the validity of the socialist case. Like any writtendocument, there is always room for refinements in phrasing. This appliesto our Declaration of Principles as well, and to all scientific writings. Inthe case of the WSP and its companion parties, such matters are andhave been decided upon by a referendum of the membership. (Anotherreason for assuring ourselves of a socialist membership.)

I do want to differentiate between specific statements and general anal-yses. We can often get involved in specific speculations, reservations,quibbles, etc., and then raise them to the dignity of a principle. As anexample: we emphasize that the ballot is the lever of emancipation. Wedo this just because the conscious, socialist majority takes political actionin order to be in a position to transfer the means of living from the handsof the parasites into the hands of society, as a whole. The ballot symbol-izes the nature of the socialist revolution. We advocate the ballot becausewe cannot visualize the need for a socialist majority to use violence. Vio-lence does not symbolize the socialist revolution. However, we can get alltangled up in speculations of projecting possible contingencies that mayexist 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 thatsocialism is inevitable it always implies: barring unforeseen catastrophessuch as astronomical collisions or the wiping out of the human race.However, given capitalism and its laws of motion, the next stage in socialevolution is socialism. That is why I enjoyed Lennie’s emphasis on theattitude in answering questions on the Application Blank.

This leaves two more items: civil liberties and reforms; and H-Bombprotests. We fight for civil liberties, i.e., free speech, etc., because itstrengthens our opportunities for socialist propaganda, and not as areform of capitalism. To call civil liberties for the propagation of socialisma reform is a far cry from our point of view. The vital distinction arisesfrom the objectives and not from the thing itself. Our opposition toreforms and reformism are just because their objectives are palliative innature and are fought for in order to make the system function moresmoothly. Though we do not advocate reforms nor fight for reforms,that does not mean that we refuse to accept reforms, as though we couldif we wanted to. Historically, reform activities have dissipated the earnestenergies of socalled socialists from doing any socialist work, whatsoever.The need for reforms is an all-time job. There is no end to ever-presentpressing emergencies that need immediate attention. A very conspicuouscharacteristic of capitalism is “burning issues.”

Likewise with H-Bomb marches, etc. They are, understandably, wor-ried about the alternative facing mankind: survival of the human raceor extinction, which translated into their language means: abolishingatomic weapons. But note well, if you please, their utter failure to realizethe alternative that really exists, in point of fact. There is no (and letme 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 thepresent insane one. Note that the activities are not directed against war,as such, or against capitalism that breeds war. (Confusion, worse con-founded.) If they are fighting for the “peaceful” uses of atomic energy,then they are fighting for the market economy with its production ofcommodities for profit. The “peace” they are supporting is the strugglesover conflicts of interest that breed wars.

To summarize: All such activities still leave the job left to be done, theonly job worthwhile and meaningful: making socialists!

Here we see the basic reason why we are small today. The great mass ofthe workers never hear the socialist message. Had all the enthusiasms andenergies of the past fifty years been harnessed for the spread of socialistknowledge and understanding, imagine how much more advanced therevolutionary movement would be today. The history of the “practicalsocialists” sneering at the “impossiblists and theoreticians” finds themlanding in the camp of capitalist politicians. There is no short cut tosocialism, short of socialist determination. Our latent strength lies inthe fact that science, truth, and above all, necessity is on the side of thescientific, revolutionary socialist movement.

There are encouraging signs on the horizon. The latest news from Irelandand British Columbia are inspiring, indeed. And even if the immediateprospects were gloomy, what other course of action lies in front of us?Socialism cannot be rammed down the throats of the majority againsttheir wishes. We have the glorious task of arousing our fellow workersto speedily introduce socialism. The alternative facing us is: socialism orchaos. We’ll keep on keeping on despite disappointments and discour-agements, 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’sWeekly which contained an article on the alert incident. I’m enclosing atypewritten copy, and I’m sending another copy along to Harry [Mor-rison, 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’mgoing to get the two Washington papers at the Newspaper Division ofthe NY Public Library. Also I’m going to check it in the Guardian, andalso the National Guardian, which I understand ran some info on itbetween November 15 and December 15.

So far I’m disappointed, because from the way I had originally receivedthe story (and the way I passed it on to you) the high level alert wentin, and there was exactly ten minutes left before our planes crossed thefail-safe point. My source assured me that that is the way the NationalGuardian wrote it up.

I’m going to do a good deal of research on this deal, and I’ll forwardcarbons of all the articles I dig up so that you can see them. On secondthought, I’m pretty sure that all these papers are available in the News-paper 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 inBoston. In that case I won’t bother.

At our last business meeting I gave a two-hour, hysterical dissertation onhow lousy our magazine was — going over it page by page. Then I handedout your current issue and went over that page by page as an example ofwhat a good radical magazine could be like, and what ours is god damnsure going to be like. I’m going to reprint your flier on “Charity” in eitherthis issue or the next issue — giving proper credit of course. I thinkthose fliers are a wonderful idea, and they’re extremely well done. Oddlyenough the one I probably enjoyed the most was the one on the LaborParty, which I was not going to order in the first place. My opinion onthat subject is substantially in agreement with Sam Weiner’s in his articlein the August issue of Views & Comments. Lo and behold you people takean identical position in that flier. I had expected that you’d endorse sucha party, and instead you denounce it just as we do.

Keep plugging, because time is fast running out. I don’t figure us forhaving 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 mailman 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 infor-mation about the Libertarian League and Views and Comments. Pleasereturn the letter to us after you have noted its contents.

Our National Administrative Committee decided not to forward youraddress to him without consulting your organization. We feel we havenot got the right to forward your address since we have no real knowl-edge about Gonzalez and his position in the Cuban regime. There isthe possibility of reprisals on your Havana comrades. This may be anunwarranted assumption on our part, but the history of the Commies— like all patriotic nationalists — is far from clean. It could not be oth-erwise, rooted as they are in the theory of the vanguard of “professionalrevolutionists” and the so-called “Transition Period” with its “Dictator-ship 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 tribalsocial relations into those of the industrial revolution and capitalism, inmuch the same way that the social system emerging in Russia and Chinais state capitalism and could be no other. (More on this score anon.)

I think you are unnecessarily harsh with your criticisms of Views andComments. It so happens I’m a member of the International Typograph-ical Union and know a little about layout, etc. I happen to have rightat my elbow your No. 39, August 1960, V&C. You should be proud ofthe fine craftsmanship in the voluntary labor that produced it. It is, ina sense, reminiscent of William Morris — a great printer and artist in somany varied fields. You can tell it was a labor of love. (It just goes throughmy mind that Paris Commune Day is in the offing. We remember theParis Commune partly because it demonstrates the untapped capacitiesof mankind when they are released for the common interests. The reac-tions of the bourgeoisie indicate that this first striving for a sane societystruck fear into their hearts.)

However, Views and Comments — in my view — does deserve criticismsfor confusing “economic power” by the workers within the framework ofcapitalism with “lever of emancipation,” which it is not, viewed scientifi-cally as a process of transformation. This flows from a failure to realize thenature of the state. (Unfortunately, I must drop this letter at this point, asI must take a nap before going to work. I work nights.) But the contrastof the “Labor Party” leaflet and the “Labor Party Illusion” article in V&CNo. 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 “economicpower” as long as they are wage slaves. Economic power has no meaningwhen it is confined to just withholding your labor power from produc-tion, which still leaves economic power in the hands of the masters. Eco-nomic 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 thestate by the feudal aristocracy. The success of the bourgeois revolution(capture of the state) transferred economic power into the hands of thenew 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 readthat letter as a minority viewpoint attacking the official Libertarian Leagueposition. Also, I sent Gonzales the last two issues of V&C so that he couldread our views on Cuba. Evidently he writes to all the publications on theleft, because M.S. Arnoni, editor and publisher of Minority of One waspresent at the debate at my invitation. He glanced down at Gonzales’ letterand said, “I think I know who that’s from. He writes to me all the time, andI recognize the handwriting.” As it happened I didn’t get Gonzales’ addressfrom Arnoni, though, but rather from another fellow to whom I mentionedthe existence of a critical letter from Havana — without even mentioningthe source mind you, and the guy said, “I bet I know who it’s from,” justlike that. The whole situation struck me as unique — everybody seemed toknow who he was without even hearing or seeing his name.

Back to Arnoni. He will be speaking at the Community Church in Bostonon 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 inNew York, and that he was somewhat of an Anarchist. Thus I invited himto our private debate on Cuba, and as it happened we had him chair themeeting. When I phoned him, however, he mentioned that he would bewith a couple from “Boston” and wanted to know if they could come withhim. Naturally I agreed. Later I got to talk to the “Boston” couple, theirname 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 theylived four blocks from my mother’s house in Somerville. Oddly enough, atthe time my own wife was in Framingham visiting her sister who just hada baby. All in all it was an evening of remarkable coincidences ... especiallywith Arnoni scheduled to speak at the Community Church where I wasmarried by Mr. Lothrop five years ago.

Re V&C again, the No. 39 issue which you cite, is the one issue that wehad 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 theLabor Party. Have you read the Wobbly stuff on the General Strike? Theydon’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 towork 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., Coordinatorof Anatomical Material for Tufts Medical School, to which Rab donated hisbody as an anatomical gift. It is apparently in response to a letter from Rabwhich is no longer extant. Excerpted here is the paragraph of Dr. Spector’sletter to which Rab responds.]*

.. .Once a body is sent to the Medical School by the Coordinator, thenthe Medical School uses the body for the promotion of anatomical sci-ence ... One statement [in your letter] bothers me namely, “I do notobject, however, to having a socialist message being given in place ofsuperstitious rituals.” Would you be good enough to tell me what youhad in mind by the phrase, “superstitious rituals” and the phrase “socialistmessage.”

*[To which Rab replied:]*

Dear Dr. Spector:

The key sentence in your letter, for me, was: “...the Medical School usesthe body for the promotion of anatomical science.” This is an excellentdescription of my desires.

.Like a true scientist, your bump of curiosity has not been dulled bythe vicissitudes of life. It is a credit to you. On an accompanying sheetyou 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 revolu-tion, have revealed, on the basis of evidence, the physical-material natureof existence. At long last, man has become aware, for example, that, bio-logically, he is the product of organic evolution; that life itself is but amore complex organization of the inorganic; that the earth had its originin the sun, etc., etc.

No longer does man, that remarkable animal with his brain capable ofgeneralizations, require such hypotheses as are found in Genesis, with itsAdam and Eve story; its mythological explanations for the origins of lifeand the earth, etc. It can be said, almost axiomatically, that the scientificmethod, has become established as the valid approach to get meaningfulanswers. This is so, in spite of the fact that most people have not acceptedscientific conclusions in their rationalizations. It is significant, indeed,that no one is religious any longer about the things he knows. His reli-gion is confined to his beliefs (such as the awesome, the mysterious, theunknown). It has been aptly said that with every step forward scientificknowledge takes, religious superstition retreats. This is a relatively newphenomenon. The history of religious opposition and resistance to suchconcepts as the round world, the heliocentric theory, the germ theory,the theory of evolution is well known. But, in the acid test of corrobora-tion on the basis of unfolding evidence, science emerges vindicated. Thetraditions of the past die hard. Men’s ideas do not keep an even pace withnewer 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 “necro-mancy, witchcraft, clay images, sorcery and betel juice.” But how doyou distinguish the Laotian medicine from Christian Science healing byabsent practitioners, the power of prayer, the Mary statues and SaintChristopher medals, the banishing of evil spirits, a throwback to thebloodletting cures? Black magic still serves the role of medicine. It isamusing to observe one religion sneer at the practices of others. Jews ridi-cule the “Immaculate Conception”’ and the “Trinity,” while themselvessubscribing to the “Angel of Death” and Rosh Hashonoh (the latter par-ticularly untenable in light of modern geology).

This week’s Time Magazine (March 17,1961) has two powerful illus-trations 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 difficultto reconcile the supernatural with the findings of modern science. Theyare caught in the dilemma of apologetics.

SOCIALIST MESSAGE

In order of social evolution, a new social system — socialism — now islooming on the horizon. Yesterday’s handicraft tool has become trans-formed into today’s gigantic socialized machine. The profit motive andconflicts of the market economy cannot be adapted to the requirementsof 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 acommodity society. The primary consideration of commodity produc-tion must be sale. No sales no production.

Capitalist society was a necessary and useful stage in social evolution. Itsped up the introduction of literacy, it fostered rapid communicationand transportation, it hastened the growth of science, it laid the ground-work for the solution to the problem of production.

Now the conditions are ripe for producing for the needs and wants ofmankind. Abundance has become the order of the day. Cooperationbased on the harmony of interests between all the members of societyand society as a whole has become possible and necessary. The alternativeto socialism is chaos and possible extinction.

Socialism (not a brainstorm, a scheme, nor a utopia) appears on the scenebecause the conditions of existence have made the times propitious for aworld fit for human beings based on cooperation and brotherhood. Bynature, homo sapiens is a gregarious, social animal. If he weren’t, he couldnot have survived against the adversities of nature. (The September 1960issue of the Scientific American is must reading for a review of the latest find-ings on the evolution of the human species in every field of investigation.)

Socialists appreciate such manifestations of inspiring social thinking andbehavior as is manifested by the Memorandum.\* It also indicated that out-worn ignorance and metaphysical fears of “life after death” are giving wayto enlightened understanding. Similar projects would have been incon-ceivable in the past because of the predominance of superstitions.

The very attitude implied in the Memorandum is a forecast ofhow wonder-fully human beings will behave when the social environment is favorable.

**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 couldstand on its own as is, but lucky indeed am I to be so “rich” (to borrow anunfortunate vestige of traditional thinking), in what counts.

Which reminds me. I am still working in the cellar and came across twoitems of interest to you. One was a letter my mother wrote on the limita-tions of school education in her days. Her theme was that the school systemis 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 poorwith their difficulties, and the schools with their failure to develop the child’scapabilities. Shall I send it to you?

The other was a paper I wrote when I was at Ohio Northern University onAgricultural Societies. I based it on my concept of socialism at that time. Itwas written when I was in the SPA and before I had any genuine glimmer ofscientific, 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 fouryears before he had just recently moved to Toronto. I asked him if he hadany names or persons I might contact by phone while I was in Montreal. Igave him your address for his information.

I am looking forward to seeing you both when I arrive in Montreal for twodays July 27 and 28. 1 am anticipating the pleasure of Max and Jennie’ssmiling 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 ofMontreal to 4555 Draper Ave. To take a bus would be foolish, being tootime-consuming with bus schedules being what they are. Besides, I’d enjoya leisurely drive to Montreal. I really appreciate very much your concern forme!

By the way, if it wouldn’t inconvenience you, could you phone Abramo-vitz, if he knows Masses and Peggy Cassidy’s phone numbers. I just mightphone them while I’m in Montreal. Time will not permit my visiting any-body, as you can well realize.

On the Judge Parker and Mary Worth comics, Ella is mailing them to youregularly. I’d suggest you first check the dates on the cartoons for the sakeof chronological order. Chubbi asked me why don’t I give you a sub to theGlobe. Chubbi is staying over for a couple days.

I imagine you will hear from others about the picnic. Everyone seemed tohave 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 hadreconnected on his recent trip there.]*

My Dear Sam (Abramovitz):

A note of appreciation for a kindred spirit. I’m looking forward to seeingmore of you in the future, both in Boston and in Montreal. One thing I can’tpromise is to be a good correspondent. This is my great weakness, neglectand 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 favorablyimpressed 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’sBrighter than a Thousand Suns, I was thinking only in terms of a bookon theoretical physics. It so happens that Paul and I were discussingsome recent books, such as The Strange Story of the Quantum, by BarreshHoffman, which he recommended highly, that my mind was workingcockeyed. The minute I started reading the book on the plane, I remem-bered reading it when it first came out. I also had read another book bythe same author on his visits to various inaccessible high priority researchcenters. It was a remarkable book of keen reporting and significant obser-vations. I can’t recall the title of the book. I consider both books impor-tant documents of the times. After letting Harry Morrison look throughit, 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, “cliches.” In a very real sense it belongs in the same cat-egory as “dogmatic” and “sectarian.” These are the favorite cliches thatare applied to Marxism, in general, by the hosts of bourgeois critics ofMarxism, the intellectual dilettantes, the reformers and do-gooders,the progressives, the Labor Parties, and the “leftists.” Not that I’m tag-ging you as a bedfellow of these schools of thought. These labels are thefavorite criticism of those who consider themselves as being practical andrealists. Ironically, these “practical realists” are impractical as can be incoming to grips with the social problems of the day and, especially, inknowing what to do about them. The word “cliche” has become a shib-boleth hurled against Marxist thought.

From your use of the phrase “Marxian methodology” I realize you arebut 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 orfaith; that socialism is a matter of knowledge based on a scientific under-standing of social forces, and that if the evidence of unfolding eventsrepudiates 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 soundunderstanding of the nature of capitalism as developed from socialistknowledge, in order to make an intelligent appraisal of the New Partynonsense. Yet, these New Party supporters fancied themselves as wellacquainted with Marxian cliches, of which they really had no inkling.

Another aspect of the same general import: When scholars really cometo grips with scientific problems and they search for objective answers,they reach Marxian conclusions, whether their fields are in the exact orin the social sciences. No longer is it possible to get meaningful answerswithout recognizing the physical-material nature of existence, which isthe heart and core of Marxism. Thus we see the greater strides in theexact sciences than in the social sciences. Capitalism does not fear thetruth in the exact sciences because of the very needs of capitalism itself.

Note, on this score — how this applies to Marxian economics, in partic-ular — I’ll make the unqualified statement that nothing has taken placein recent developments during the past 20 years that has even remotelyrepudiated the wage-labor and capital basis of 1961 capitalism. This alsoapplies to the following: the prime object of production is the produc-tion of commodities to be sold on the market with a view to profit; thatthe accumulation of capital is accompanied by and concomitant with theproduction of surplus values; that there does take place a class struggleboth economically and politically; that the transformation of ownershipfrom entrepreneurs to gigantic combines and state ownership still finds aclass whose members are the “eaters of surplus value,” even though theymay be government bond holders, bureaucracy or a party. The generalanalyses of Marxian economics even on problems of inflation, money,gold, etc., have not been found invalid. But, we have seen, time and timeagain, new fads in modern economics come and go, popular today andforgotten 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 becomesocialists? 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 seestanding in the way of socialism is the political ignorance of the workers.Socialism is possible, necessary and practical today the moment the greatmajority become conscious of their interests. The notion that the workersare dumb is plain hogwash. They are confused, especially the “friends” ofsocialism, speaking in the name of socialism. It still remains the case that,aside from the feeble voices of the World Socialist Movement, the greatmass of the workers are not exposed to socialist fundamentals.

Our task is hard enough as it is. But despite the discouragements anddisappointments, it takes a heap of understanding to realize the forcesworking for socialism. The greatest ally we have is capitalism itself. Thegreatest teacher of all is experience. Eventually, all the groping and mis-taken diversions into futile efforts of reforming and administering capi-talism will run their course. People learn from their mistakes. Necessityis the latent strength of socialism. Truth and science are on the side ofsocialism. Nothing is stronger than an idea come of age. (These are notjust trite cliches.) It is easy to be cynical and sneer at socialist efforts.But, with mankind facing the alternative of socialism or chaos, you don’thave to be a Pollyanna to realize that we are on the eve of significantsocial changes. Already, you have seen indications in this direction in thethinking of men everywhere. But I had no intention of writing any suchletter 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 onrambling remarks as they occur to me. This will be an unofficial answerto various and sundry matters of interest. So, overlook any incoherenciesor illogical (irrelevant) non-sequiturs.

First of all, I love you both and miss both of you very much. Besides, I’mproud of you both, On my trip to Detroit and Chicago I was temptedon several occasions to brag about you both but refrained because I didn’twant to interfere with proud parents and grandparents’ moments ofglory. All I ever said was that my children were socialists and as for theiraccomplishments let their works speak for themselves. (How was that forrestraint.) (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; slightlyless 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 resultedfrom the recent Conference. Every Monday and on an occasional Fridaythere are members working in headquarters on clerical details. We arehaving a Party business meeting tonight and your requests for pamphlets,etc., will be turned over to them for immediate processing. You got thecircular letters all right? I’ll tell them to rattle off an extra 100 for safety’ssake. I assume you received the first batch.

Incidentally, somehow I had a sneaking suspicion that Boom mightmake a surprise visit to the Conference. I did send him, c/o you, a copyof Hardy’s article in the latest SS on the Khrushchev promises. It shouldbe very helpful to him in clarifying the confusions. I can really under-stand how a literal acceptance of the Khrushchev statements could bevery thrilling, if they are taken at face value, instead of being understoodin 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 Dialec-tical Materialism, M.C.H., Labor Theories of Value Before Marx, Valueand Price, Money, and Surplus Value. They are all short — between 20minutes and a half-hour. They are gems of clarity and brevity. (Make mytapes sound very inferior). Billie is going to make two copies of Gilmac’stape for general distribution: one Down Under and the other throughout

Canada. What a valuable means of conducting a meeting for educationaland propaganda purposes! What a help in those areas where just suchtapes are especially needed. As for my Montreal tape, I was satisfied withthe contents but very unhappy with my sloppy manner of talking. Itseemed to me that the contents rose above the delivery and made themuseful, in spite of the speaker. If results count, the talk was well worth-while only because the subject matter treated made it worth listening toand it was obviously well received. Witness just two reactions: the sparkplug 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 whatyou say about Trevor Goodger-Hill’s interest in the Party.

Which reminds me: Application blanks for Montreal must be obtainedfrom the SPC. Write J. Milne, 601 Garwood Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba... Incidentally, Jim Milne has not only fond but vivid memories of you asa 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, espe-cially, that dynamo George, are doing on behalf of the Montreal Gilmacactivities. Mail your bill for expenses direct to the NAC c/o Harry Mor-rison. I don’t think it would be fair to bill Winnipeg because our treasuryis in the best shape in years on account of some good donations. And,after all, we are really one organization, except for national consider-ations for organizational procedures and political activities.

I have 2 copies of Anthropogenesis in the house. One may be George’s. Atall events, I shall mail it to him under separate cover.

On the Toronto TV, it so happens that Comrade Edith Canter in Detroithas a friend in Toronto connected with a radio station who may be ofhelp for getting Gilmac a hearing. She has written the Catts but I don’tknow what has resulted as yet.

I was hoping that Gilmac might have an opportunity to see somethingof New York. And he still can! I don’t see why he must return to Bostonon the 12th. He can return on the 14th just as well. This may work outvery 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 His-tory, Bronx Park, top of the Empire State Building, and other things hewill never have another opportunity to see. At all events, I’ll take it upwith the local Party meeting tonight and get their reactions. If they agreeI’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 ispriceless.” The Youngs have friends in Norwalk, Ct., and are thinking ofcoming to the USA next year. By the way, he is a school teacher and oneof the better SPGB speakers. Unfortunately, you did not meet him in Eng-land. He just came back from guiding a group of American school teachersthrough Europe. He has the same impression of Spain you had. He writesan interesting letter, as does Mrs. Young. They sound like a wonderfulcouple. He writes under the pen name, Horatio, in the SS. Her letters speakvolumes for her concern and understanding, and she has a mind of her ownand is not afraid to think and express her views. She usually writes on behalfof Harry, because he has my negligent habits in correspondence.

By the way, when you see Sam Abramovitz, remind him I’m looking for-ward to getting the French magazine with the article he referred me to. Alsowe got a letter from Peggy Cassidy in Montreal. Have you met her yet? Ifnot, try to contact her. We are trying to cooperate with her in getting infor-mation 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 Dis-cussion Group. It seems that it will succeed in filling a gap that exists inDetroit today. There is no activity worthy of the name taking place in anyof the so-called “radical” organizations. There was a desire apparent for justsuch an activity by the WSP Two committees were elected, to get a per-manent hall, and to get furniture for the hall. (Ask Gilmac about Detroit.)Edith Canter is going to arrange socials and entertainments. In fact shehad a good folk singer at this organizational meeting with his guitar andworking-class and revolutionary songs, besides a buffet lunch and socialtime 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 methat she has really missed WSP contacts. It was a pleasure to see howshe desired closer associations with real work. She has problems, as youknow: four sweet children and housework and school teaching and othertime consuming tasks. If you remind me, I have interesting news to tellyou of a personal nature that I’m proud to have been a factor in straight-ening 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 equipmentand 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 andI carried out. We did get 4 newsstands to display the WS. These wereall stands that featured out-of-town papers. (This is an idea for Mon-treal 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 interviewedby newspaper reporters on the basis of his Taxi union activities. Onthe University of Chicago and Roosevelt University campuses we gotencouraging responses in the sense that eyes lit up at the mention of asocialist meeting. I got one sub on campus and three came down to themeeting. (I forgot to mention, we got a new member in Detroit and laidthe groundwork for reviving the Detroit local.) In Chicago, we have twogood prospects for new members. We have a lot of spade work to doin Chicago, for we never did have any activity there. Next year we arethinking of going to Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Now for more personal matters. I changed over your closet into a linencloset. 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 decoratedfor a leaf extension on the radiator cover for the telephone. It alwayslooked like a nice piece of furniture, now it really looks unique. Ann wasthe 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 reallydid not realize what his object was in coming. He wanted to get into theHome for the Aged and we were not aware of this. We all feel terribleabout this. Especially cruel was that the relative that invited him (sheshall 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 fineexamples of socialist behavior. To tell the truth, I don’t blame him forit has all the appearances. It only proves what I’ve always contended: Itis easy to condemn. I’ve been called “Jesus Christ,” so often for being“naive” and “trusting” and so forth. We always assume we know, andmore often than not, we really don’t know the true facts. It is very easy toassume a position of judging. Unfortunately we ask “logical” questionswhy and how do you explain, etc. I call such questions, district attorneyquestions. Another thing, we have lost that very precious thing: sympa-thetic understanding. It is a pity! I didn’t mean to get off on this tack butI’m just taking advantage of you to unburden myself. Better not mentionanything about this! I can’t help but say that one of the severest indict-ments of capitalism is what it does to human beings.

I’m surprised that George objects to his instructor who understands theChristian basis of ethics, society, literature and what have you. He mustbe one of those damned atheistic materialists. What kind of guy did youmarry? 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 arenow 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 thisletter (that’s the kind of typist I am), so I’ll close now. I warned you itwould 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) hasapproved your membership in the World Socialist Party of the UnitedStates. Here’s my hand! Especially since I had the thrill of witnessing atclose hand your enthusiasm and devotion to socialist aims and activities.

There are two items in your Application Blank that could be misunder-stood by those who did not have the opportunity to speak with you per-sonally as, Comrades Orner, Gilmac and myself did.

The NAC has instructed me to write you about these two points and toenclose another Application Blank for you to fill out for the records only.

Both items appear in your answer to Question 5: “Must we have leadersto obtain our object?” Your answer was “Yes. to educate the workers politi-cally and economically towards socialism and community government.”

The primary objective of this question was to discover if the applicantbelieves that we must have leaders (great men) to direct their followers(blind supporters) into a socialist society. Otherwise, this question has nosignificance.

Teachers are not leaders any more than writers or speakers are leaders.Their function is to spread knowledge and understanding so that theworkers, the conscious majority, may emancipate themselves. Quitea different story, is it not? (In the interview with you at the Glicmanmeeting in Detroit hearing your answers to the Application Blank yougave an excellent explanation on this very point, so we are well aware ofyour understanding of this matter. It was only the poverty of languagethat is involved in the answer you wrote down.)

The other item was the “community government” quoted above. Theword “government” is often confused with the word “administration.” Itis a very common misconception, until one realizes that “government” isbut a synonym for the “state,” that is, rulers and ruled; governors and gov-erned. (Although all governments have a secondary function of admin-istering social affairs, it is a secondary function that is subordinate to itsprimary function of ruling society in the interest of the ruling class.)

Where the social relationships of private property exist, there is a need forstate machinery (a government) to keep the people in check and undercontrol, as well as to protect the national ruling class interests against therivalries of foreign “enemies.” Thus, we have had governments in chattelslave, feudal, and capitalist societies. Primitive tribal societies were typi-cally administered communally and had no governments, as such.

Socialism is a classless society, without rulers and ruled. a genuine democ-racy where there exists a real community of interests between all themembers of society and society as a whole. It is a social administration ofaffairs where everyone cooperates in the common interests according tohis abilities and desires; where human beings live useful, interesting andmeaningful lives.

In this connection, Question 3 on the Application Blank has special sig-nificance. It asks: “To establish socialism, must the workers first gaincontrol of the powers of government through their political organiza-tion?” It is the recognition that the state is the central organ of power inthe 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 fromthe parasites, who own them, to society, where they belong. This is theonly function or need the working class has of the state/government. Assoon as the revolution has accomplished this task, the state is replacedby the socialist administration of affairs. There is no government in asocialist society.

Yours for a world fit for human beings, here and now.

**QcTOBER 13, 1961**

*[The following note was enclosed in the same envelope as the above letter toMike 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 anobject lesson that it is not necessary to be Marxian pundits to be quali-fied for membership. I wish you could meet the comrade. He could be asymbol of the common conception of an “average, overalls worker.” Heoozes genuine devotion to socialism in every pore of his body. He is afar cry from a scholar, but a worker eager and anxious to do what he canfor socialism. And he has a real understanding of what it is all about. Buthe is not “literate” in the scholastic sense. Over the past nine months hehas bought all kinds of literature to read, leaflets to distribute, a lifetimesub and made substantial contributions. He reminded me of George, inthe sense of being a dynamo, but he lacks George’s skills and finesse. Itis the Mike Stimacs who are the backbone of the movement, when thechips are down. Even his very name seems to fit him. If one were to writea novel of a factory worker, the name “Mike Stimac” seems to fill thebill. He worked hard to push the Detroit meetings, but he is no GeorgeGerell — 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 wasoffered the chief resident physician job in Stanford University Hospital.He was very flattered to receive such an offer but he prefers to settlearound 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’mreally in the dark as to what transpired. You (Whoa! I see I must stop here.)

Papa Rab

*[I wrote this to Rab from Montreal in response to the letter on the previouspage. The rest of it is rambling and personal. ]*

**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 aboutthe Detroit Discussion Group. Even before I could answer, I had to con-sult the NAC for their opinions. On top of this, I was involved in anavalanche of work: the time-consuming work of the WS editorial workwith Comrade Morrison on editing, proofreading, revising, laying outdummy, etc. Then the job of transcribing Gilmac’s talk on tape on Dia-lectical Materialism for the Western Socialist. (It is in the new issue aboutto 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, includingworking for a living, that was responsible and not neglect or unconcern.

I trust you found Comrade Catt’s letter helpful for the discussion groupprocedures. Special efforts should be made in Detroit for new subs forthe WS and SS, especially the WS. Also efforts should be made to getmore newsstands.

I looked through the periodical, Correspondence, that Comrade Ornerforwarded to me. (It was Vol. V Oct. 1961.) 1 had never seen it orheard 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 theWobblies, anarchists and similar groups. Their “instincts” are genuinelyproletarian. I have a sort of a bond for them. From the issue I saw, I havean impression that their thinking is along such lines. When the chips aredown, as they were in Spain, their activities were neither pro-Russian norpro-liberalism and patriotic. They are not in the camp of capitalism, atleast not consciously, in the same sense as the Bolsheviks, Social Demo-crats or social reformers.

Just because of their misunderstandings of Marxian science, their grasp of thesocial forces at work is limited. In spite of their “instincts,” they do spreadserious confusions, as noted in their critical attitude to the political nature ofthe socialist revolution: the highest expression of the class struggle.

As soon as time permits, I hope to write a letter to them briefly summa-rizing my criticisms, such as: James Boggs’s view that “everybody in theU.S. should have a right to a job.” Or “all the proceeds of American pro-ductivity and taxation should go to these purposes (education, medicalcare, etc.).” What socialists oppose, above all, is jobs, the very badge ofslavery and exploitation. Under socialism, the social relations are those ofcommon right of access by all men to satisfy their needs and wants. Jobsare not “rights” except in a bourgeois sense. As for taxes, they are essentialto the maintenance of the capitalist state. In fact, in the long run, theworkers don’t pay taxes, which are based on property ownership. All thathappens is that the workers function as transfer agents via withholdingtaxes, sales tax and the like, resulting from the quarrels among the varioussections of the capitalist class to shift the burden of taxation. As far as theworkers 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 objectiveand he can write. We could use his abilities and style in the WS. But, he seesa “socialist humanity” in Cuba. I only wish it were true. What he actuallysaw were encouraging signs of growing maturity and evolution of thinking aswell as indications of what can take place when an idea comes of age.

The dilemma of Cuba and of the new “independent” native nations ofAfrica and Asia is their belated emergence into capitalism in a shrunkenworld already ripe for socialism in the mid 20th century. They are too latefor capitalism and too early for socialism. They can only function as newstate 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 classesand 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 revolutionarysocialist movement by the Russian Revolution. The energies and enthu-siasms for socialism were dissipated and diverted from socialism. Disil-lusioned by Russian developments of the validity of the socialist case,superstitions now develop concerning mixed economies and fascist ornew types of capitalisms appearing on the historic scene and other new“profundities.” Socialism has been retarded many years by the erroneousconcepts 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 Revolutionwas not a socialist one. A socialist revolution there, in the absence of asocialist revolution in the West, was not as yet possible in 1917. Thislesson 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 Cor-respondence, to be used as a “Reader’s View,” if they wish. I honestly don’tknow when I’ll be able to get my desk clear to tackle it the way I wouldlike to.

To Kobus: special regards to Mary. Give Stimac a special shake of thehand. I was very impressed by his enthusiasms for socialist principlesand for WSP policies. He is the genuine article. The Stimacs are the realbackbone of the movement.

To Edith: Special regards to your daughter. Give my very best to all thoseI 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 answeryour last letter (a very thrilling one to me). I’ve just completed the dummypages 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, especiallyworthy of review in the discussion group because of some prevalent con-fusions regarding American “fascism.” It is amazing the many immediateand “burning issues” that constantly crop up to divert “revolutionists”and “leftists” from socialism, as though anything could be more cur-rent than socialism itself, which is the real burning issue. The realizationthat Russia had put back socialism many years gave rise to my articleon the “Dilemma of Africa” in the new issue. It is tragic to observe theexcitement of so many sincere devoted partisans of Cuba, Africa and Asiafor the growing “socialism” (translated: state capitalism) taking place.Unwittingly, these enthusiasms are obstacles and hindrances to socialistwork. It is about time that friends of socialism realized that socialistwork 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 connec-tion, this fellow, Devore, of Edmonton, Canada, has a swell article onCatch Phrases and Slogans. All in all, this is one of our better issues andshould prove to be very helpful to the Detroit comrades in clarifying theissues involved. The great pity is to see this refusal to learn the lessons ofexperience and to observe the persistence of “socialist” superstitions thatmerely echo the old cliches of “practical realism.” It is amusing to listento the scorns and sneers directed against “dogmatic sectarians” by thosewho cling to proven futilities in spite of the evidence of the workingsof social forces. I trust that 11 Faneuil Hall Sq. sent you the back issuescontaining our criticisms of the New Democratic Party in Canada thatyou requested.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I sent to Correspondence. It will have to sub-stitute for a personal discussion for the time being. By the way, it is inter-esting to note that Views and Comments (Anarchists, mind you, who arecritical of Marxism) have a better grasp of Cuban developments than doesCorrespondence. Weiner, editor ofViews and Comments, has a well- docu-mented article in a recent issue of the Industrial Worker (IWW) quotingfrom original sources in Cuba on the relations between Castro and theCuban rebels. It is very revealing reading, especially in view of the character-istics that distinguish a socialist revolution from bourgeois insurrections.

It is a pity that circumstances thwart the active participation of com-rades from other places, to be side by side with the three Detroit stal-warts. Under the circumstances, you are doing valiant work. The impor-tant thing is that, through your efforts, many who would not otherwisebe exposed to socialist influences are becoming aware of the socialist case.Here we see in action, socialism in practice. Note well, you cannot sepa-rate socialism in practice from socialism in theory. The very essence ofsocialist theory is democracy — the conscious, majority, political natureof the socialist revolution. Socialism is not the result of blind faith, fol-lowers, or, by the same token, vanguards and leaders. Nothing is morerepugnant to socialism than clever strategy and conspiratorial tactics.Socialism is not possible without socialists. What makes socialist workstirring and inspiring is not that there are short cuts and royal roads, butthat there is nothing else worth a tinker’s damn. The seeming failures, thedisappointments and discouragements, the slow growth, only indicatethat socialist work is not an easy task. Our satisfaction is that the latentstrength of the movement is that it makes sense, and when the greatmajority wake up and socialist ideas come of age, then socialism, a worldfit for human beings, becomes invincible.

I enjoyed your descriptions of the Discussion Group activities. It was anobjective report. It reminded me of the past. It recalled to memory thepicnics, concerts, dances, singing, socials of bygone days in the move-ment. The growth of a social life and esprit de corps tied to socialist emo-tions and determination is a true barometer of growing maturity. The eveof socialist revolution will be dominated by such thrills. When rootedin the drive for socialism, it becomes an indomitable force. The greatindictment 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. 1 joined the SPAin 1909. I have seen ups and downs in socialist emotions. Just recently,I skimmed through a volume of Wm Morris’ letters and noted the senti-ments for socialism expressed in many ways, one of which was a con-cert at which there were readings, music, recitations, community singingwith Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, Belfort Bax, Wm Morris, George

Bernard Shaw (in his earlier days) and many others participating. Wehad it in Boston during the Hayward Place days. We had it very inspir-ingly in Detroit in the 1915 - 1918 period.

Your jazz musicians and their unassuming love of each other and theircooperative behaviors are normal for human beings; even capitalism hasnot been able to uproot man’s gregariousness. What capitalism has doneto human beings makes it unworthy of any support, especially in 1962when conditions are ripe for socialism. You may be surprised to learnthat our Dock Square headquarters was the place to go if you wanted realjazz. Three jazz musicians became members of the party. Nat Hentoffattended our study classes.

Finally, as for the next Party Conference. Personally, I’m all for holdingit in Detroit, as you will note in the NAC minutes. There is a seriousdrawback and that is the difficulty of key workers in the detail andadministrative phases of the party work going to Detroit. Milne in Win-nipeg would go to either Detroit or Boston. The Catts would go to eithercity. I suspect that Karla and George Gerell from Montreal would preferDetroit, only because of her reaction to your letter. (You rememberKarla? She married a Montreal comrade and they are both members ofthe SP Canada. She visited us over the holidays.) I’m afraid that BritishColumbia comrades would find it difficult to attend. The decision willbe made by the majority vote of the party referendum and I would notbe 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 rev-olutionary socialist movement. The past few weeks have witnessed a minorbreakthrough. Several youngsters have manifested an aroused interest in thesocialist movement, whose only object is the inauguration of a sane worldworthy of human beings which has at last become possible, practical andnecessary. 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 stimulatedmy hope that there remains in the Western Hemisphere a party advocatingtrue, democratic and scientific socialism . I have learned that “socialist”parties are all too often either archaic hero-worship cults or mere appendagesof the “Democratic” Party. Judging by the Declaration of Principles of theWSP, however, the WSP is a modern, intelligent working-class party andone that merits the support of every socialist ... I’d like to get in contact withthe nearest local or nearby member . I would like to learn more about theWSP 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 matu-rity of scientific understanding coupled with revolutionary fervor. All of thenew contacts were the products of the WS and their other reading ratherthan the results of personal associations and discussions — usually the moreproductive source of new recruits. It is reminiscent of one of Marx’s com-ments: “20 years go by and you don’t see the progress of a single day and thencomes a day in which is crystallized the progress of 20 years.”

As long as I’m writing to you, I’m enclosing some correspondence withViews and Comments. Because of your comments on Views and Com-ments, I thought you’d find them of interest. Please return them when youare through with them.

I’m a poor correspondent. It takes something “mandatory,” to get me to thetypewriter (I’m a slow, incompetent typist and an excellent hen-scratcher;“illegible hieroglyphics” would be a compliment). However, should you everdesire to come to grips with some problem of theory or any other matter, donot 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 atime when man is seeking the mastery of space, it is well to have remindersfrom time to time of earth hazards. But what do such reminders teach?”

Uncle Dudley notes that the Physicians for Social Responsibility organi-zation 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 ofcauses. The basic cause for modern wars — including nuclear war — iscapitalism, with its production for sale and its accompanying conflicts ofnational economic interests.

Conditions are now ripe for socialism, i.e., production for use and whereall mankind cooperate in the common social interests. In a sane worldfit for human beings the social forces breeding wars disappear. It is timefor a breakthrough to a society in harmony with the tremendous techno-logical developments of the last 100 years.

**TUNE 7, 1962**

*[The young man to whom this next letter is addressed was the recipient of aletter from Rab welcoming him into the WSP in a letter dated Feb 3, 1962(above). After a few months, the young man resignedfrom the Party. ]*

Dear Comrade Jim Williams,

Needless to say, we are reluctant to accept the resignation of a comradewhilst he is coming to grips with the fundamentals of socialist analyses.Thinking and re-examination are not violations of socialist discipline. Itis no question of “heresy” that is involved, rather a matter of examiningthe evidence and basing our ideas and attitudes on this evidence.

In this letter, I will attempt to establish what is a socialist, and what arethe qualifications for membership in the WSP

A socialist is one who understands that capitalism can no longer bereformed or administered in the interests of the working class or of society;and that capitalism is incapable of eliminating its inherent problems ofpoverty, wars, crises, etc. Further, a socialist recognizes that since thematerial conditions — with the single exception of an aroused socialistmajority — are now ripe for the inauguration of socialism, socialism canoffer a viable solution for those social problems.

The WSP is made up of socialists who share a unity of agreement on theabove simple generalizations. Note that we are not engaged in a compe-tition with other organizations in a contest to emancipate the workers,because we recognize that the workers are fully capable of emancipatingthemselves, once they become socialists. Just for the above reasons, it isquite unlikely that there ever would ever be two socialist parties in anyone country. The WSP would have no other alternative but to mergewith any other group of real socialist workers appearing on the sceneorganized for the same purpose as we are.

On the other hand, we do oppose all the so-called working-class partieswhich compromise with capitalism and do not uphold the socialist case.When the workers become socialists, they will not need a vanguard partyto lead them. They will organize consciously and politically to emanci-pate themselves.

As to any fears that there is no room for differences of opinion in asocialist party, this simply isn’t so. Socialists have varying opinions onmatters of a speculative nature, on interpretations of current events, onattitudes on music, painting and other cultural matters, specific aspectsof 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 govern-ments; trade unions (not unionism) are anti-working class today; and ahost of others.

On the other hand, here are some items on which all members wouldagree: The conscious, majority, political nature of the socialist revolu-tion; the material nature of existence; Marxian science on MaterialistConception of History; the Law of Value; the Class Struggle; attitudeson leadership, reformism, and religion; the general nature of socialism asa system of society.

It would be wonderful, indeed, if circumstances could permit you tobe in Boston for the Conference. You would find a congenial socialistenvironment.

**JUNE 14, 1962**

My dear Bob (Calese):

Your letter, draft manuscript and $5.00 check arrived OK. The spirit ofyour letter spoke volumes for you as a person. I admired your attitudevery much. Incidentally, the validity of socialism or the socialist revolu-tion does not hinge on the character of individual socialists. The acidtest of the soundness of the socialist analysis can only be assayed in thecrucible of the unfolding of social forces, themselves. This is why I, per-sonally, avoid any ad hominem attacks or arguments because they proveexactly nothing. You know, one can be an “angel” and be dead wrongand 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 printingyour 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, weare aware that the actions and activities we engage in reflect the qualityof our knowledge and understanding. Our primary object is to changethe world. The great obstacle to the socialist revolution, today, is igno-rance, compounded by confusion and superstition. Who can deny thatthe historic conditions are ripe for socialism? Lest we forget, the job ofemancipation is the task of the great majority, the working class. That iswhy we do not rely on leaders, intellectuals or vanguards.

The only matter I would emphasize to you is the need for your final draftto be about 1,500 words. This will allow about 3,000 words for yourcriticism 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. Theevent at Newton South High School referred to in this letter was arranged byMartin Smith, one of Comrade Len Feinzigs nephews.)*

My dear Dinah,

Enclosed are three recent issues of the WS. I earnestly trust you to glancethrough them, especially the checked articles. You would be amazed atthe 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 indispens-able for his classes, and the head of the Sociology Dept. of Colby wrotefor bundles of WSs to give to his students. He also mentioned that hehas made a display of WSs on his bulletin board to illustrate the real casefor socialism.

Forgive me if I seem unduly impatient with you! It is becoming increas-ingly apparent — from that old master teacher, the experiences of life— that do-gooding reformism, “community” efforts, even the mistakenresistance of real heroes like the anti-segregationists and anti-bomb dem-onstrators, are all futile in coming to grips with the problems that con-cern them. The “practical” men all turn out to be merely utopian vision-aries. The times call for socialist enthusiasm, fervor, and determinationto 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!” isbecoming only too obvious for all to see. Socialism in 1962 is the onlylive 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 socialistcase 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 theitems 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 yourmarked 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 themto him. As long as I’m writing you anyways, a few thoughts thatoccurred to me:

In my eyes, you are in a dilemma because you are riding two horsesrunning 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. YourSocialist horse is genuinely concerned with a revolutionary change insociety, 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 yearsand more are lost on you. If there is one generalization that could beapplied to the Bolsheviks, Social Democrats, those Anarchists whosupported World War I on the issue of Fascism vs. Democracy, andthose “Socialists” who supported both World Wars, it is that theystood for their pet “burning issue”’ and socialism. Recall the phrases:“Immediate Demands” and “Ultimate Demands.” We used to betold and are still being told, that “in the meantime” we must fightfor some “priority” issue and you revolutionary socialists should joinour 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, inall its stark nakedness.

Had all that wasted energy (devoted, sincere, sacrificial as it mayhave been) been harnessed for socialism, what a movement — orsociety — we would now have! It is easy to forget that human beingsare also part of the material conditions and that they play the activerole 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 thesocialist movement), you find yourself compelled to rationalize yourdefense 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, dedicationand deep sincerity.

As for your desire to write your criticisms of the WSP, it goes withoutsaying that we welcome criticisms. The WS is primarily concernedwith the most important work of agitating, educating and organizingfor socialism. With our limited funds, we can only get out a 24-pagepaper. So, if you have several matters to thrash out, why not take onetopic at a time? Incidentally, you’ll be glad to hear we had to increasethe last issue to 4,000 copies.

**OCTOBER 12, 1962**

*[This letter is to Paul Mattick Jr. See Chapter 5 of the biography for insighton Rab’s relationship to the Mattick family, and why Mattick Jr. is addressedhere as “Otto. ”]*

My dear Otto:

Just a few comments on your school paper: “From Philosophy to SocialTheory.” I am very grateful to your father for his kindness in loaning it tome. 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 sig-nificant reading. Your knack of selecting just the right quote, with theprecise shade of meaning, illuminated your analysis.

You succeeded in placing Marx where he belongs: not as the creator andarchitect of scientific socialism, but as a brilliant thinker who drew gen-eral conclusions about the developments of his time. Note your state-ment: “ The Essence of Christianity (Feuerbach) could be followed onlyby The Communist Manifesto.” Again, your recognition that the evolvinganalyses by Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, the early Engels, and theyoung Marx were conditioned by the social and economic forces of thelate 18 th and early 19 th centuries. Plus, your comment that what waslacking in the work of the pre-“Marxists” (my phrase), such as Hess,Stein, and the utopian socialists, were the discoveries (to use your lan-guage) of the role of the proletariat as the revolutionary principle, andthat capitalist society, itself, is the agent of its own transformation. In aword, scientific socialist theories were ripe for expression.

Just as the young Marx, in the historic period of emerging materialistunderstanding of the new social theories, later developed into the matureMarx of revolutionary organization for social change, so I look forwardto the young Mattick, a product of the period crying for a revolutionarychange in society, becoming transformed into a participant in the actualintroduction of a socialist society, a world fit for human beings, at longlast possible, practical and necessary today, here & now.

In closing, is not the outstanding lesson of the past 7 5 years and morethat the only meaningful and worthwhile task today is arousing our fellowworkers in their mighty numbers to unite for socialism? Is that not tan-tamount to “unite for survival”? Your present concern with the “burningissue” of stopping nuclear wars (with the distasteful associates lined upwith you in this effort) is but an echo of other “burning issues” throughthe years. There have been so many who wanted Reforms and immediatedemands (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 realsocialism stays on the back burner: capitalism is being administered by“socialists” and in many cases in the name of “socialism,” but we stilldon’t have socialism! The anti-Fascists have turned into Fascists, and thepacifists have turned into warmongers. The evidence is all standing therestark naked, in the history of World Wars I and II. What a movementor society we might have today, were it not for “burning issues.” Lest weforget: Human beings are also part of the material conditions and theymust 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 Indpendent for seat in the U.S. Senatevacated by J.F. Kennedy’s election as President. His campaign was largelybased on his opposition to nuclear warfare.* — *KDR]*

Dear T.A. Ostrow,

Your prompt reply to my notations on Hughes’s campaign circular speaksvolumes for your concern for a peaceful world. This concern you sharewith the vast portion of mankind, including even the heads of state whomay 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 isthe existence of a piece-full world (pieces of the markeP. pieces of territory,spheres of influence, raw materials, trade routes and other phases of capi-talist society).

I am sending you, under separate cover, the following items: the Commu-nist 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: elaborationsof the distinction between nationalism and the class struggle. I trust thatyou 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 StuartHughes”? Its theme is, in Hughes’ own words, “an all-out nuclear war willdestroy American democracy.” (My emphasis.) This defense of U.S. capi-talism emphasizes where Hughes really stands. He is not opposed to thesham counterfeit of a democracy, i.e., “American democracy.” There werecounterparts of Hughes — equally sincere, equally courageous — voicingquite similar convictions in England, France and Germany prior to bothWorld Wars I and II. They were disturbed mightily with the “burningissues” of human destruction. With the outbreaks of war, because of theirnationalism and patriotism (“we”), they became supporters of their coun-tries on grounds of new “burning issues,” such as the Kaiser and Hunbrutalities or Hitlerian Fascism and Japanese treachery. These shiningexamples of pacifism included anarchists and “socialists.”

As for the “internationalist” views of Hughes: his internationalism is not asocialist world without national sovereignties. Hughes’s internationalism isbut worldwide state capitalist alliances.

It is far easier, far more intelligent, far more in harmony with the worldof 1962 to work and fight for socialism than to expect capitalism to func-tion without wars. What is capitalism? That is the key question! Capi-talism is a commodity society where goods are produced to be sold inthe market with a view to profit. Capitalism is rooted in the social rela-tions 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 willbe delighted to spend time with you exploring further this vital questionof 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 Yorkcomrades.]*

My dear Comrade Charlie Davis (and Hello, Ruthie, my love):

.. .I have not read either The Tangled Bank by Stanley Edgar Hyman orThe Marxists by G. Wright Mills. You may be perfectly correct that theymisuse the word, “Marxists,” in their books, which I most certainly willtry 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 thefallacy of adhering to the Marxist title.” Here we are facing the problemof language as a living thing. An excellent case in point is the new, com-pletely changed (not just revised, but starting from scratch) MerriamWebster dictionary. You must have seen some of the many reviews of thisedition in the literary columns. The new edition is revolutionary. Youwould be amazed at some of the new definitions and the inclusions ofso 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 publishingfield because of its emphases on new usages, making obsolete so many ofthe accepted grammatical procedures. Just one item that it will take yearsto adjust to: the breaking of words.

Haven’t we, from time to time, pointed out the misuse and manhandlingof such words as: Materialism, Dialectics, Value, Capital, and a host ofothers? To us, a scientifically valid definition is a key item! Merely substi-tuting other words for “socialism,” “wealth,” “Jew” (that arch example ofdistorted definitions), and so many more illustrations I could mention,does not solve the problem. However, there is no substitute for scientificdefinitions that relate to the analyses and understanding of processes andrelationships. All that is accomplished by changing new words for oldis that the substituted word, in its turn, becomes subjected to the sameabuses that the original word was subjected to. There is no question ofthe 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 thatthe Russian Revolution did have a corrosive effect on the World Socialist

Movement everywhere, especially in the period from 1917 - 1935? Isit Sunday Supplement stuff that the Russian Revolution did stir andinspire large segments of our own members? Have you forgotten thesneers and scorn heaped on us by those who should have known betterbecause 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 insaying that the World Socialist Movement would be a far greater forceand factor today had it not been for the wasted energies and illusionsof the Bolshevik counterfeits as far as a genuine socialist revolutionarymovement 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 con-sidering continuing your membership in the party. No one else can recallsuch a letter. Of course, we would have entered into correspondence withyou on this matter. And we would have respected your final wishes.

Your letter must have been lost in the mails. A common complaint in theBoston Postal District is the notorious service. Just recently a friend toldme of some experiences of his that seem incredible.

Since no action was ever taken or discussed regarding this matter, you areat liberty to reconsider whatever impulse may have triggered your letter,in my opinion. All of us are creatures of sudden actions. The effects ofdisappointments and discouragements do leave their mark when it seemsthat all is in vain. But the validity and urgent necessity of a socialistmajority to inaugurate a socialist society — a world fit for human beings— is the driving force for us to keep on keeping on. Socialists are basi-cally optimists because they realize that people are not dumb and moronsbut only confused. Can it be denied that socialism is practical and neces-sary here and now if man is to survive? I’ve coined a slogan: The obstacleto a peaceful world is the existence of a pieceful world! This says it all, inthe sense that capitalism can neither be reformed or administered in theinterest of society or of the working class.

Having so recently received two inspiring letters from Virginia impelsme to urge you to write the NAC on your present reactions and inten-tions. 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 ofunderstanding, and not mere belief, it is difficult to be sold a bill ofgoods, such as genesis, flat world, and the host of superstitions, including“socialist” ones. In this vein, I just got a significant letter from ComradeBetty (Hoffman) Hennebury in key West. You must remember her fromthe old days. She wrote: “...I am sending a small check. Although thechildren’s toys seem so important at this time, I know that this is the bestpresent I can give them . My political convictions have never changedand I doubt they ever will.” All this after a very long silence. This is thelatent strength of the socialist movement.

Incidentally, you would be intrigued with Vincent Hennebury (Betty’shusband). He is a full man, in the William Morris sense. He is a sculptorwhose modern “junk” sculpture has been featured in a magazine article;an artisan who built his own coastwise boat and sailed it from Boston tokey West; a poet of sorts and a really great guy. He is sympathetic to theWSP 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 speakto me,” complains George Frazier in the Boston Herald, Jan. 8, 1963. Inhis typical malicious manner, he attacks the printers in the New Yorknewspaper strike: “After all, it is my business if I must spend three dollarsa month (in Newspaper Guild assessments). There must be a better wayto do so than to build up Bertram A. Powers.[[10]](#footnote-11) I’m a working man too,for God’s sake!”

Even Time Magazine, in its Jan. 4, 1963 issue, described Frazier as “pos-sibly the most despised man in Boston ... with the habit of erectinginsults on the very borderline of libel.”

Let’s take a brief glimpse at the basic issues involved in the New Yorknewspaper strike. The membership of Local 6 (Big Six), New York Typo-graphical Union, was faced with obstinate publishers who demandedthat newspaper printers accept a pattern established by the publishers.The door was closed to negotiations. When the patience of the NewYork printers was exhausted, they voted overwhelmingly to strike. Evenat that, they struck only five of the nine New York newspapers. Four ofthem were at liberty to continue publication, if their real concern was“the public interest.” It is not because of the printers that New York Cityis without newspapers, despite the hypocritical preachings of the sancti-monious moralists with their “public-be-damned” attitudes arising fromtheir workers-be-damned point of view.

Condescendingly, Frazier claims he “loves labor” whose endeavors havegiven us “the better way of life.” But when labor seeks to obtain a betterway of life, Frazier opposes it for not being “reasonable.” Labor had tofight every inch of the way to gain what little it has. Only by resisting thepressures of unsatisfactory working conditions, too little pay, too longhours and other hardships did labor achieve any results. Frazier proposesas a cure-all that “labor and management sit down and not arise untilboth sides have accomplished working conditions without woe.” Heoverlooks that his proposal does not eliminate the woes. There is a basicconflict of economic interests. Employers must be concerned with low-ering labor costs; employees must be concerned, at the minimum, with asufficient wage to support their families. It is as simple as that. This factof life is what gave rise to unionism in the first place.

Smug Frazier purrs that “the labor movement was created for the com-fort, not the distress of the working man.” Thus he reveals his ignoranceof the history of unionism. The labor movement was not created by phi-lanthropists. The International Typographical Union was organized ’wayback in 1848, making it the oldest, continuous union in the UnitedStates. It arose because of the solidarity of union men in their commoninterests. This very solidarity gave rise to democratic procedures. Espe-cially is this true of the ITU. Every clause in the ITU Book of Laws hadto be submitted to referendum; no assessment can be made without areferendum; no action can be taken without the approval of the mem-bership. The members are watchdogs, constantly on the alert for abusesof sound unionism. The union is controlled by its members and not byany officialdom.

To paraphrase George Frazier, there are better ways to protect the inter-ests of labor than by sniping at those deeply involved in the struggle toimprove their economic conditions. His griping over his $3.00 monthlyassessment approved by the members of the Newspaper Guild only indi-cates that he is not in sympathy with his brother members, especiallythose 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 strikeof1963. 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 NewYork Newspaper strike and lockout that went to the heart of the bitterdispute. The theme of the article was that it wasn’t merely a strike overwages, but that the printers see their jobs menaced by automation. Itpointed out the threat in the immediate future of the teletypesetter, andfarther 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 remindthe publishers who they are and what they are and what they can dowhile they can still do it. Now is the time to administer such a doseof militancy that win, lose or draw, a publisher will think twice beforedeciding to introduce job-cutting machinery. At the least, he’ll under-stand that he must negotiate the terms of its introduction, and that theprice will be high.”

And that the printers are justified in their fears is seen by other articlesin the same issue, for example, that “two newspapers are using RCA301 computers virtually to automate the process of typesetting,” andseveral other new developments — among them this item on the PalmBeach Post Times. At present, this is the only paper using teletypesettingin the Perry Publications chain and still requires a typist to produce thefinished tape, but eventually this system. [The letter becomes illegible atthis point. KDR, 1991]

This system, observes Business Week, “saves about 40% of the time neededto convert copy to print and may add job security fuel to the blazingnewspaper 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 theseends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institutenew Government, laying its foundation on such principles and orga-nizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affecttheir Safety and Happiness.”

I can well imagine your reactions if you did not know the source of thisquote. It is the very heart and core of the opening section of the Declara-tion of Independence. An even milder statement stirred you to “reportme 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, likemany millions of others, you have preconceived and predigested notionsabout socialism. Most people have never had access to what socialists,themselves, say, only to what others claim that socialists say. In fact, youtold me that you did not even care to find out what we had to say byreading anything I might offer you.

Nothing could be more alien to genuine socialism than the sham andcounterfeit of Russian and Chinese state capitalism. Socialism hasnothing 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 goalis class rule over the people. The socialist goal is common ownershipand democratic control of the means of living by and in the interestof society as a whole. Thus, the basic action of socialists is geared tothe understanding that socialism can only be brought about by a con-scious majority, through the ballot, voting for what they want: socialism.There is no other way. A majority of determined socialists is invinciblebecause an idea come of age is more powerful than the strongest armies.Though this may surprise you, it is the people, not leaders (as distinctfrom representatives and spokesmen, who are really not leaders), whowill introduce a sane society fit for human beings to replace today’s dog-eat-dog jungle, with its depressions, wars, nervous breakdowns, crimesand corruptions.

The encouraging thing is that men (including you, Gene) do learn throughthe lessons of experience. People are losing many of the superstitions andpreconceived 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 thelatest findings of anthropologists (see Father Hubbard’s work among theEskimos, as an illustration) that man is, basically, gregarious. Mutualaid and cooperation is so deeply rooted in human behavior that evencapitalism could not eliminate it. Mankind is also outgrowing nationalsovereignties in the rapidly shrinking modern world, which has becomeinextricably interrelated economically. Poverty amidst plenty no longermakes 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 onlyindicates 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 Vancouverlocal will soon see the light of day. I base this hope on such factors asyour own tape recording, which spoke volumes not only for your con-cern but for those comrades who are members-at-large and others on thesidelines. To which I would add the influence of Victoria local and itsexperiences; the enthusiasm and drive of fellows like George Jenkins andDon Poirier; and the traditional “rebellious” spirit in the Vancouver airwith its impact on the memories of old-timers and their heirs. I say thiswith knowledge of the limitations of much of Vancouver’s past.

Whether there is or there isn’t a “legal” Vancouver local is only an aca-demic question, in my book. Were it not for the “illegal” locals overthe years, the groundwork for a sound, revolutionary socialist movementwould have suffered immeasurably. We have two locals in the WSP thathave become reduced to less than 5 members, but have persisted in spiteof little or no activity to preserve the skeleton for socialist organization.We cannot always afford the “luxury” of “legal” locals when the all-essen-tial consideration is to keep on keeping on, despite difficulties, disap-pointments and discouragements.

.. .Suffice it to say for the nonce that thinking is no violation of socialistdiscipline. Further, we should never stop reexamining our policies, pro-cedures and even our socialist analyses in [the] light of experience andunfolding events. The acid test of socialism is found in the workings ofthe real world. The bond that makes us as one and inspires us is the rec-ognition that capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered inthe interest of the working class or of society, and the understanding thatconditions are now ripe for socialism, which is the solution for society’sproblems. All that is lacking is a socialist majority. This says it all! This isthe 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 tothe stature of “principles” or “position,” and are given an importance andemphasis they do not deserve.

There is no golden rule for a good approach or a correct approach; it isa question of judgment, only. Of course, there are many ways in whichwe can improve our propaganda methods and writings. Methods of“approach” are well worth discussing and applying. But the acid test ofsocialism is not the type of approach the party uses. The smallness of theparty is not the result of using wrong “approaches.” Critics within the partyhave resigned on just such grounds. Opponents of the party have stressedour alleged “dogmatic, sectarian” approaches. Critics, sympathetic to theparty have stayed out of the party because of our “erroneous” approaches.Lest you misconstrue my remarks, I am well aware of your attitude on thisquestion. I’m merely indicating that so many of us have dignified opinionsand differences as “principles” or “positions,” which they really are not. Inmy 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 greatcontributions to knowledge. Unions deal with the economic phase of theclass struggle, not its political phase ... The realization of the class struggleleads to the understanding that the “politically awakened working classwill vote for” socialism. (See my article on the N.Y. newspaper strike.) Weadvocate unionism — the economic phase of the class struggle, but wecertainly 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 offi-cial speaker before speaking for the party would really hamstring socialistwork. Every effort should be made to develop speakers. The object of whatis called the Speaker’s Test is to assure that those speakers who represent theparty in debates and in major addresses — as well as those who serve onmajor committees, such as national committees or editorial committees— have the necessary knowledge to serve in such capacities. Years ago, theWSP 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 Ican see. Already the SPC and the WSP executive committees are discussingjoint conferences. More than likely, the proposals for joint annual confer-ences will be submitted to joint referenda, in time for the next Labor Dayconference in Boston. We have been informed that the SPGB is sendingComrade Grant as a fraternal delegate to the next Labor Day conference.

This closer cohesion is making our conferences more international in char-acter. These developments lead to standardization of Application Blanks,Dues Forms, Party Rules, and General Knowledge Tests, etc. I can thinkof two reservations for national purposes, e.g., WSP historical questionson the Frontier and the Civil War and SPGB historical questions on theRepeal of the Corn Laws on the Speaker’s Tests.

On the Election Manifesto: I cannot conceive of anything more unwork-able than a referendum on an Election Manifesto. The time-consumingdiscussions of specific wordings would prevent the publication of such adocument in time for the elections.

I wholeheartedly agree with you that socialist work is as much emotionalfervor as it is understanding. What could be more stirring than put-ting an end forever to poverty and insecurity by working to introduce aworld fit for human beings? Socialism couples the head and the heart.Socialist bonds make shambles of the sham “fraternalism” of the pro-fessional do-gooders. The attachments of the comrades are revealed inconference times at socials and in the exchange of photos, etc. As forpictures of comrades in our periodicals, if it happens spontaneously onaccount of some special circumstance, it may be OK, but as a deliberatepolicy, I would question its merits. If you want to see real comradeship, itbecomes visible in most unexpected moments, as I have witnessed manytimes.

**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 thatmakes sense is to social-economic classes. “Class” in this sense is deter-mined by how individual human beings stand in relation to the pro-duced wealth of the world. Social-economic classes are not separated bycolor, sex, religion, etc.

All propertied societies, from the warrior chiefdoms of the early nomadictribes to chattel slavery, right down to modern times, have consisted ofvarious social-economic classes.

Today, in modern capitalism, there are but two classes remaining: theworking class and the capitalist class. The working class, regardless ofcolor, sex, religion, etc., do not have access to the wealth produced bysociety 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, evenin the now-emerging new African and Asian countries. On the otherhand, the capitalist class derive their income by virtue of their ownershipof the means of producing and distributing wealth. They, therefore, arethe ruling class.

I’m not speaking here as a “radical” or as an “intellectual.” Both appear tome to be bankrupt of understanding today’s world. I’m speaking as a rev-olutionary socialist who recognizes the class nature of capitalist society;its dog-eat-dog jungle with its vicious conflicts that permeate its everyfiber. It keeps workers divided into warring camps with “patriotism” and“national loyalties.” The concept that the Negro worker is exploited bythe white worker is but another form of that nationalism that contami-nates modern society.

The great need of our times is working-class solidarity to overthrowcapitalism and establish socialism. The inspiration of the Red Flag ofsocialism is a symbol of the red blood that courses through the veins ofall human beings. We are all members of one species, Homo sapiens.

**MAY 18, 1963**

Mr. William R. Cloud,

Editor, *The TypographicalJournal,*

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 resistthe encroachments of capital on their economic interests that producedthe unions in the first place. The inspiring history of the early strugglesof unions demonstrates that our strength lies in solidarity and militancy.We just saw anew how this was confirmed to the hilt in the recent NewYork newspaper strike. Can anyone question that Big Six never wouldhave won their major demands without resorting to the strike?

In the May 1963 The Typographical Journal, there are two items that aresignificant in light of the above comments.

1. C.F. Schempp’s justifiable letter in Vox Populi condemning PresidentKennedy’s “double cross” of the ITU demonstrates again the untrustwor-thiness of Labor’s “friends.” Sooner or later, we will recognize that we canonly depend on ourselves and not on our “friends.”
2. There also appears an appeal for COPE in the same issue. Is COPEreally worthy of our support? Let’s see. The roster of those congressmenin both houses who voted for measures such as Taft-Hartley and Lan-drum-Griffin only demonstrates how some of our “friends” really think,when the chips are down. It is a fallacy to expect “liberals,” with theirabstractions of “justice,” “progress,” “the good fight,” etc., to graspLabor’s problems. In fact, the ITU’s opposition to arbitration is rooted inour realization that these “broad-minded, impartial” arbitrators examine“both sides” without understanding the issues involved. Real progresscan 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 ofideas, communism wouldn’t stand a chance against the free society.” In thespirit of “an honest competition of ideas,” let us examine this editorial.

1. Just where in Marxian writings will you find the contention that com-munism is “the theory of equal sharing regardless of ability”? The goal ofcommunism (a synonym for Marxian socialism) has always been: “Fromeach according to his ability, to each according to his need.”

Marx, dealing with this very question in the Gotha Program, points outthat the concept of “equal rights” is a bourgeois one. It arises out of “theexchange of commodities, as far as this is an exchange of values . in theexchange of commodity equivalents a given amount of labor in one formis exchanged for a given amount of labor in another form.”

In contrast to the market economy of capitalism, communism/socialismis the common ownership and democratic control of the means andinstruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interestof society as a whole.

1. By equating Russian state capitalism with “communism,” you haveerected a straw man, which is alien to “an honest competition of ideas.”True enough, there is a bitter competition between the USSR and theUSA. It is a power struggle over markets, trade routes, raw materials,spheres of influence and domination, which eventually may culminatein a hot war.

Note the similarity of accusations each of the powers hurls at the other:“Imperialist bandits,” “dictatorial and totalitarian,” “war mongers,” “slavesocieties,” etc. And they are both telling the truth. Both sides support sat-ellite 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 pov-erty, crime and corruption. Above all, in both camps there is an exploitedworking class and an owning ruling class. Despite their different labels,in both camps we find commodities, capital, money, wages, surplus valueand all the other appurtenances of capitalism, whether corporative ornationalized. Even their propaganda campaigns to arouse national patri-otism for the looming war are similar. One calls it “A Free CommunistWorld”; the other calls it “A Free Society.”

In both powers, there is the same basic problem: Capitalism has becomeoutmoded because of its own tremendous strides in technology, creatinga potential abundance that cannot be harnessed for the benefit of man-kind as whole. Both can only thrive on waste. Both powers have noalternative but a war economy and fear of the horrors of peace — closedfactories and lack of markets for goods.

The competition of ideas between capitalism and communism/socialismrevolves 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 tospread 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 possibleand practical here and now. There are many signs of stirrings, groping andconfused as they may be: the Negro crystallization, even with their seriouslimitations of racial consciousness and chauvinisms; the stop-the-bombmovement, especially the section of it that stirs you so very much; and theunderground evidence that ideas are catching up with the material socialconditions of the mid-20th century, such as the compulsions on the Churchto alter their tenets — actually from weakness and futility of their dogmas,not from strength and profound convictions. Yet, these stirrings still do notconsciously reflect socialist fervor and matured understanding, which are inprocess of being crystallized. (Lest you misinterpret: the Church is not andcannot be socialist.)

Enclosed you will find your copy of Spies for Peace, the exposure of theRegional Seats of Government plans for the British Government. Coinci-dentally, the June 1963 Socialist Standard just arrived with 3 comments onthe Spies for Peace, pages 98, 96 and 88. I’m enclosing a copy for you in placeof the comments that I was going to make. In general, the point of viewexpressed is the same as my own. In relative importance, I would stress theattitude developed on page 98.

Thanks for the The Bomb, Direct Action and the State, Direct Action Pam-phlet No. 7. Regarding its reference to the SPGB as being unaware that Par-liament is not the real seat of power, and that the Parliament is only a facadefor 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 func-tion as the executive committee of the capitalist class. You will never hearthe syndicalists, at any time, mention just what is the seat of power of theruling class! It only points out incidents, in a vacuum, out of context of theworkings of the state, such as the Richard Acland comment of the AtomBomb debate in Parliament. They can’t deny that the final decision must bedetermined in Parliament, when the chips are down, just because moderncapitalism 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 areuncompromisingly opposed to any leadership policy or principle! Weurge the socialist majority to vote for socialism, and socialism alone. Ifthe workers depend on the SPGB or the WSP, the SPGB or the WSPmay sell them down the river. Nothing could be more repugnant to theSPGB and the WSP than the idea of voting for the SPGB so that theSPGB might do something for the workers.

On page 13, a distinction is made between “direct action” and “politicalaction,” which is called “indirect action.” The key question is “Action forwhat?” We are organized for action to change the world from capitalismto socialism. We are not concerned with the problems of administeringcapitalism. Capitalism cannot be administered in the interests of theworking class or of society as a whole. Nor are we primarily concernedwith the economic phase of the class struggle (unions) ... although weare always prepared to fight the economic struggles between the wageslaves and their parasitic masters over the division of the wealth pro-duced by the workers. We are also always prepared to fight for civil liber-ties. Workers who are scissorbills as satisfied, contented slaves are poorprospects for socialist revolution. The fight for civil liberties is basic, justbecause democratic forms are powerful tools for socialist victory. Thework of introducing socialism is the work of the working class. Socialismis democratic both in objectives and means. Our end (or objective) ofsocialism — which is real democracy — shapes our means, which canonly be democratic. This is socialist action — real “direct action”!

Now glance at the Syndicalists. If they have the majority convinced ofsocialism, the weapon in existence for the majority to use is the ballot,ready at hand. The trouble is not the franchise, but the political igno-rance of the workers, who support capitalism. But the Syndicalists fancythat socialism is a working-class society in which the social setup is a syn-dicalist one — sort of an industrial union government. Their thinkingis far removed from a socialist society. If society is faced with a problemof how to carry on production, it is not yet ripe for socialism. The his-toric mission of capitalism was to solve the problem of production withmodern highly technological developments. In a socialist society, leisureand interesting, useful lives are the concern of mankind. Socialism is aclassless society, in which the state has been superceded by an administra-tion of affairs.

**TULY 24, 1963**

Dearest Karla and George:

Enclosed is a statement I wrote for the next NAC meeting, I hope bothof 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 rankand file to their humiliations and discriminations. In my opinion, thesedemonstrations are not the result of a Negro bourgeois conspiracy. Theuprising was the consequence of a boiling point having been reached. Ifanything, it demonstrates the power of an idea come of age.

The socialist analysis of the situation should recognize and emphasizethe serious limitations of racial and nationalist views, even while sympa-thizing with colored people’s reactions against second-class citizenship.This, in my opinion, is the socialist position. This is not “support” of theNegro confusions and patriotic attitudes. The success of the demonstra-tions will merely find the Negro worker “enjoying” the privileges of hiswhite wage-slave brother. The economic beneficiary will be the Negrobourgeoisie.

**SEPTEMBER 26, 1963**

My very dear Comrade Larry (Nathanson):

It was a delight reading the note accompanying your WS renewal. It spokevolumes for your concern. Your offer of cooperation — within the limi-tations of the pressures of your other obligations — is most welcome.

However, the object of this note is just a matter of “definitions.” Let medefine what we mean by reforms. They are efforts to introduce measuresinto the legal machinery of the state for smoothing out the operation ofcapitalism. The difficulties that arise from the irreconcilable contradic-tions of the system require “remedial” measures. Thus the advocacy andfight for reforms, such as nationalization, social welfare, tax relief, andthe 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 con-ditions of life with a view to a better administration of capitalism.

What confuses this question is when such activities as resistance to theencroachments of capital and the fight for civil liberties are equated withreforms, as though they were synonymous terms. Just two illustrations willsuffice for the nonce: 1. Workers going out on strike over wages, hours,shop conditions, etc. Their objective is to resist increased exploitation. Thisis not a reform activity. Or 2. Socialists fighting for civil liberties, the rightto speak on street corners, distribute circulars house to house, equal timeon TV, etc. The strength of the socialist movement is that it is the taskof the vast majority. Democratic procedures are the essential conditionsfor the social change we are working for; they themselves are the specialproducts of the material conditions of the 20th century. Civil liberties arerevolutionary weapons in the hands of socialists and the socialist majority.This is not a reform activity. The fight by workers for their economic inter-ests within the framework of capitalism is the economic phase of the classstruggle. The fight for civil liberties within the framework of capitalism isa manifestation of the highest expression of the class struggle, its politicalphase. The acid test: neither of these two illustrations have as their objectivelegislative enactments to administer capitalism. Reforms have no significantmeaning in any other context.

There is some excellent writing on this very topic. One of the most effec-tive brochures is Rosa Luxemburg’s Reform or Revolution. I have it athome, 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. Iget pangs of conscience for my neglect of your correspondence. It is onlybecause 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 movementwhose concern is for the abolition of capitalism and the establishmentof socialism. You have had a long history of such concern. We may placediffering emphases on vital aspects of the revolutionary change, but it isnot on the question of compromising with capitalism; on adjusting tothis chaotic system; or of trying to reform it.

For me, the emphasis must be on class-conscious political action, justbecause this is the thermometer for measuring the fervor and determi-nation to get rid of this system. A majority of socialists will know whatto do about introducing socialism and will take the necessary steps.The strength of the capitalists is not only in their control of the statemachinery; but they also have all the advantages on the economic field,especially with the slave status of the working class. The workers areweak, indeed, economically. Unfortunately, political revolutionary actionhas become confused with parliamentarianism; lick-spittles of capitalistinterests. The two have nothing in common!

Also, I would emphasize the materialist basis of existence, rather than ouropposition to the Church or anti-clericalism. Our struggle in the battle-field of ideas is against superstitions — which includes the whole gamutof confusions which prevent the workers from seizing power. The CatholicChurch is no worse and no better than the liberals, progressives, “bour-geois materialists,” etc. In actual fact, the Catholic Church is far from aninflexible organization, as witness the current ecumenical discussions. Theadvances 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 ofsocialism.” Like Hearst, you know where his papers stand — but the N. YTimes (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 dayis 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! Themenace we face is capitalism! In the name of anti-fascism we had WorldWar II. Both World Wars were fought on behalf of “Democracy.” (Inci-dentally, you will be interested in seeing the 2nd article on Vietnam inthe WS about to come off the press in about a week.) Democratic formshave nothing to do with democratic social relationships. These democraticforms conceal the mailed fist! Even in Hitler’s Germany, Mussolini’s Italyor Stalin’s Russia, propaganda and public support was essential for theirterrorism and brutality. In these times of rapid communication and trans-portation and spread of literacy, democratic forms are vital to capitalism.Those who wonder that Germans and Russians fell for dictatorial fascismshould see the nonsense swallowed by advanced Americans.

Personally, I am not pessimistic about the working class. They are notmorons or idiots. It is easy to become contemptuous or to underestimatethe capacity and intelligence of the workers, but who else but the workerscarry on the activities of society?

Experience is the great teacher. The follies of all the efforts to makepresent-day society work in the interests of all humanity are making theirimpressions on the minds of this generation. Science, truth, and aboveall else, necessity, is on the side of the socialist revolution. The alternativefacing society is becoming more obvious, as witness the undercurrent ofdisillusionment as expressed in movies, novels, intellectuals even in thefindings 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. Havingno crystal ball, it would be rash to specify dates. But we live in a period ofsocial 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 justreceived from you touched me deeply. Toyour credit be it said that your “withdrawal”from the party was not a withdrawal fromthe inspiring goals of socialism. You phraseit: “I must commit myself to work in some-thing I feel is most effective in bringingabout the goals we commonly hold as right.

In short, there must be total commitmentof self, myself specifically, without any res-ervation as to the effectiveness of the orga-nization, to whose goals I am dedicated.”

Your implied quandary: Where are the socialist masses? This lack ofresults must be due to ineffective organization. There must be somethingwrong with the tactics and strategy of the WSP, if it has failed to rousethe mass of workers for socialism.

For the past 75 years we have witnessed the “success” of a procession ofpractical efforts to rally workers to socialism by clever policies. We haveseen the transformation of these advocates of socialist goals into sup-porters of the status quo — rebels who have been converted into adjustersof the system. Their trademark has become reforming, improving andadministering capitalism. Need I cite the list, ranging from Social Demo-crats 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 usefulin illustrating lessons to be learned:

1. Peace and Anti-Bomb Demonstrations. The ardent fervor, the stirringemotions and dedicated struggles have proved incapable ofeither preventingthe production of nuclear bombs or of establishing peace. They cannoteven claim that the Test-Ban Treaty was the result of their efforts. Manysections of the peace movement are now having sober second thoughtsthat 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 ofthe latent strength of socialism: it is later than you think.)...

1. The Negro Explosion. When the colored masses started demonstratingagainst their humiliations and discriminations, the concept of color-blindness came of age. All strata of society rallied to the support of theNegro. We found the “leaders” of all shades climbing on the bandwagon.Unfortunately, most colored workers are primarily concerned with theserious limitations of national and racial thinking and with “jobs” and“freedom,” rather than with socialist goals. (Though there are instancesof groping for socialist answers. Again: it is later than you think.)...

Here’s how I see these developments. If you want to see evidence thatsocialism is practical and possible today, see what modern capitalism iscompelled to do in order to function. With all the “socialist” aspects ofhighly developed capitalism, it has not and cannot do away with theprivate property aspects of its inherent relationships. The very transfor-mation of capitalist private property forms from owners, intimately anddirectly associated with products and their production, into the giganticprivate property forms of today — which are more or less typified byvarying aspects of state capitalism and absentee ownership — describesthe process satisfactorily enough. Especially note that state ownership, aswell as cartels, monopolies, huge corporations and other highly social-ized appearances of ownership are but factors of a system in which theproceeds of that society (surplus value, in the last instance) belong to the“eaters” of surplus value. What I would emphasize from the observationsof incipient socialism that you stress is that here is evidence that menare social beings and can cooperate in their common interest. Even incapitalism, 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 bringinto being the introduction of vast social measures. Most important, wesee the conclusive proof, as it were, that the change from capitalism intosocialism is a relatively simple matter, rather than requiring intricate,complex involved measures. In fact, haven’t we always maintained thatif capitalism had not developed the technology for producing potentialabundance, the conditions would not be ripe for socialism? The evolu-tionary changes laying the groundwork for socialism have already takenplace within capitalism.

**November** 30**, 1963**

Dear Bob (and Phyllis) Calese:

It is always a great pleasure to receive your meaningful letters. Your lastletter was of special interest.

A word on your plea for solidarity. Solidarity is the very heart and core ofrevolutionary socialism. Every issue of the WS urges that the “Workersof the world unite for Socialism! You have nothing to lose but yourchains.” All the Companion Parties insist that the work of emancipa-tion is the work of the working class itself, and not of leaders nor even ofthe parties. Should any other organization or group appear on the scenededicated to the proposition that the working class must organize con-sciously and politically for the sole purpose of getting rid of capitalismand to inaugurate socialism, we would have no excuse for separate exis-tence. Immediate overtures would be made to merge with such a group.

Had you said that a socialist does not necessarily require a sound graspof Marxian economics and, specifically, the distinction between “labor”and “labor power,” I would agree with you 100%. Understanding thisdistinction is no acid test of whether a person is a socialist or not! (How-ever, it is true that there is a distinction between these two terms when itcomes to describe the nature of capitalist exploitation.)

In my opinion, the acid test of socialist convictions hinges on such fac-tors as: Capitalism cannot be reformed or administered in the interest ofthe working class or of society; Capitalism, as a social system, is in theinterest of the ruling class (albeit that capitalism, historically, is an essen-tial stage of social evolution); Socialism is the solution to the social prob-lems and irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism; Socialism cannot berammed down the workers’ throats against their wishes; The socialist vic-tory hinges on the fervor and enthusiasm of the determined, conscioussocialist majority. These are the characteristics of a socialist; a coupling ofthe head and the heart, theory coupled with action.

Thanks for the Peace News. It is a very interesting paper. We are reprintingthe Buick letter you marked for our attention. Have you seen ChangeOver, edited by Virginia Naeve (A Swallow Paperbook)? It has severalquotes from Peace News. Unquestionably, fellows like George Clarkrealize 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. Butfor 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 move-ments (and the CND) to the left.” Some questions: How do you definea “radical”? In my observations, radicals are a host of strange bedfellows,some of them avowedly pro-capitalist, others avowedly pro-socialist; alsosome 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 Bolshe-viks to humanitarian anarchists. Am I right? Sooner or later, the lessonsof social development will reveal that the real alternative is socialism orchaos. There is no short cut or royal road to socialism. Experience exposesthe 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 forsocialism now, as the first and only objective. We are making every effortto 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. Wehave an article on Uncle Sam and the new Vietnam regime. In lightof the “Marxist” assassin of Kennedy, we will have a short statementon Marxism vs. assassination. We genuinely appreciate your approvingappraisal of the WS. It is gratifying that we see increasing influence of theWS, in such contrast to our few numbers and small number of printedcopies (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 theliberty of sending you a marked copy of the latest issue.

Of course, your statement that gradualism precedes the socialist revolu-tion is correct, but not in the context you put it. The culmination of thesocial changes taking place gradually within the framework of capitalism[is that] the ground is laid for the transformation into socialism by thesocialist revolution. For superb development of this social evolution intosocialist revolution read three classics: Communist Manifesto, Preface toCapital, and Socialism, Utopian and Scientific. Proof, par excellence, of thefallacy of this gradual evolution into socialism by “socialistic measuresand practical efforts” is in the result of 75 years of just such efforts onthe part of the British Labour Party, the European and Down UnderSocial Democracies, and today in the new “socialist” countries of Africa,Asia Minor, and Asia. Rebels become transformed into administratorsof capitalist states, recruiters for capitalist wars, etc. Success? Question:Where are the socialists they have roused to abolish capitalism and insti-tute socialism? Was it not “Socialist” governments in France and Eng-land 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’ plightin Israel; the capitalist-relations contamination of the kibbutzim; of thestrikes and the worsening of workers’ plight in Israel. Like Russia, Israelcan only operate capitalistically, in spite of any socialist terminology. Youcan’t blame them for that. But you can condemn those who deceived andsidetracked 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 confusionas it is without contributing to it.

**1964 (UNDATED LETTER)**

*[The following letter is undated, but was sent to me in the same envelope as someother 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 outthe unsoundness of your views on Vietnam in light of the economic andhistoric factors involved.

First of all, let me stress that capitalism breeds wars; they are part andparcel of capitalist social relations. This applies, with a vengeance, to theVietnamese War (and it is a war, despite the apologists). Long before thewholesale murderous attacks by Uncle Sam on peasants, villages, chil-dren, women, etc., when the French were defeated at Dienbienphu, theUnited States stepped into the vacuum that resulted from the Frenchwithdrawal. The history of the American intervention since that timeis an open book. The violation of the Geneva agreements, the controlof the synthetic, manufactured South Vietnam with its succession ofdictators demonstrates American policies of safeguarding its interests inSoutheast Asia, especially against its imperialist rivals, termed the “Com-munist 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, wereit not for the internecine conflict of interests engendered by capitalistnational sovereignties and power interests.

One thing that I admired so much about you was your determinationnot to become a member of the armed forces, yet you unwittingly leaveyourself open for participation in a war on Vietnam on behalf of thepeasants. On the concept that it was a different kind of war, social dem-ocrats, radicals, pacifists, commies, etc. rallied to propaganda appealsof brutality, humanity, freedom and whatnot to both World Wars, theSpanish 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 theWorld 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 realissues 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) tohis great-granddaughter, who was named after his mother Sarah FriedbergRabinowich. The letter is a little garbled, since Rab could think faster thanhe 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 isleaving it in the loving care of your two wonderful parents — endowedwith such genuine characters and fine intelligences.

They have just experienced one of the greatest joys of life: working togetherin loving cooperation in bringing you into this world and, what’s more, arenow starting to share this loving companionship with you. You are blessedand fortunate in the special environment to which you will be exposed.

They named you Sarah for a very special reason. Had you been a boythey would have named you William Morris for the same special reason.These two pioneers had the same inspiring vision in common: a coopera-tive society, full of love and brotherhood in the midst of useful, interestinglives, 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 workfor their living instead of living for their work.

The knowledge that you are in the fifth generation (starting with the earlierSarah) and in the revolutionary tradition stimulated by William Morrismay serve to arouse you to take your place in the one task really mean-ingful and worthwhile today in your generation — on the basis of yourown understanding rather than on any blind acceptance or mere faith.

With all my love,

Papa Rab

**FEBRUARY 6, 1964**

My dear Comrade Eve (Goodman):

Your sketch was most delightful. I can anticipate George and Karla’sjoy at seeing it. (Just a minor correction, little Sarah Rachel is the fifthgeneration.) She was named Sarah for my mother. She was the pioneerrevolutionary 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 inBoston, while I was still in Detroit. It was my father who had originallyconvinced her of socialism while they were still in Russia, but in his lateryears he became enamored of the Russian bug and the Jewish “prob-lems.” He never swallowed the religious nonsense, clarity on this wastoo deeply ingrained. My father went through these phases: in 1893 hejoined the SLP; in 1899 he became a charter member of the new SPA; in1921 he became a charter member of the CP. An amusing incident: theCP gave him a banquet in celebration of his 75th birthday and 50 yearsin 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 Morrisfor the same reason they named it Sarah: a pioneer in revolutionarytraditions.

When I spoke to Sarah, the other day, she told me not to rush her. Shewould 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 manyrequests for my views on the Referendum issue, when your welcome airmail 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 goingto answer both your letters thusly. There is much overlapping in thecontents.

Dear Eve, I couldn’t agree with you more. Socialist pressures on theirchildren do often create resentments and resistances. There is no substi-tute for “exposure” rather than persistence. I’ve been fortunate in havingvery 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 iseffective in creating the healthy attitude for hearing the socialist case. Atno time was the “heart” divorced from the “head,” but the coupling ofthe “heart” was on the groundwork of the “head.” Then, of course, therewas Ella, without whose enthusiasm and support there would have beenno results. In a word, I had the lucky breaks and no special credit forsuperior wisdom is really involved.

To both Eve and Gilmac: We have received letters from comrades, every-where, bewildered picturing a serious schism in the WSP. We were asked,what is going on in Boston? We were roundly criticized by many. TheNAC, involved in so few doing so much, carrying on party work, hadno spare time to clarify the “facts” which would have diverted us fromgenuine socialist work. We are all voluntary workers, who have to workfor a living, and the pressures of more important work — like gettingout the WS as one instance — deter us getting involved in “proving” theinaccuracies of allegations.

At all events, Comrade Davis of New York local and a member of theNAC, wrote us a scathing letter saying that we should proceed to actdemocratically. We immediately contacted Comrade Davis to come toBoston and attend the next NAC session. Comrade Davis attended theNAC yesterday (March 4, 1964) and now understands the situation.

I’m the first to recognize that inefficiencies are bound to creep in whenwe are drowned in so much detailed work; the wonder is that there areso few errors and boo-boos. It would take a staff to handle all matters ina fashion that reaches perfection. So much for that! I had no intention ofdevoting so much space to this.

Within 5 days, we have received 3 letters from prospective visitors toBoston. In addition to you, Mac, there is A.L. Buick who desires to comeduring July-September if he can get a job in Boston, and Steve Ross whoexpects to visit Canada and the U.S. in June. To all three: I read an itemin the papers recently of the price war between the Iceland airline andthe big 3 airlines. Apparently, the regular fares on the Iceland line arecheaper than even the excursion rates on the others. Why not inquireat the London office of the Iceland lines and get all the facts for theinformation of all comrades? Incidentally, they could meet the Reykjaviksympathizers at the same time. I recently got a letter from there urgingme to advise one and all to go via Iceland and have comrades drop in onthem to say hello.

**DECEMBER 18, 1964**

My dear Sophie: *[This would have been Sophie Levin, a member of theDemocratic Socialists of America.]*

Please accept my apologies for poking you with my fingers in empha-sizing the points I was making. I was totally unaware of my actions. Idon’t recall having done this on any previous occasion.

The only extenuating explanation I have is that, in front of me, I saw thepersonification of the futilities of the radical friends of socialism. I don’tmean this in any ad hominem sense. You epitomized to me the prevailingpopular notions of Marxism among the “profound” socialist thinkers ofour times.

Prior to writing to you, I had prepared notes reexamining your prem-ises in light of unfolding events, especially to document the importantconsideration that in the mid-20th century the times are now ripe forsocialism.

Then I recalled that you told me, one time, that you knew my oversim-plifications and generalizations as well as I did. They were very elemen-tary. So I decided not to impose on your good nature by including thatmaterial in this letter. However, I’m hoping against hope that you mightwelcome a reasoned, objective review of the limitations of your presentviews concerning the socialist activities so essential today.

For the nonce, let it suffice merely to note that much of today’s criti-cism of Marxian revolutionary socialism proceeds from poorly-digestedreading of the Marxian fundamentals, such as the Materialist Conceptionof History and economics, on the one hand, and relying on second-handinterpretations and commentaries, on the other. This situation can onlyresult in half-knowledge and misconceptions. Marxism is the science ofsocial evolution in much the same way that Darwinism is the science oforganic evolution.

What disturbs me, especially, is the function and role of the Social-Democrats as obstacles and stumbling blocks to the spreading of socialistclass-consciousness. In the name of building up a socialist movementamong the masses, they have emasculated and compromised socialistprinciples. When elected, they have actually administered capitalism inthe only way it can be administered, in the interest of the capitalist class,even to the extent of supporting capitalist wars and crushing workerson strike. They have complained that capitalist parties have stolen theirplanks (as though any capitalist party could steal a socialist program).Look at the net result. Where are the socialist masses? As far as numbersare concerned the Social-Democrats are not much better off than theWSP. Their practical, realistic policies have proven worse than illusory.They have failed to make socialists! Yet they continue to heap scorn andsneer at the World Socialist Movement for our small numbers. Withsmug omniscience, they dismiss the WSP as “ivory tower utopians,”“dogmatic sectarians,” “impossiblists,” etc. The real question is: — Whohave 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 WSPhave never become so cynical as to fancy that the “average man” is nota rational being. They realize that socialists are not superior intellects.The only distinction of a socialist is that he has become emancipatedfrom bourgeois confusions and misconceptions. Would that that couldbe said of many SPAers! The essence of socialism in action is: the workof emancipation is the work of the working class. Thus the ranks of theWorld Socialist Movement can never be greater than the number of con-vinced revolutionary socialists. Our task today is to carry on the work ofspreading socialist knowledge, in order to speed the day when the con-scious majority can take political action to introduce socialism.

Finally, who are the real humanists? Is it the SPAers concentrating onjoining with fellow “humanitarians” to fight for crumbs and palliativemeasures? Or is it the revolutionary socialists who are involved in thatmost 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 dedi-cated and organized for that objective. How can there be two socialistparties in any one country who have the same objective? Should thereappear on the horizon another party determined to fight for socialismand socialism alone, the WSP would immediately take steps to mergewith 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 SteveButtrfield. It contains an interesting account of some of the events in Chapter3 of the Biography.]*

Dear Comrade Dave:

It so happens that I am on a 2-week vacation. So, what better way ofspending it than doing socialist work? I’m relieving Comrade HarryMorrison of one job, at least, by answering your inspiring letter.

Unfortunately, your letter arrived on Monday, a day too late for the NACmeeting. The next meeting takes place on Jan. 10th.

I’m one guy that really realizes your feelings: “One begins to need themoral support of fellow socialists.” It is no cinch being a lone voicefor socialism. For seven years, I kept plugging away at socialist workin 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 conductedclasses, gave lectures, even directed boys’ clubs — looking forward tocrystallizing 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. Even-tually, as a result of the classes, both the SPA and the CP asked me toconduct classes for them. This is hard to credit but they looked on me asa 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 Iwould not do is to emasculate socialist principles. You should know howmany fakers got their “Marxian” training from me. Even to this day, oncein 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 localwas finally organized, an innocent front group for the Trotskyites askedme to conduct the “economics” section of their “Social Studies Seminar,”composed of university professors, etc. They billed me as the “leadingMarxist in New England.” (That was nonsense.) The local granted mepermission on the grounds that it was not being done under the auspicesof 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 nosubstitute for keeping on keeping on. It takes a tremendous amount ofsocialist understanding to withstand the fear that you are wasting yourtime or that there must be something wrong with the socialist case whenadherents to socialism are conspicuous by their absence. We have lostmany, many members who were impatient and reconsidered their viewson the grounds that the policies and practices of the socialist movementwere fallacious. (Yet I doubt that very many of these have forgotten thesocialist message.) Let me emphasize: There is always room for betteringand 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 stir-ring than instituting a world fit for human beings — which has, at last,become practical, possible and necessary. History, science, truth are allon our side. Our greatest ally is capitalism, itself, which is making ourcase for us.

As you say, “I’m outgunned by professional organizers.” And such fellowsare imbued with leadership and vanguard attitudes. In light of the soundjudgment you displayed by noting that “the work for socialism must stressour views on capitalism, poverty and socialism,” my best advice to you isto 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 cityhall, and the host of reforms advocated by CORE and the Young Demo-cratic Socialists. Let me tell you that you will be confronted with sneersand scorn by those who fight for something “in the meantime” and whoare actively participating in the “workers’ struggles.” The lure and fascina-tions of protest demonstrations and making demands is very attractive. (Ina sense, it indicates how deep-rooted discontent with capitalism really is,and it demonstrates the latent strength of socialism once the masses wakeup 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 theimmediate needs of our time: the making of socialists. The lack of socialistsis all that stands in the way of socialism, now.

You can put these guys on the spot by asking: Where are the socialists youhave obtained by your efforts? Their vaunted “fresh approaches” prove tobe very stale indeed. For over 75 years their antecedents — the Fabiansocialists with their gradualism, the Labor Party with their enthusiasms, theBolsheviks with their “revolutionary” programs — actually gained victorieson such policies and programs. On their hands is the recruiting of workersfor capitalist wars and the crushing of workers on strike. All those “socialistgovernments” merely wound up administering capitalism for the capitalistclass. And that is all that CORE and the Young Democratic Socialists willbe able to do if they gain their objectives. I remember old Whitey (one ofthe legends of the real socialist movement) who when heckled by one ofthese activists answered: “If it is action you want, take a physic!”

As to specific things you can do: Your idea on obtaining newsstands hasproven 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 housesone week giving a free sample WS to each tenant, telling him to read itand he will return the following week. When he returns, he asks howthey 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 youare already doing that. Your idea of reprinting outstanding articles fromthe WS and SS with Judy’s cooperation on the duplicating machine issuperb. (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 areform. Free speech is a valuable socialist tool.

In place of your article submitted to us, I believe you will find the enclosedextract very timely and effective for the purposes you have in mind. Itscores the very points you wished. You made a couple of economic errorsin your article, e.g.: “If the capitalist pays the worker high wages theselling 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 valuein the long run. Also you omitted altogether that the worker is exploitedthrough the mechanism of surplus value (unpaid labor time), and that isthe cause of his poverty. Of course your statement that the cause of pov-erty is class ownership is correct. But the secret of his poverty is disclosedthrough 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 canonly come out of previously accumulated capital, which itself is extractedout of surplus value. I was happy to read that you are studying Vol. I ofCapital. Just for the hell of it, look through the index for these particularitems: surplus value, value, prices. Be sure to question me about anyproblems that arise. In the meantime, I’m having Karla look through theWS index for articles on Value, especially that gem: The Market Place.

There are two opposing views about the WS held by comrades and criticsalike. We have had hot sessions at some WSP Conferences on that sub-ject. There are those who claim that the WS is too scholarly and over theheads of the average worker. Then there are others who hold that the WSis 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 theoreticalquestions. But how wrong they are! Just look at popular magazines, andthe newspapers. Even such magazines as Saturday Evening Post and Lifehave serious literary criticism, scientific articles and art analyses; even theHearst press, pandering to scandal and the races, have pundits and col-umnists as well as complicated do-it-yourself articles and sport reviewsthat are gibberish to a non-posted reader, but require a brain. Theseorgans, despite their slanted news and trashy conclusions, use 50C wordsif they pertain to the subject and there is no substitute, and wordswhen they are apropos. These media cannot be accused of writing downto their readers. If the expression “using the workers’ language” has anymeaning it applies here.

The second group, in some, but not all cases, consist of “intellectualsnobs,” to coin a phrase. Their stock in trade is “profundity.” Theyassume that a clear-cut development without footnotes and “scholarly”treatment a 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 clearlanguage 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 neces-sary, and put out the best product we can, within our limitations. Someof the writers are really gifted; others, like myself, are lousy. One strangething 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 consciousof what socialism is all about.

Finally, as a suggestion to you: Why not write an article on campus activi-ties, or on some clipping in the newspaper — or, write a review of a bookyou are reading, or of a significant movie or play you saw? Just to start thewheels 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 withso 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 wantto ask the SS Editorial Committee to suggest a writer for this in view ofthe difficulty they now have in getting volunteers to rewrite the Religionand Racism pamphlets. A light dawned on me as I was puzzling what todo: Why not Brownrigg?

Your valued comments and suggestions for the WS indicate to me thatyou are just the fellow for this task. In case you might say: “I can identifya bad egg but I can’t lay one,” all I can reply is: “I hae me dubts,” as ourGlaswegian comrades might say.

I have just ploughed through the almost 1,100 pages of Ayn Rand’s AtlasShrugged. Because she is being widely discussed on the campuses and inthe press, I wanted to read what she had to say.

To summarize her views: The looters — government bureaucrats and con-niving, cheating entrepreneurs, phonies, as it were — are leeches. Theydo not contribute ideas, inventions, or brains to production. They wantprofits without earning them. They preach the public good, unselfishness,brotherhood — all meaningless double-talk — and practice greed and athoroughgoing hypocrisy. Their practices can only lead to the ultimatedecline and ruination of the economy. The only reason they remain inpower is because the genuine, legitimate capitalists consent to be governedby their rules. The real brains should withdraw their participation from thepresent set-up and let the inevitable consequences of the illogical, brain-less activities of those in power destroy the whole economy as it exists atpresent. Then a new regime becomes necessary. The brains will come intotheir own. Free trade and free minds will predominate. Real values will betraded. Honest values will prevail. There will be no limit on profits becausethey will have been earned. Men will be guided by reason. All the relativ-istic 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 95G Let’s hear from you.

The trials and tribulations of the Socialist Movement arise, really, out ofconcern with the soundness of the movement, or with disappointmentwith the seeming lack of concrete results. It still remains true that socialistwork does remain the only task really worth-while — thus socialist orga-nization is vital to spreading socialist understanding and knowledge.This is the bond that rises to the surface to consolidate our efforts. Thereare hosts of socialists outside our official ranks. With the march of timeand events, these will rally to the inspirations and fervor of the socialistobjective: inaugurating a world fit for human beings. This is our latentstrength. 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 theforthcoming 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 principlesof his own life a religion.” That is his right and prerogative, if he preferssome special personal definition of the term “religion” that satisfies him.

However, there is a question of semantics that enters the picture. Thereare commonly-understood and commonly-used definitions of this term.You recommend that “the party stop defining religion as a system ofbelief including the concepts of god and an afterlife.” But we find thatjust this definition of religion is most generally current. Especially, wefind the following:

The classic 11th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica devotes 15 pagesto the question of religion, ranging the entire gamut from primitive tohigher religions. More than one page introduced the subject by ana-lyzing what is meant by religion and its historical background. It refersto ancient writings and ends up with recent studies, especially, E.B. Tyler,Max Muller, Herbert Spencer, Grant Allen, J.G. Frazer and others. Infact, it pays tribute to the study of comparative religion for paving theway to the science of anthropology.

This introductory development stresses: “By all means let universal char-acterization be attempted.” And, with favor, it quotes Tyler (“...a min-imum definition of religion is the belief in spiritual beings”) and Frazer(“By religion is understood a propitiation or conciliation of powers supe-rior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of natureand human life”). Interspersed throughout this analysis are such expres-sions 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 thiscopy, so please return it when you’re finished with it. The two most per-tinent chapters are “Socialism and Ethics” and “Socialists and the Reli-gious Conflict.”

My impression of what you are saying is: “If by religion you mean asystem 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 forthe physical-material phenomena constituting the universe and exis-tence. And you do not need to go beyond that. After all, religionists andreligion are not synonymous terms. Reformation theology was not freefrom religious superstitions, but reformation theologians acted sociallyin response to the conditions of their times. Religion, as defined above,is hostile to scientific socialism — religionists are affected by their experi-ences 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 ofWSP member GeorgeGloss) and which has been in use intermittently ever since.* — *KDR, 2008]*

Dear Comrade Rab,

Thanks for the card and greetings and unbounded enthusiasm. The cardwas nice in that it is seldom we see a Socialist greeting card, altho one ofthe Comrades here wondered why the picture suggested piracy.

I have been intending to do up a greeting card or two for several yearsnow & still haven’t gotten round to it. We have the duplicator here nowtoo, which would handle black & white stuff & color too if more moneywas spent on it.

Our study group ses-sion for last nite wascancelled, not enoughwere able to showup. We have a newmember coming up,

Dave Ross, well edu-cated formally, whomay be able to giveus a lot of help withgrammar, writing,speaking, etc.

The WS this lasttrip was a good one.

Regards to you andthe rest of your familyand the comrades inBoston,

Comradely,

George

**TANUARY 14, 1965**

Dear Comrade George Jenkins:

Thanks for your cooperation in notifying me so promptly of your receiptof the 4-track WSP 1964 Conference Good & Welfare tape. In time, tapeswill come into more general use for party propaganda, official communi-cations and correspondence. Note the recent SPGB motion to set moneyaside for tapes; the Vancouver intention of taping your meeting with themon the controversy; and the pioneer work on tapes by the WSP

I’m writing Vancouver that you will forward the above tape to them whenVictoria is finished with it. I’ve also asked them to let me know when theyreceive 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. Whichreminds me that the reason why you have not received the list of tapesyou had requested some time ago is because we are revamping our inven-tory of tapes and our clerical work procedures. Incidentally, I’ve justlistened to two tapes: Buick on “Historical Analysis of Bolshevism toPresent Time” — this is a scholarly presentation and really worthwhile— and my own on “American Foreign Policy,” which is informative oncurrent matters, even though the delivery is poor and there are a couplebad 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 from16-year-olds (3 high schoolers) to post graduate college students. One,in particular, Dave Butterfield, who has a teaching fellowship, is doinggood socialist work on the University of Cincinnati campus. Four of theseyounger 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 lastsummer.

Speaking of Vancouver and speaking only for myself: I’m hoping thatthe bond of socialist objectives intimately tied up with socialist orga-nized activity prevails in Vancouver. These controversies, to me, indicategenuine 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 indi-vidual socialists; personality problems and resentments arise; differingattitudes are rationalized as “principles,” etc.

But the place for socialists is in the organization for socialism. This takespriority! After all is said and done, all the parties in the World SocialistMovement have no alternative but to operate and function democrati-cally and this democratic procedure always rises to the surface, in spite ofhell 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 inthem (and I mean socialists in our understanding of the term). This can beseen 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 ApplicationBlank test. However, what cannot be lost sight of is: Socialism also requiresaction to change society the organized socialist movement.

Just a thought: If you could succeed in designing a series of inspiringsocialist 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 Secretaryof the SPGB.]*

Dear Comrade,

Thanks for the things you sent me on the ITU [International Typograph-ical Union] — as a matter of fact, Lipset, Coleman’s and Liow’s book ison my sociology reading list. I just finished reading it over the ChristmasVacation. Quite interesting but what I don’t understand among aca-demics is the way they attribute to Robert Michels the theory that “orga-nization means bureaucracy and a new ruling class.” This is an anarchisttheory which Michels consciously notes!

The real reason why I am writing is that one of our comrades who isinterested in William Morris would like to read George [Gerell]’s thesison him — he wants to know the exact title, date, university, etc., so thatsomeone 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, wasthat a result of your visit? How was Ron suddenly “unconverted”? [Thiswould be Ron Yurkowski. KDR, 2006]

I see Harry Morrison has got you to draw up a letter on Violence for ourEC. I hope you’ve not got the wrong end of the stick as to what the dis-cussion is about. It is not a repeat of your Canter controversy. The officialparty position is — and always has been — “peaceably if we can, forc-ibly if we must.” At the last conference, Paddington branch presented aresolution which said that “the very nature of socialism precludes the useof violence,” etc. which was taken to be a demand for a revision of theparty position. I hope Harry doesn’t see any affinity between his positionthat the ballot is the only way and that of Paddington branch (whichwas, you will remember, a hot-bed of Turnerism which was against allpolitical action!). Paddington branch maintain that conditions will havechanged so much as a result of the spread of socialist understanding thatthe question of violence will be more or less superfluous.

Incidentally, I haven’t heard from Bill [Jerome] (though I’ve been meaningto 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 ComradeGilmac has his thesis on William Morris. He is anxious that the thesis bereturned to him when they have finished with it. It has not been publishedand he will need this copy, eventually. Our comrade in Oxford is welcometo borrow it. Is he a member of the Oxford group of the SPGB?

Before commenting on chitchat news, two matters interest me. 1. Thequestion of violence and 2. Michel.

You are mistaken in assuming that Harry Morrison got me to draw upthe letter to the SPGB-EC on violence. Let me quote the 11/22/64 NACminutes. (If you would like to get these minutes regularly, why not writeto headquarters.) “The sec’y read his draft letter to the EC of SPGB onsubject of their statement on violence. The letter stated that althoughwe find nothing in the opening paragraph to disagree with — it beinga statement of fact — that we would prefer that an official party posi-tion on violence contain no conjecture, even ‘reasonable conjecture,’ ofwhat will happen in the days immediately following the mandate by amajority of the population to abolish capitalism and introduce socialism.That there seems to be no unanimity of opinion among the members onthis point and that we should stick to a simple statement on our attitudeto 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 advo-cate the ballot as a means of attaining socialism and anyone who advocatesviolence as a means of attaining the socialist victory cannot be a member ofthe WSP! Motion: the letter be sent to the EC. Carried.”

Now, for my personal views: I cannot agree with you that the “officialparty position is — and always has been — ‘peaceably if we can, forciblyif we must.’” No word is more abused in the socialist vocabulary thanthe word “position.” How can we take an unqualified, positive positionon some specific, detailed event in the future? The very conjecture beliesthat it is a position. There are very few indeed statements that we makethat can be dignified with the description: “position.” We do have a posi-tion on the socialist victory, all right enough. It is: The socialist revolu-tion 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 syn-onymous terms. When they are used as substitute terms for each otherthey lead to quibbles, such as seen in your letter. By “force” in the contextof the socialist revolution, is meant the power to accomplish our objec-tives, 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, prop-erly so-called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressinganother. If the proletariat, during its contest with the bourgeoisie, is com-pelled by force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if by meansof a revolution it makes itself the ruling class (by winning the battle ofdemocracy, p. 79) and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditionsof production, then, it will, along with these conditions, have swept awaythe conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes gener-ally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.”

And hereby hangs a tale, the horror of the bourgeoisie that the Commu-nist Manifesto advocates violence with their hypocritical condemnationby quoting, out of context of the Manifesto itself, the final paragraphof the historic document: “They openly declare that their ends can beattained 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 prac-tical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto itselfstates, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for thetime being existing...” does not apply to the analysis of force but doesapply to the so-called “peaceably if we can, forcibly, if we must,” as aprincipled “position.”

Finally, Paddington’s “ballot is the only way” is as good a way as I knowof stating the essence of the class-conscious socialist democratic natureof the socialist revolution. This is not telling history what it must do. Itemphasizes that we advocate the ballot. Turner’s opposition to all polit-ical action merely lines him up with the anarchist spokesmen who saythe same thing, but find themselves involved in political actions, despitetheir theories, when the chips are down.

Now, for Michels. I confess that I’m bewildered by your reference toRobert Michels. Maybe you are assuming that I’m acquainted withLipset, Coleman and Shaw(?)’s work on sociology. I’m not. However, asa strange coincidence, I’m in the middle of reading The Anarchists, editedby Irving L. Horowitz. Dell, Laurel edition 0131, 95c. On my recentbirthday, 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 himwas: “Robert Michels, who along with Max Weber, was the father of thegeneral theory of bureaucracy, was an anarchist and makes his criticismsfrom the point of view of the psychological insights gained from sympa-thies with (and ultimate rejection of) anarchist ideology.”[[11]](#footnote-12)

So far, I’ve found this work very worthwhile. It is reminiscent of theSS articles on anarchism during the late teens and early twenties whenthe anarchists were a very vocal force. Like the Standard, he emphasizesthat there are many schools of anarchism; he deals pretty thoroughlywith seven of the schools. The old Standard once said that there are asmany schools of anarchism as there are anarchists. Also, like the Stan-dard, he pointed out that most schools of anarchism are really bourgeoisin essence. His introduction indicates the dilemmas arising from theirconflicting views and their limitations in analyzing social forces. How-ever, like myself, he has a strong sympathy for their “spirit,” as it were. Iphrase it: they err on the right side.

I don’t hesitate in recommending you to go through this work. It could behelpful to you. The other book that Karla and George gave me was IsaacDeutschers The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology. I’ve onlyread one chapter dealing with Trotsky’s visit to the U.S. in 1917. He visitedDetroit 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 theorganization of the local there. At present moment, it is the white hope.Judging by their minutes they are carrying the Jimmy Higgins work that isbound to bear fruit. As for Ron [Yurkoski], after reading Keracher’s Howthe Gods Were Made, he became satisfied with the validity of our stand.

Bill Jerome recently became the father of a baby girl. Why not surprisehim by dropping him a note of congratulations. His address is: 14 BuswellSt., 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, whooften mention you.

Karla just passed her comprehensives for her master’s degree. She eventu-ally 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 peri-odicals on the streets, etc., is not a reform. Socialists have participated injust such demonstrations in the past and will again in the future, whenthe occasion arises. After all, civil liberties are important socialist toolsand weapons to carry on socialist education and propaganda. Note well,our attitude has always been that we will march side by side with othersbut never under the banner of others. We will not be identified withnon-socialists. This has happened in London on occasions, even, on MayDay celebrations.

Let me define reforms. They are measures that require legislative actionby the capitalist state to improve the operation of the system, or at leastthat is their object. This typifies the Negro movement generally. This canbe seen by the emphasis on establishing equal social position of Negroand white capitalists, as well as equality of rights for Negro and whiteworkers. You will observe the constant emphasis that this constitutes“good Americanism” and is the highest patriotism. What have we incommon 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 exploitedof all colors.

If you recall, my “quarrel” with the objections to my article on the Negroquestion was that a few comrades wanted me to eliminate my com-ments of sympathetic “support,” as it were, for the civil liberty phase ofthe Southern Negro resistance, a spontaneous demand of the coloredworkers that had overwhelmed the Negro spokesmen. These “leaders”found themselves followers who were led by a historic demand that hadcome of age. But this no longer typifies the situation. This can clearlybe seen in the concentration on bourgeois demands being made bythe Negro organizations. They have become respectable. Like the “suc-cessful” victories in Asia and Africa, they are only concerned in a “betteradministration” of capitalism.

**FEBRUARY 1, 1965**

*[William Davenport, to whom this letter is addressed, is mentionedfrequentlyin 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 memorableassociations in Detroit in 1915 - 1921 and then in Boston, soon after. Agreat 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’sautograph — which could be helpful for party funds, if we could locate it.I’ve already written George Ramsay, likewise, in case his memory mighthelp. As you recall, London’s letter to the newly organized WSP in 1916was addressed to you as our first national secretary. It was reprinted in theSocialist Standard and later in the WS.

There are now five generations of socialists in the family, starting withElla’s and my parents, whom you had met, and ending with my one-year-old great granddaughter, Sara Rachel. In 1893, my father was amember of the SLP in Boston, and previously, my father and motherwere involved with socialism in Russia. As you know, Ella’s father wasan organizer for the SPA in the 1903 period in Wyoming, Colorado andother western states, arranging tours for Debs and other SPAers. Myfather ran the gamut from SLP to SPA to CP. My mother had a betterunderstanding of genuine socialism than my father (as you may recall).From 1902 - 1907, 1 was a member, with my brother and sister in theBoston Socialist Sunday School. Pity there are no such things anymore.One of the highlights was the massive Moyer-Haywood-Pettibone paradeof labor unions and other organizations. The Sunday School led the pro-cession and I was the proud chief marshal, in 1906. Later, in 1909, inorder to get a Roxbury SPA local going, I was given special permission tojoin and serve as secretary, despite my age.

It might even be possible for you to revisit Boston and reminisce on theold Detroit days with the three younger generations, as well as with theBoston 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 Con-ference in New York, some years ago. I vividly recall my impressions ofher as a sincere, genuine human being — even though we had differingviews of what should be done for advancing the socialist case. She had agood mind and made some valued comments to the Conference.

As you know so well, I’m a poor correspondent. It takes a pressing matterto get me to the typewriter (and there are always many of them — cre-ating 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 hadthe time to do justice in coming to grips with your inquiries.

I can very well appreciate the confused dilemmas that seem to arise whenconsidering the socialist attitude on reforms, civil liberties and I’m adding“trade unions,” for that is also bound to arise. We have realized for manyyears that we need a pamphlet on reforms. Comrade Felperin, the logicalwriter on this topic, is willing enough but personal circumstances haveinterfered. He has made a special study of this question.

Let me start by defining what we mean by “reforms.” A reform is legis-lative action by the capitalist state to institute measures that will makethe system operate more smoothly. Usually, the appeal is made on thebasis that these measures will “improve the lot of the workers” within theframework of the system, in the meantime. There have been two excel-lent studies made on this topic: Rosa Luxemburg’s Reform or Revolutionand Wm. Liebknecht’s No Compromise — No Political Trading.

The Negro question serves as a useful illustration. There we can see thedistinction between reforms and a fight for civil liberties.

1. Generally speaking, the Negro movement concentrates on fightingfor legislation to establish and maintain equal social conditions for bothNegroes and whites, capitalists and workers alike. For the Negro capital-ists, the objectives are equal privileges and social status with the whiteexploiters. For the Negro workers, it means equal job opportunities andwages with their white brothers. Always, the emphasis is on good Amer-ican patriotism. Their efforts are devoted to enforcing constitutionalprovisions and compelling compliance with the laws. They support capi-talism and share the same confused superstitions and bourgeois aspira-tions as the majority of their white counterparts. They think in terms ofrace and color — a people apart (similar to other forms of nationalism).The goals of the Negro movement are reforms, and not a change in thesocial structure. Socialists are distinct from this movement since they arecolorblind on the Negro question.
2. Coincidentally, there also exists the fight for civil liberties aspect of theNegro efforts. The fight for civil liberties, as such, is not a reform. Whatis meant by civil liberties in the socialist vocabulary, as it were? First ofall, the socialist revolution is the conscious majority obtaining politicalpower in order to transfer the means of living from the parasites who liveoff our backs to society, as a whole, where it belongs. Such measures asfree speech, house-to-house canvassing, selling periodicals on the street,removing restrictions from the franchise and similar activities strengthenthe revolutionary weapons to get rid of capitalism — and have nothing todo with reforming the damn system. You may have noted the statementon the Negro question in No. 6 - 1965 WS: “As to the extension of thefranchise and civil liberties, generally, we naturally welcome improve-ments 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 retainingour identity and not being associated with any United Front efforts withthose who are not dedicated to our Object and Declaration of Principles.

The economic phase of the class struggle, unionism, is sometimes mistak-enly referred to as a reform. It is undeniable that many unions do engagein reform activities. But unions and unionism are not synonymous terms.The only thing that the workers, as a class, own is their commodity: laborpower. The quarrel over hours, wages and shop conditions has nothingto do with reforming capitalism or improving the lot of the workers. Theworkers are compelled to organize into unions by the very conditions ofcapitalism, i.e., the division of the new value produced by the workers intoits two component parts: variable capital (the workers’ share) and surplusvalue (the capitalists’ share). Through the mechanism of unionism, theworkers, over the long run, sell their commodity, labor power, at its value.Value, Price and Profit is invaluable on this question. One quote will suf-fice: “They [the workers] ought not to forget that they are fighting witheffects and not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding thedownward movement but not changing its direction.”

The above may suffice to indicate the replies to your specific points. Ifnot, I’d be only too happy to elaborate.

Now, for your economic questions.

No different from any other branch of science, Marxian economicsmakes no claim to give explanations of every specific action and occur-rence in the economic sphere. Like all sciences, it attempts to outline thegeneral laws of motion at work and outline the processes at work. Thatis sufficient.

Selling prices are not related to wages in the sense that high or low pricesreflect high or low wages occurring in the production of these commodi-ties. The most effective refutation, of course, is that the history of pricesshows no such correlation. In fact, just the opposite is true. Higher wagesaccompanied by greater productivity resulting in reduction of labor timesincorporated in commodities generally results in lower prices. The bestindicator is that old standby of the official “economists,” Steel. It justshows the power of the propaganda used by the press, urging the workersnot to strike for higher wages, it can only mean higher prices and thecontinuation of that bugaboo: the spiral of wages and prices. In spite ofall the hogwash, the law of value is still true: commodities sell at theirvalue, in general (with all the admitted exceptions).

It is amusing, the consistent refrain of the bourgeois economists fromMarx’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 oftime, not even by national capitals. In spite of iron controls and legisla-tive actions, yes, and executive edicts, the competition of new processes,new sources of power, new synthetic materials and what not are at workintensifying international competition on a gigantic scale, even leadingto war scares. It is easy — but false — to ignore that the only thing thatmatters is the accumulation of capital itself. Fluid capital is ever seekingnew avenues of investment. Capitalism remains capitalism, with its eco-nomic laws of motion, despite Keynes and the rest.

The SLP and the SPA are fond of describing socialism as a society in whichthe worker gets the “full product of his toil.” This is an erroneous concept.“Full product” is only another expression of the bourgeois “equality and jus-tice.” 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 gotthe full product what would be left for the common administration of theaffairs of the whole community? For a superb annihilation of the Lasallean“full product” concept, Marx’s refutation of the Eisenachers in the GothaProgram 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 nogood as a correspondent. The only time I write is when it becomes manda-tory. There is no need for any reply to this communication. However, neverhesitate 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 ofurging the NAC to table your resignation until March 21. I asked forpermission 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 withqualms and reservations.

For a time, the SPGB had an internal party journal, Forum, to thrash outdifferences of opinion among party members on theories, procedures,activities and other matters of common concern. In the June 1953 Forumappeared an article I wrote on “Requirements for Membership.” I shouldlike to quote some pertinent items for your serious consideration.

*[Rab’s article on “Requirements for Membership” is reprinted in full elsewherein this book, so I am not including the excerpts Rab chose from it here. Hisletter 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 inheadquarters.) If it should prove that their real concern is to make social-ists, it could result in an interesting discussion leading to strengtheningthe socialist movement in the U.S. The great need is for consolidatingthose who want to work for socialism. It is only too true, that he whomerely sits and waits does not serve the cause of socialism.

“Socialist Activists” have had impressive “successes” and “victories” inevery field except one. The lessons of experience and history have provenbeyond any shadow of doubt that they have not remotely convinced theworkers of the need for socialism. From the activities carried on in thename of socialism, the one thing conspicuous by its absence has beenany mention of the socialist case. In common, the efforts of “socialistactivists” — ranging from anti-bomb demonstrators, through fightersfor equal rights, to the administrators of both the social-democrat and“communist” varieties — have been geared to an attempt to reconcile theirreconcilable contradictions of capitalism. With contempt, they sneerat the dumb workers and their backwardness. Such groups have beenguilty of disillusioning the workers about real socialism. The great indict-ment of these activists is that they divert the workers from the genuinesocialist movement, and have hampered the growth of socialism by manyyears. Were all that tremendous energy and enthusiasm harnessed in thegenuine socialist work of making socialists, how much more the move-ment would have been advanced! The “practical realist” has proven to bean impractical utopian; the “activist” has proven to be the occupant ofan ivory tower.

Dear Comrade Mike, I’m fully convinced that your main concern issocialism. Isn’t your place in the ranks of the organized revolutionarysocialist movement, with all its limitations, disappointments and frus-trations, fighting within the party for those improvements that willstrengthen 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 youinto the comradeship of the Party. I feel very guilty about it. What couldbe more inspiring than to witness another teenager taking a meaningfulstep in the direction of speeding up a world fit for human beings! Here’sa shake of the hand from the oldest WSP member to one of its newestand youngest recruits.

Taking advantage of this opportunity to make a suggestion: This letter isbeing typed on the back of a form letter [an invitation to an event at theBoston Headquarters], with malice aforethought. A similar letter might beuseful for the New York comrades in trying to get schools and collegesto hear socialist speakers. Next to the WS, our greatest efforts should bedirected to getting a hearing of the socialist case by youths. The times areripe for the hearing of the socialist analysis.

I’m particularly delighted that you are so concerned about the problems ofsocialist propaganda. We should always be on the lookout for improvingour procedures. Also, it is noteworthy that you are not afraid to think foryourself. 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 ofmy own.

First of all, I agree with you that Marxian socialists are not militant Athe-ists (capital “A”) killing gods. Such an attitude makes no contribution toany understanding of the question of religion. Several articles in the WShave made a distinction between Atheists and atheists. The former are,speaking generally, bourgeois materialists. Their conclusions are basedon mental exercises and logic gymnastics, in a vacuum. Their refutationsmerely emphasize the “nonsense” of the God theory in a manner that isa far cry from a scientific analysis. In contrast, the latter are materialistswho 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 maliciouslycreated for the purpose of deceiving people.

Secondly, I would like to call your attention to such men as the Blanquistsof the Paris Commune days, who were Anti-God. They were Anarchistswho glorified the Rights of Man and the philosophy of individualism.

Essentially, they were the vestiges of the spirit of the French Revolu-tion and bourgeois revolutionaries in their fight against the Church andclericalism, i.e., they were anti-religious. Note well how the anti-religiousrevolutionaries, once they were in power, re-established the respectabilityof religion in defense of their new control of the state — including theUSSR. (Read Plechanov, LaFargue and Mehring.) Their prior anti-reli-gion was rooted in resistance and defiance of the aristocracy and thestatus quo, in which the Church was a major partner. (Incidentally, per-sonally, and speaking for myself alone, I’ve always had an empathy forthe Anarchists, in spite of Anarchism being the philosophy of capitalism,merely because, in the main, they are found on the right side of the fightwhen 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 alltheir arguments and explanations, they use the materialist analysis. Butthey leave the door open for “contingencies” despite the overwhelmingevidence for the validity of the physical-material explanations for theorigins of life, geology, etc. Unfolding new evidence only confirms thefallacies and futilities of metaphysical, supernatural concepts and cor-roborates the scientific conclusions on the God theory. Question: Whoare the dogmatists?

A much more serious item, however, is the question of religion being aprivate matter. There are a host of issues that socialists can disagree on, butreligion is not one of them. Unlike so many other items, religion is notmerely a matter of personal opinion. How can the religious explanationsof existence be reconciled with the materialist conception of history? Butthat 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 justone question to mull over: Besides ignorance and confusions, what otherobstacles are there to a socialist transformation of society?

Ironically, nobody is really religious any longer, simply because religiousexplanations no longer make sense in the modern world. Note that reli-gions today emphasize rationalizations rather than blind faith. Also notethe emphasis on ethics and morals. It is amusing to read the recent writingsof theologians on even the God concept, itself. Take almost any issue of

Time Magazine and read the Religion section. The rulings of the Ecumen-ical Councils would have been inconceivable a few short years ago. But thetraditions of the past weigh like an Alp on the minds of the living, as Marxsaid. (And that is true, whether Marx ever said it or not.)

The religious teachings of humility, servility, obedience, faith, with itsteachings of “Work and pray, live on hay, you’ll get pie in the sky whenyou die” are social forces also, in the same category as patriotism. Hereinlies the fallacy of the SLP. Two of their minor flaws are: glorifying thefounding fathers, and religion being a private matter. (Incidentally, thishas caused them embarrassments on more than one occasion — a con-spicuous one being having to retract an article by a spiritualist memberin the Weekly People.)

I must close now. To sum up: just like reformism, religion stands in theway of socialism. The latent strength of socialism is that it makes senseand harmonizes with the lessons of experience. What inspires our youngfriends is the inspiration of socialism: From each according to their abilityand to each according to their need. Religions no longer can “stir men’ssouls” the way socialism does, once they lose their superstitions. If manis 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 tellyour children when they ask you what did you do during the NegroRevolution?”

More likely, our children will ask us: “What did you do during thesocialist Revolution?”

In the 1960’s we are witnessing the coming of age of the general recogni-tion of and determination to alleviate the social plight of the AmericanNegroes. But we are not witnessing anything that does away with thissocial plight. All we see are legalistic measures being enacted, whichrequire coercion and duress for their enforcement. And, in the diplo-matic arena, the driving force behind the official support of the Negro“equality” movement is admittedly the necessity of creating a favorableimage of American “freedom and democracy” in the Asiatic and Africancontinents with the reactions on European chancelleries.

Negroes of the South, would you see your future? Just go up North andask your brother Negroes about the alleged blessings of Negro “equalityand freedom.” The passage of civil rights measures and the so-called abo-lition of discriminatory practices have not, in any way at all, altered thepredominant social relations.

The primary characteristic of a social revolution is to change the socialrelationships. The social revolution called for in the historic conditionsof the 1960s is to supplant production for profit (capitalism) with pro-duction for use (socialism).

Inherently, capitalism breeds prejudices, bigotry and hatreds. KennethB. Clark, in The N.Y. Times Magazine (4/4/65), bemoans the “Delusionsof the White Liberals.” Unfortunately, both Negro and White liberals,as well as Negro and White reactionaries, suffer the same delusions. Thisvery concept of “race” is a fallacy, speaking scientifically. Negroes andWhites are essentially social categories, as can be seen by examining dif-fering behaviors and attitudes throughout the globe. Homo sapiens is butone species.

Capitalism is a class society, despite the apologists and pundits. TheNegro and White capitalists have common interests, and the Negro andWhite workers have common interests. It is an illusion that Negro capi-talists have common interests with Negro workers, any more than Whitecapitalists 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? Yourselection has an excellent reputation as a superior school of learning andinformation. Note that I did not say “education.” To me “education” impliesmore than a host of specifics and details, perse. Education includes an under-standing of how the storehouse of information is tied up in their interrela-tionships, and in a process of growth and development. In the final analysis,science is not only accumulated knowledge, but the methods of acquiringthis knowledge. There is but one science, it is an integrated whole (in spite ofall the vast gaps in our knowledge and our colossal ignorance). But there arebranches of science galore: astronomy, chemistry, physics and the other so-called exact sciences as well as history, economics, sociology and the so-calledsocial sciences. They all overlap and none of them exists independently, in avacuum. Unfortunately, universities must be geared to job training as theirmajor objective, rather than education, as outlined above.

However, with the march of time, more and more emphasis is being placedon 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 gener-alizations, i.e., it is the science of processes. Really, only the socialist is capableof viewing science objectively, without moral reservations and ethical com-punctions, when the chips are down. What is more inspiring and emotion-ally stirring than socialism and the fight for socialism — yet it is not rootedon merely ethical, moral, or philosophical considerations. This is becauseour 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 thanmetaphysical. What distinguished the early Marx from the mature Marxwas just this. The dilettantes and intellectuals emphasize the “humanism”and “alienation” of Marx’s Hegelian youth and ignore his basic contributionof historical materialism. Not that Marx forsook his condemnations of theinhuman and alienating features of capitalism. But there is more to it!

Heartiest congratulation on your efforts at the San Francisco rally. Yes-terday, 3 comrades gave away many thousands of leaflets (and not onewas seen thrown on the ground) at Martin Luther King’s parade and rallyon Boston Common.

**TUNE 12, 1965**

Dear Comrade Mark (Gioni),

Yes, I agree that a belief in a supreme being does not, necessarily (youremphasis), prevent an individual (my emphasis) from opposition tocapitalism. (Note: I omitted your adjectives, “complete” and “effective,”’because they are absolute terms.) Of course, an individual religionist maybecome a revolutionary socialist, despite his superstitions. But, this is nottrue of religionists, as a whole. In this context, please reread my last lettercontrasting the religious and materialist views of social phenomena.

Also, I cannot quarrel with your other statement that no new member ofthe party can be expected to have a “complete” grasp of Marxian science.And this applies most emphatically to all members of the party. For thatmatter, I know of no one who has a complete grasp of any science. (Yourabsolute adjective, again.)

However, like you, I do believe we should avoid abusive harangues (asdistinct from good satire a la Anatole France or Mark Twain, a most dif-ficult type of writing). Diatribes, as such, merely antagonize rather thanconvince. And I do believe you seldom see harangues or diatribes in theWS, despite our serious criticisms of anti or non-socialist confusions.

Finally, the strength of the socialist case is that it harmonizes with thelessons of experience, as it unfolds in its historical development. Thesocialist case is far easier to grasp than the unquestioned beliefs thatso many blindly accept. (It is important to realize that today, religionis only accepted — but no longer established — as the explanationfor the beginnings of life or the beginnings of the earth. Even religiousseminaries are compelled to give materialist explanations for those twophenomena, despite their rationalizations and apologetics.) Bourgeoiseconomics proves to be sheer gibberish and is difficult to make senseof when examined on its own merits. The reason why Marxian scienceappears to be “profound” is because it is not frequently taught and thussounds strange. Just examine some of the strides being made now in theelementary schools in teaching the new mathematics and science, whichhas 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. Andthe class nature of capitalism has succeeded in creating the illusion thatthe workers are dumb and cannot grasp real understanding, and musthave leaders (as distinct from teachers) to tell them what to think.

I trust, very earnestly, that I may have been of some help in clarifyingthose items that disturbed you.

May the day come sooner than you anticipate when you can visitBoston.

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 mythsof racism. They have denied the alleged innate superiority of one groupof people over another group of people. They have emphasized that theinterests of workers the world over are to abolish capitalism and estab-lish socialism. They have urged workers to do away with the barriers ofnationalism and the prejudices of racial superstitions.

The Racial Problem: A Socialist Analysis, a 78-page pamphlet publishedby the SPGB in 1947, describes the “term” and the “myth” of race in itsChapter I, titled “What Is Race?” as follows:

.All this shows one thing, the absurdity and futility of trying to putforward rigid theories about race ... Nobody denies that differencesexist between peoples, yet immediately we try to lay down any hardand fast theories from this fact, we land ourselves in difficulties ... Itis not surprising, in these circumstances, to find that certain scien-tists are in favor of dispensing with the word “race” altogether. Huxley,for example, suggests that the term “ethnic group” is a more correctscientific alternative, and the American anthropologist, Franz Boaz,has put forward the word, “population.” Such methods of overcomingthe problem are obviously doomed to failure. No harm results from ascientist’s use of the word, “race,” because he has full knowledge of itsmeaning and uses it accordingly. But, if he thinks that by using a dif-ferent word, he will materially assist in ridding the minds of the major-ity of false ideas about the subject, he is sadly in error. Even if either ofthese two terms was to become of general use in preference to “race,”these would, in turn, become subject to the same misuse as the wordthey were meant to supplant.

Chapter I closes:

To summarize briefly.: Firstly, race is a scientific term used to signifythe possession by a group of the human species of a certain set ofinherited physical traits. Secondly, that though it is obviously possibleto draw broad physical distinctions between people of the world, sci-entists are still unable and, most probably will always be unable to fixrigid lines of demarcation between them. They can do little more thanacknowledge and accept the overwhelming difficulties that confrontthem in investigating such a subject. What we emphatically repudiateare the doctrines of racialism, which deliberately ignore or misuse thefindings of science, and seek to convince by clothing themselves in amantle of scientific jargon and primitive emotionalism.

Possibly, the most serious and objective study yet made on this and relatedtopics is “The History of Mankind, its cultural and scientific develop-ment.” The work was sponsored by UNESCO. It was the collaborativeproduct of the best scholars in their respective fields. Unwittingly, thiswork gives a hint of the future when objectivity, truth and the commoninterests will be the considerations for scientific study. (This is even truetoday in the exact sciences only because of the needs of the commoditysociety.) Two unusual features of this study were: 1. Whenever a mootquestion arose over interpreting the evidence, the varying attitudes werepresented, and 2. The social and economic summaries seemed to beinfluenced in large measure by the Materialist Conception of History.This reflects that Marxian science has become established as valid, eventhough it has yet to be accepted. (Reminds me of Boudin’s comments onthis phenomenon.)

It can be said that physical anthropologists agree, in general, that thereis but one species, homo sapiens; and that within this species, there aregroups 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-fixingtools. Notable examples are the diatribes against “materialism,” “dialec-tics,” and “value,” a la Marxian economics, etc. Some years ago, a WSPConference had to discuss the merit of changing the term, “socialism,”to some other term, such as “cooperative commonwealth,” “worldsociety,” and other suggestions, because of the confusions on “socialism”and “communism.” It was agreed that we do not repudiate our scientificterms just because of the bombasts hurled at them or because they aremisused. Our job is to define and explain our terms. It was to the creditof the SPGB that the last chapter in their Race pamphlet was devoted tothe definition and explanation of the term “race.”

What we condemn in no uncertain terms are the doctrines of racism. Andthat is where you entered the picture. You tied up the social system, theeducational institutions, the hysteria, and the fallacies of the racial con-tentions, through an exhaustive research of the documentary evidence.In my humble opinion, you have an obligation to have your exposures ofthe 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 own-ership 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-enoughgeneralization of the socialist case. The World Socialist Movement isclosely intertwined. To get involved now would divert the few activecomrades away from our all-essential work. Such as it is, the D. of P.symbolizes the solidarity of the aroused working class when they wakeup to their common interests.

In substance, my comments on your essay will be on these lines, when Idiscuss 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 char-acteristics. You point out material factors that gave rise to them, andthat they are the “end product” of the conditionings taking place in theenvironment. You are on sound ground here!

But, are you trying to infer that there are no interrelationships betweenbiology and the environment? I want to warn you against oversimplifica-tions when dealing with physical anthropology. You weaken your owncase. The great strength of socialism is that the findings of science cor-roborate the socialist case. You have more than enough documented evi-dence to expose the bigoted superstitions of the racists and their “scien-tific” apologists and supporters without having to repudiate the scienceof 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 theDiscussion 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” isbecause of the misconceptions that are attached to the word. Puttingforward “Ethnic Group” as an alternative will not help matters as themisconceptions will simply be transferred to the new phrase. It is notthe 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 thesocial 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 AshleyMontague, who is in favor of replacing it within the cultural connec-tion 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 endow-ment or inheritance at birth consists of no more than certain broadpsycho-physical dispositions which are common to all mankindwithout 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. Thesemajor groups number a large variety of different physical types, whichare better called ‘ethnic groups’ rather than ‘races.’ (Man in Process, p.34). On the basis of his definition of “ethnic groups” (p. 132) what iswrong with continuing to call them races, as long as it is understoodthat it has no reference to mental endowment, and, in the long run,only refers to temporary stopping places, like inns, on the highwaysof time.

Arising out of his conception of the oneness of mankind Ashley Mon-tague has this to say:

*“Had the religion of Christ been faithfully brought to the peopleinstead of the cults and dogmas, spiritual prevarication, bigotry,intolerance, and auto-da-fe which have to so large an extent servedin the past, Western man could never have fallen into the spiritualuncleanliness in which he finds himselftoday. ” (p. 123)*

*“The craving for decency, justice, and social stability cannot beachieved without love. We know that now. Christianity has alwaysknown it, and science has at last demonstrated it. More than anythingelse man not only wants love, but he wants to embrace the wholeworld within his interest and to extend everything in it his love and hisunderstanding. Heartened by the support for this knowledge which hascome from the wholly unexpected quarter of science the Church mustgo forward in the renewedfaith in its principles.*

*“Devotion to human ideals, love, sympathy, understanding, justice,and the embodiment of these values in human relations is the truereligion of man. Failure to practice this faith is the only real atheism.*

*“Today, and hereafter, the Church, in leading mankind toward thepractices ofthis faith, will have the support of many allies: the socialscientists andparticularly 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 atvariance with his neighbor”? Christ.

Who produced the atomic and hydrogen bomb? The scientists.

I have only concentrated on Ashley Montague’s book because ComradeMiller recommends it in his essay.

Incidentally, in spite of what I have said, I think Montague’s book con-tains some excellent material and is well worth reading — but critically.

Gilmac

Need I say more? Only the socialist is the genuine scientist in the sensethat he correlates all knowledge in all its interrelationships just becausehe is a monist who sees all things in a constant state of motion. It is easyto fall into the trap of dualism and absolutism a la Montague without thebackground of Marxism. (Note Pannekoek vs. Montague.)

Again, may I warn you against repudiating the findings of the science ofphysical anthropology. The trouble is not physical anthropology but thephysical anthropologists. (They are not Marxists.)

It boils down to the realization that man is still colossally ignorant. Thereare far more gaps in our knowledge than actual information. But the greatcontribution of Marxism (notably Dietzgen): at long last, we realize thatwhen answers are found they are always physical-material ones. There areno unknowables, only unknowns.

Here’s my hand!

Rab

P.S. I just happened to think of how much more sound is Kropotkinthan Montague in spite of Montague’s justifiable tribute to Kropotkin.Kropotkin was largely influenced by Marxian science. Note in particularhis An Appeal to the Young. We printed a section in the WS recently. Ifyou ever meet a good prospect among university students, there is nobetter introduction to scientific socialism.

**sepTEMBER 24, 1965**

Dear Comrade Brownrigg:

Going through my pile of unanswered letters, I came across yours of June1st. So, I’ll take advantage of you by sounding off on a pet claim: There isa growing ferment for socialism going on today. Many comrades deny thison the basis of the “facts.” They contend I have no “proof” or “evidence,”in view of the small membership of the World Socialist Movement. Unfor-tunately, such reasoning only takes account of superficial appearances. Onecan’t ignore the imperceptible social processes at work.

The lessons of experience impress themselves on men’s minds long beforethey reach their lips. (How often new members and sympathizers have saidthey have always been socialists even before hearing of us.) Long beforethe “round earth” and “organic evolution” theories were finally accepted,they had already been established in men’s minds. Louis Boudin, in hisTheoretical System of Karl Marx, has a tremendous development of thispoint. That the socialist analysis has become established can be seen inmany of the newer novels, plays, movies, etc. Even politicians like Eisen-hower (in his United Nations speech) indicate that the socialist pointof view makes sense. Current trends in sociology and social psychologydemonstrate that when the universities come to grips within their fields,they reveal that what there is of any scientific value in their analyses areMarxian. Even the ecumenical councils reveal radical changes in estab-lished understandings. I’m not saying or implying that any of the above issocialist. 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 asingle day, and then comes a day in which are crystallized the experiencesof twenty years.” And Engels’s that when concepts that had been takenfor granted as reasonable become obvious nonsense, the conditions for asocialist revolution have become propitious. To me, one quite significantphenomenon is that when the socialist case is presented to almost any-body without mentioning the word, “socialism,” rarely will you get anargument. Just try it yourself and see. (It is the word that the head-fixingindustry [education] uses as a means of propaganda.) It’s significant thatthe idea of socialism makes sense. The head-fixing industry is fighting alosing battle in spite of the confusions, superstitions, and opposition tosocialism by the majority. To summarize: This is the MCH at work!

.. .We do have a manpower problem in headquarters. We have alwaysbeen short of manpower. But, with the advertising we’ve been doing,there is an increasing influx of mail requiring immediate attention. Thereare an increasing number of complaints over errors and failure of promptattention. The records are behind, etc. We really require a fulltime orat least a part-time office worker to take care of details. The MondayNight Work Crew is no longer adequate. We do not have the funds for apaid worker. We do have comrades available who are willing but lack theexperience for competent clerical handling of details. It’s a wonder thatwe get the work done that we do.

Finally, let’s hope that Comrade Milne’s trip to Toronto may have desir-able results. The good of the movement should take precedence over allother considerations, taking for granted common agreement on socialistfundamentals. We decided not to discuss the SPC situation at the recentConference, trusting to the SPC to surmount their present difficulties.The Conference was fairly successful. Let’s hope the day is not far distantthat the SPC have annual conferences! Every effort should be made inthat direction. (The road is open for combining SPC/WSP Conferenceswith sessions set aside for autonomous matters.)

There is no need for any reply to this letter except if the mood strikesyou. In closing, all honor to those in the WSP who disagree with myviews on “ferment.” They keep on keeping on, patiently and persistently,despite disappointments and discouragements because of their socialistconvictions 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 theopportunity of reading your booklet on New Hampshire Indians.

Have you ever run across Lewis Henry Morgan’s Ancient Society, pub-lished in the mid-1870’s? It is the classic study of the “lines of humanprogress from savagery through barbarism to civilization.” Morgan wasprofessor of anthropology at Yale. He was the first American anthropolo-gist recognized in Europe as a first-water man in his field. He spent 40years with the Iroquois and was adopted as a blood brother by one ofthe tribes. The Indian Museum in Albany, N.Y., pays tribute to him. Hewas a member of the National Academy of Science. Like his contempo-rary, Joseph Henry, the first secretary of the Smithsonian, he has becomesomewhat forgotten for the present but both are destined to becomeuniversally recognized for their contributions to human knowledge.

As for your recipe for old age, “being active in mind and body,” may Iadd an additional ingredient: living in the present.

I’m very optimistic about the young generation. We live in a periodwhich has seen tremendous strides in technology and science. Alreadysociety has — potentially, at least — solved the problem of produc-tion. The present problem is the failure of social relationships keepingin pace with the revolution in technology. No longer can anyone say thereason people are in want is that we can’t produce enough. It is so easy tocondemn the “juvenile delinquents” and the “criminals,” instead of thesystem! 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 assumptionsfor 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 workfor their living — at whatever job becomes available (and these jobs arebecoming less available, especially for youngsters). With the increase inautomation, at long last, human beings could enjoy their leisure doinginteresting and meaningful work according to their talents, tastes anddesires. Biologically, there is no such thing as a lazy man. Human beingshave energies they must expend, be it only whittling wood or fishing inthe streams.

**NOVEMBER 27, 1965**

Dear Comrade Red Miller (Hello, Gertrude):

At long last, I got the information I promised you last September. (By theway, I trust this letter finds you in improved health!

Prof. Wm Bascom, director of the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthro-pology at University of California, Berkeley, and physical anthropologist,vociferously disagreed with Coon’s racial theory that “the Negro race is atleast 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 froma trip to Africa.

Prof. Bascom sent me a review of Coon’s The Origin of Races that waswritten by Prof. Morris E. Opler of Cornell University; and referred meto two other sources:

1. “A Four-Letter Word that Hurts,” by Prof. Morton Fried of ColumbiaUniversity in the Saturday Review of Oct 2 1965.
2. Prof. Sherwood’s presidential address to the American Anthropolog-ical Association, entitled: “The Study of Race,” presented by the specialrequest of the Executive Board of the Association. This was printed inAmerican Anthropologist, Vol. 65, 1963.

The major criticism of Coon revolves around his contention that allliving “races” of man do not descend from Homo Sapiens origins. Insteadhe traces “races” of man as products of descent from Homo Erectus. Theypoint put that “the probability that the same species could evolve fivetimes 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 theylist some of these loose ends.

The concluding paragraph by Opler is worth quoting: “Coon is essen-tially a technician. He is at his best when he is describing the physicalcharacteristics of tarsier or the latest Australopithecine find. In spite of abreezy style and abundant self-assurance, he cannot convincingly writehuman history, even racial history. He will have to acquire more knowl-edge, 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 inter-esting letter to WSP headquarters in Boston. We regret the delay inreplying. This letter is written in the same spirit of sincerity and objec-tivity 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-wideSocialist Industrial Union in addition to the political organizationnecessary to vote out capitalism and to vote in socialism”?
* Isn’t it true that “without industrial might and organization behindus, our political vote will be nothing more than beating the wind ofcapitalist reaction?”
* Why does the WSP “favor the continued use of the political state(your emphasis) by the working class when you recognize thatsocialism is a classless and stateless society (as per your Paragraph Sixof your Declaration of Principles)?”
* How would you convert the historical organ of class rule to an instru-ment of emancipation? (With the addendum: “Are you Leninists?”)

I earnestly trust that the following comments clarify the questions youraised. However, they will not be answered in seriatim order. Before pro-ceeding to the replies, one important observation — on the surface, itwould appear that there are so many basic points of agreement betweenthe Socialist Labor Party and the World Socialist Party that there is reallyno justification for two socialist parties in the United States, both ofwhom claim to be Marxist, revolutionary and scientific. Both partiesagree on the futility of reforms and on the validity of the Law of Valueand the economic lessons it teaches. Both organizations accept the Mate-rialist Conception of History and the Class Struggle.

Granted, there are some differences between the two parties. The WSPholds that socialists are materialists and cannot be religious, at the sametime. We do not regard the founding fathers of the United States withthe same high esteem as the SLP We consider Russia to have the social

relations of state capitalism, and that the material conditions in 1917were not ripe for any socialist characteristics; and the World SocialistMovement has taken this position ever since the Bolshevik Revolution.

But the basic and primary distinction between the two organizationsis that we have different objectives. If both the SLP and the WSP hadthe same goals, there would be no valid reason for the existence of theWorld Socialist Party in the United States. Up until the early years of the1900s, 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 systemof society based upon the common ownership and democratic control ofthe means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by andin the interest of society as a whole.”

The object of the Socialist Labor Party is “To inaugurate the SocialistRepublic of Labor.”

In this Industrial Republic of Labor, workers cast industrial ballots for agradation of councils from a plant council, to a local industry council,to a national industry council, and finally to an all-industry council, thesocialist Industrial Union Congress, composed of manufactures, publicservice, 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 WorldSocialist Movement is a social system which is possible, practical and nec-essary today, here and now. Due to the workings of capitalism, mankindhas already solved the problem of production. Potential abundance pre-vails today. If this were not so, the material conditions of existence wouldnot be ripe for socialism. Socialism is not a blueprint or a utopia, but aproduct of social evolution. The times are now propitious for a harmonyof interests between all members of society and society as a whole. It isnow possible for everyone to live useful, interesting and meaningful liveswhere everyone gives to the best of his abilities and receives according tohis needs. The real problem of socialism will be not the organization ofthe productive process, but the enjoyment of genuine, meaningful lei-sure. Socialists, as social beings, will come to grips with problems as theyarise 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 relationshipsinto its socialist society. The separate branches of industry of the 1904-1905 period no longer typify the closely interrelated socialized tech-nology and production of 1966. I’m a printer and already the IBM 360— now functioning in many plants — has tied in transportation (andcommunication), manufacturing, lumber and public service as adjunctsof the graphic arts. The SLP chart, like so many other plans, has beenbypassed by the march of events. But equally sad is their stress on Laborin a socialist system. You correctly emphasized that socialism is a state-less society. It is also a classless society. Labor, as such, is a meaninglessterm in describing socialist relationships. The discovery of the IndustrialRepublic of Labor proved to be merely a matter of sounder union tacticswithin the framework of capitalism and nothing more. (In fact, the craftgraphic arts unions are in a bind on account of the over-lapping of thenew processes, which are driving them into union mergers.)

It is no wonder that the SLP has never really described the economy ofSoviet Russia. For a long time, they maintained a critical but friendly atti-tude to the “socialist” nature of the Bolshevik Revolution. Later, becauseof unfolding events, they branded Russia as “bureaucratic statism,” andother similar terms, none of which described the social relations. At notime, up to the present, have they recognized that the system that prevailsin Russia is state capitalism. This attitude flows from the similarity of theSLP’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 transitionperiod that has ever come to my attention: “The political organizationnecessary to vote capitalism out and to vote socialism in.” (My emphasis.)Question: What stands in the way of socialism, today? It is not the limi-tations of technology, nor of the material conditions of existence (withone exception). It is not the lack of literacy, scientific information ordemocratic forms. The only material condition lacking is a majority ofclass-conscious revolutionary socialists determined to inaugurate thenew social system ... [Building that majority] is the task of the socialistmovement. Our great ally is the workings of capitalism and the lessonsof experience. That is the latent strength of socialism. Once the workerswake up and the ideas of socialism spread like wildfire, they have thetools ready to hand — the ballot. All that the capitalist class can do is tosubmit to the inevitable. (Significant, isn’t it, that there is no reference inany major work of Marx and Engels to the “Transition Period.”)

This gives me the opportunity to come to grips with some popular buga-boos (really superstitions) concerning the working class. For example:“Without the industrial might and organization, the political vote wouldbe nothing.” Can you conceive of a worker being a socialist in the fac-tory 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 growingless.) And just what strength has the worker got industrially? He has twoalternatives: 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, thecentral organ of power! As you surely know, the highest expression of theclass struggle is the political phase. Do I have to stress the limitations of theessential economic phase of the class struggle? Is this not the leitmotif ofthe Marxian analysis? (I’m curious to understand how you misconstruedParagraph Six of the D. of P to mean that the WSP “favors the continueduse of the political state by the working class.”)

The first step in the socialist revolution is to capture the powers of thestate for the sole purpose of transferring the control of the means of livingfrom the hands of the ruling class to where it belongs, the hands of society.(Your voting capitalism out and socialism in.) However, socialism cannotexist in one country alone. Should a socialist victory take place in onecountry, the workers will use the Telstar and all means of communicationin their hands to send greetings to their fellow workers everywhere: “Wehave 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 willexist everywhere else also. Lest we forget, there is no fear that a socialist vic-tory will be overthrown at the next election. A socialist electorate will haveelected Socialist candidates, not on promises, but because they wanted awageless, moneyless, profitless, classless, stateless world!

You asked, “What form of government exists under socialism?” In the con-text of Marxian science, there is no such thing as government in socialistsociety. This is not a semantic quibble over words due to the poverty oflanguage. “Government” implies governors and governed. With the abol-ishment of the property basis of class societies, the necessity of governingvanishes and is replaced by the administration of affairs by the membersof society.

The only question that remains unanswered is “Are you Leninists?” Inthe context of this letter and from the articles you have read in the WS, Ithink the answer should be obvious.

I have made every effort to answer your queries in the same spirit of sin-cerity 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 itemsrecently.

With love and affection, Rab

*[A letter to his sister, Leah Nathanson, upon receipt of her (belated) birthdaygift to him.]*

Dearest Leah:

I’ll never forget two admonitions mamma impressed upon me. Eventhough experience and unfolding understanding have revealed their lim-itations, nonetheless the essence of her urgings made a deep impact onme 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, suchas: “Look at so-and-so’s behavior — and he calls himself a socialist!” Yearslater, I came to realize that she had not completed the sentence with anessential qualification: “...but the validity of socialism does not dependon the behavior of socialists.”
2. “Never forget that you came from a long line of self-immolators.” Ofcourse, 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 ofsuch heritage. However, she was correct in an historical sense of the longline of martyrs for truth and humanity — throughout the ages — in thehistory of revolutionary thinkers and doers for social changes. (I lay noclaim to such a role.)

You can understand why Karla, a dedicated socialist, became inspired toname her firstborn, “Sara.”

All this just to thank you for your most-appreciated birthday gift. In mam-ma’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 timeparents 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 foryou at the same time.

Of course, I realize the article “The New Attack on Killer Diseases,” isnot news to you. However, it is a demonstration of an important objectlesson. Socialism and preventive medicine are, essentially, synonymousterms. The restrictions of capitalism — concerned as it must be withpalliatives for immediate “remedies” — cannot come to grips with basicnecessities. It permeates all aspects of life. The bond between socialismand preventive medicine is genuine science — the study of processes andinterrelationships in a constant state of motion.

Last night, I listened to an interview (I forgot the doctor’s name) onChannel 2 on “Heredity: Life’s Biggest Gamble.” The title does notreflect the interview but it would attract listeners. The speaker, like somany doctors and scientists somewhat socially conscious, a sign of thetimes and an omen for the future, was encouraging in his comments. Buttwo things are worthy of calling to your attention:

1. The interviewer was troubled by “moral” considerations: “Who isgoing to decide on making the suggested genetic changes in humanbeings?” The speaker was very good in explaining that human beings arebasically social, gregarious and intelligent. He did not mention that oneindictment of capitalism is what it does to human beings.
2. The speaker was worried about the “population explosion” — and thiswas his one weakness. He does not realize this is a strata (class) societythat gives the illusion of “overpopulation” dilemmas. Within the con-fines of capitalism, the emphasis on “eugenics” truly raises the question:“Who is going to judge the judges?” Here again is illustrated the con-trasts 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 reproducedthem 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 tworeasons: 1 — Our past associations, and 2 — My early days (espe-cially 1902- 1913) in the area from Mass. Ave. to Vernon St. and fromColumbus Ave. to Hampden St.

It was reminiscent of the close association I had with Wm. MonroeTrotter for a long period . We had a bond of common attachment,yet had many theoretical differences ... Not only did I spend time in hisstore, but I also accompanied him on his walks doing errands on behalfof The Guardian.

Because of my parents’ friendships and discussions with a coterie ofinspiring persons in the neighborhood (including Trotter), I spent timewith such persons as [lists individuals and where they lived or did busi-ness] ... Then there was Mr. Cook. He was practically a member of thefamily. But when Marcus Garvey loomed on the horizon, he became anardent supporter of [Garvey’s] cause. You can picture the discussions. Butin no way did it interfere with personal relations. They had one thing incommon: genuine human beings.

I should have mentioned that my father had a tobacco store on Wash-ington St., just across Ball St. He also supplied small stores with theirtobacco needs. I used to go over the route to take orders and to deliverbundles. His store was a gathering place for discussions. My parentswould preach socialism to the customers. I should mention the reverends(several Black and one Catholic) who joined the discussions. One Blackreverend took me as a special project — to convince me of my errors andto save my “soul.”

Incidentally, my father was boycotted by religious Jews for opening hisstore on “sacred” holidays because of their superstitious nature. Andstrange to say, he was regarded as an authority by the same Jews on theBible because of his youthful studies. His great advantage was his evi-dence of the fallacies.

There was only a small sprinkling of socialists, such as they were, in theneighborhood. There was a mixture of Black and White socialists; suffi-cient to organize a local of the old SPA in Roxbury, in Appel’s tailor shopon Washington St., near Sterling St., in 1909. I was only 16 years old atthe time. The National Office in Chicago gave me special permission tojoin and I became its first secretary. We held several meetings in smallhalls on Tremont St. and had a few colored speakers (of the stamp ofRandolph 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. Theyhad wonderful, inspiring teachers (two of them public school teachers).It lasted for about 8 years (1899 - 1907). One highlight was when theSunday School kids headed the parade down Charles St. to a monstermass meeting on Boston Common, organized by the Boston CentralLabor Union on behalf of Moyer, Pettibone and Haywood — convictedmembers of the Western Federation of Labor on a framed-up charge ofmurder and testified to by perjured witnesses before a biased jury and ajudge, reminiscent of the Sacco-Vanzetti case. (The one basic indictmentof the system is the Class Struggle, which underlies, in the final analysis,the radical conflicts of our times. The primary conflict is not betweenBlacks and Whites. It would be difficult indeed to classify common inter-ests of Blacks, as such, and Whites, as such. But it is apparent, even ona superficial glance, the common interests of Black and White capitalistmasters vs. Black and White wage slaves.)

Oh yes, I quite forgot an interesting item . I went to Dearborn Schoolas 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 brutallyattacked by a gang of enraged kids in Orchard Park because of my remarkson the Church and patriotism. The favorite remark: “You goddam Jew,you killed Christ!” (And all the time this was going on, I felt sorry fortheir ignorance and superstitions and didn’t hold any grudge againstthem.) To this day, I hold with Einstein on this one point, anyhow: “Thepoison that contaminates the human race is Nationalism.” To which Iwould add this applies to Jewish nationalism, Black nationalism, Amer-ican 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 sonMerwin, also a comrade.]*

Dearest Comrade Rena:

Let me be the first to welcome you to the ranks of those organized in theWorld Socialist Movement for the purpose of spreading socialist knowl-edge and understanding so as to speed the day when sanity replaces thepresent “insane world.” It is not the World Socialist Movement that willemancipate mankind from the shackles of outworn capitalism, whichhas 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, wherethe interests of all individuals will be in harmony with the interests ofsociety as a whole. To paraphrase the Communist Manifesto: The WorldSocialist Movement is the movement of the working class. And the workof 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 sessionsin which you present your views as expressed in Old Mole.

We are not concerned with a philosophical discussion or with quibbles overideological differences. Like Marx, we are not only concerned with under-standing the world, but in changing it.

While appreciating your determined courage and organizational ability inyour struggles to ameliorate the inexorable workings of capitalism and yourrevelations of certain facets of the nature of the system, which you sharewith many others, nevertheless, the times call for the struggle to awaken theconscious determination of the great majority to establish socialism, whichhas now become the prime order of the day. The fact is that the very work-ings of capitalism itself have impressed themselves on the minds of the livingso that there is a growing chorus of just such voices as your own. These aresignificant 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 bedenied 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 (March1969). This is the official organ of the Socialist Party of Great Britain andthe World Socialist Party of Ireland. It contains two pertinent articles: “Spe-cial Powers in Northern Ireland” and the World Socialist Party “ElectionStatement” in the just completed elections there. Also please note the ad onpage 48. It is encouraging to observe the caliber of the new, young comradesjoining the SPGB.

May we look forward to your presenting your views very soon at one of theSunday 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 occasionalfilm, taped message or social at World Socialist Party Hall, 295 HuntingtonAve., Room 212, Boston. Listen to our radio programs every Sunday at12:30 on WCRB 1330 AM and 102.5 FM. The Western Socialist is on saleon many newsstands.

**JULY 15, 1969**

My dearest Dina:

For many years, I’ve been only too conscious that we’ve not been veryclose. Yet, I always got the emotional reaction that there was a strongempathy 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 allappearances to the contrary.

The trials and tribulations of life do exert their pressures in today’s jungleworld. I still work for a living. In addition I’m engaged in the one mean-ingful task: Arousing concern for changing the world. Almost a 24-hourday — how often Ella hollers up the stairs, at three o’clock a.m., “Whenare you going to get some sleep?”

I refrain (with exceptions) from standing in judgment and condemningindividuals, 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 socialand gregarious, despite the popularity of the notion that man has uncon-trollable “aggressive instincts.” Herein lies one of the major indictmentsof capitalism: what it does to human beings!

Human behavior, such as it is, reflects the predominant conflict of inter-ests that characterizes all propertied societies, capitalism especially. Yet sodeeply rooted is human nature, that capitalism cannot uproot it. Lookaround you, see the overwhelming evidence of how human beings canand do act, despite the system. The driving need for a sane world todayis reflecting itself in greater and greater efforts for a world of brotherhoodand cooperation. Witness some of the objectives of the youth. It is anencouraging sign of the times.

I’d be grateful if you would let me have Judy and Wayne’s address, whenyou get it. I feel especially guilty in my seeming “neglect” of them. Theyare 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; itmay 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 negotiationswith the Boston newspaper publishers. The primary lesson, of course, isthat the Union is the only weapon we possess for improving our wages,hours and shop conditions. And when the chips are down, the strikebecomes 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 highestITU wage scale in the country, the raise was only 7%, at a time when thecost 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 effec-tively in the negotiations.) Now, just imagine what the result would havebeen without the union. Without resistance by workers in their unions,the tendency of capital is to reduce labor costs to the very bone in theinterests of their profits. Invariably, capital, including the publishers, cry“poverty,” despite what the real facts might be. (And the scale committeeproduced the real facts on that score.)

There is a conflict of interests between capital and labor because, in thefinal analysis, a reduction in wages results in an increase in profits. Con-versely, 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 risein living costs that compels the fight for higher wages. In 1949, I hada documented article in The Typographical Journal demonstrating thisvery point. The superstition that a rise in wages causes a rise in pricesis 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 memberscriticizing the original proposal of the Boston Scale Committee becauseof its “ridiculous, unreasonable” demands that “made no sense.” Thescale committee was on solid ground. Who should decide what is “rea-sonable”? Certainly, not the employers.

I have spent vacations throughout the United States and Canada. I’vevisited over 20 local unions and chapels. I have walked in the picket linesin Tucson, Los Angeles, Toronto, and with our French-speaking brothersin Montreal. In Toronto, I marched in the huge mass meeting in Queen’sPark on behalf of the Toronto strike. (Pity that the other unions forgottheir pledges of solidarity with the printers.) Toronto was — and is — aliving proof of the conflict of interests between capital and labor. Formany, many years the Toronto Local had most congenial relations withthe publishers, without a single strike. But, at long last, capital revealedits true colors. For over a year, the publishers had not been negotiating ingood faith with the union. They were training rats to replace the union-ized composing room. One fine day, they posted new Office Rules, vio-lating the ITU Book of Laws. They locked out our members.

As has been recognized in ITU conventions and in our journal, there isa great need for a merger of the various graphic arts unions. With all theoverlapping of jurisdictions arising from the new processes, the condi-tions prevailing today emphasize that such a merger is the best interestof sound unionism.

We can be proud of the democratic nature of the ITU. Not only doesthe membership control through its referenda procedures, but its scalecommittees are subject to the decisions of the membership. When themembership is apathetic, it handicaps the scale committee (and the pub-lishers sense it). No scale committee can be stronger than its member-ship. The sure guarantee for an effective scale committee is a concerned,determined membership seeing to it that their representatives carry outtheir wishes. That is genuine union democracy.

A word on the new permissive legislation enabling reopening contractsfor reproduction considerations. Personally, I earnestly hope that LocalBoston 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 theamount of tape; severance pay; wage increases that are not below thecost-of-living index; and the other demands we have been asking.

Yours for sound unionism,

**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 his-tory repeats itself recurrently in cycles. Well, my history is being repeated.In the summer of 1919 I attended a class in Wage Labor and Capitalgiven by a young man named Rab. It was held in the old Auto WorkersHall. 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 andCapital, 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 otherslike them throughout the country) find a way to advance the cause ofsocialism more effectively than my generation did?”

Thanks for the names and addresses of the two socialist contacts inPhoenix and Tucson. I will more than likely take a trip out that way andwill try to look them up.

By the way, has your Western Socialist in any of its issues (or the Stan-dard) contained an article giving your party’s views about the U.S. Gov-ernment’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 1 didnot understand her view of Unions and disagreed with it violently; todayI not only agree with that view, but believe Ann did not then realize howprofoundly correct she was.)

Frank

**SEPTEMBER 6, 1972**

*[On this date, Rab responded to the following letter from Oakley C. Johnson,which is datedJuly 26, 1972]*

Dear Rab:

.You ask what I plan to do with the data I am seeking. What I want isto do an essay on the events of 1919 and the role of the Socialist Party ofMichigan (Keracher, Batt, O’Brien, et al.). I do not agree fully with theSPGB or the WSP, but agreement is not important at this moment. I dowant to do as objective and complete a study as I can. I intend to quoteconsiderably from W. Jerome’s historical article in The Western Socialist,May 1966, especially the sentence beginning: “In particular, the Mich-igan section of the S.P.A. came under the influence of the S.PG.B. ...collective action.” I shall also quote (p. 4) the sentence: “The Proletarianadopted the Declaration of Principles of the SPGB as its platform.”

I fully accept the point on page 3. I also accept the statement on page4, but I would like confirmation that the Proletarian actually quoted theDeclaration of Principles word for word! Is that true? I did have (haven’tany longer) a complete file of the Proletarian to 1925, but I confess Idon’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 theeditorial page, showing the statement to be a fact? I will certainly acceptyour own personal confirmation, and I trust you will give me such anassurance, 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 abouthim in general.

My articles, some of them, have appeared in the Centennial Review, aquarterly published by Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich-igan. One that appeared in the C.R. (Spring, 1966) referred briefly toAdolph Kohn (John O’London).

Fraternally,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 12issues 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 handlingthem, they fell apart. Pity that I couldn’t locate the missing issues. Shouldthey be found, I hope they are in better condition and especially that theissue you were interested in will be among them.

Thus, I must trust a faulty memory. One of the missing issues had the tophalf of one page devoted to a tribute to the SPGB and its Declaration ofPrinciples. I can visualize it in my memory. I will not say that it reprintedthe Declaration of Principles word for word; I am hazy on that point.

As you know, at that period there were many members of the ProletarianParty who were still members of the SPA, including its State Secretary,John Keracher. The Proletarian Party had not yet been organized and thehope was to transform the SPA into a genuine socialist party. The Britishand American comrades (slackers from the armed forces) congregatingin Detroit in those days had had a powerful impact with their classes andopen 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 SPAmembers resigned from Local 1 (English-speaking branch) to organizethe “Socialist Party of the United States,” our first name, which onlylasted 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 stirredwith the outbreak of events. (I could regale you with anecdotes of Keracherand myself during those days insofar as the Russian Revolution was con-cerned.) However, we differed on our interpretation of the Russian Revo-lution. Our emphasis was that the only hope for the Russian Revolutionwas if the West came to their aid with a proletarian revolution of class-con-scious socialists, since the material conditions were far more propitious forsuch a revolution, there. (And events have borne that out.)

Time marched on and there came the organization of the Third Interna-tional. What now distinguished the WSP and the PP was the interpre-tation they respectively made of Marx’s Civil War in France and Lenin’sState & Revolution. To summarize:

Marx, in Civil War in France, stated that the working class simply cannotlay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own pur-poses. This was followed up by Lenin’s amplification that Marx’s idea wasthat the working class must break up and smash the “ready-made statemachinery” and not confine itself to merely laying hold of it. This wasfar from being a quibble but a fundamental recognition of the power ofa class-conscious majority.

As for Comrade Jerome, he is a Boston product who volunteered to writeup the historic section of the anniversary issue of the WS. He passedthrough the whole gamut of higher “education” in the universities. Inde-pendently of his studies, he arrived at Marxist conclusions. He had neverheard of us, but had decided to investigate all the organizations thatclaimed to be Marxist before joining one. Eventually, he found that, inhis opinion, the WSP had the sound socialist position. He recognizedthat one has the need to do something about his convictions.

Here’s my hand in spreading socialist understanding, the sine qua non forthe socialist revolution.

**SEPTEMBER 16, 1972**

*[This is a short excerpt from a lengthy correspondence between Rab andComrade William Z. (“Red”) Miller on various theoretical matters. More ofthe correspondence is available in the WSP Archive.]*

Dear Comrade Bill Miller:

.I also do not wish to engage in any polemics on [the word] “inevi-tably,” primarily because there is nothing really involved. There is nodispute on the question.

When and where have you ever seen a statement in the WS that “socialismis inevitable”? ... There is no design in nature and everything in existenceis in a constant process of motion and change. Absolute statements areforeign 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 theacid test.

You accuse me of having a mechanical view of history. All I said is, mate-rial conditions give rise to socialists working for socialism. Who in hellever urged passive sitting on the sidelines waiting for the inevitable?

The sentence you quoted reads: “It (socialism) is only possible when thegreat majority of the workers become socialists.” You may conceive ofsome other society than socialism following capitalism. To me, the obsta-cles to socialism are ignorance and confusions, and — barring physicaldevelopments such as atomic bombs (and I can’t imagine mankind com-mitting suicide), geological or astronomical disasters (and they are pos-sible), — Socialism is the inevitable product of social evolution. This isamply 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 alwaysknown you as Rab. In fact I believe if I had heard someone refer toyou as Rabinowich I would not have known who he was talking about!Hell, “Rab” is an institution in the socialist movement! Yes, I know youbelonged to the old UAA & VW How well I know it! I know it so wellthat 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 Ifirst met you in 1919! I envy you.

You say, “The hope is more unionists become socialists.” I used to sharethat hope. But in my experience I have seen all too many socialists turnpure and simple unionists, especially when they became union pork-choppers — then they denounced socialists much more than did union-ists who never professed to having been socialists.

Writing my memoir was a painful experience, for it was no less thanpainful to recall the role that former socialists played in the union oncethey got pie-cards.

But such is life, I guess. This is why I have so much respect for peoplelike you and our late mutual friend Al Renner. You fellows stuck to yourguns.

If the WSP were running a candidate for president I would vote forhim. Of the two “socialists” running, I will vote for the SLP candidate; Iwould never vote for a Trotsky totalitarian.

The UAW COPE people in Detroit are in a state of dismay and dis-array! They are trying so hard to swing the “blue collar” vote in favor ofMcGovern. But those workers — notably those who live in the suburbs— consider McGovern “too radical!” Now if I were Davenport I wouldask you, “Is that what Marx meant by the historic mission of the workingclass?”

But I know those workers will learn the hard way what it’s going to belike to live under “Nixonomics” during the next four years.

What a pity Canter had to go so soon in his life! His “Concerned Union-ists” would be putting out their mimeographed bulletin, telling the autoworkers what Nixon and McGovern stand for, and why really it makeslittle difference which one wins.

Thanks for the SS. Am enclosing check. Will be interested to read whatthe SS has to say about the so-called “new left” freaks. Two years ago Ioffered to conduct a class on “Class Struggles in America” for the SDShere 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 Samuelhad joined the WSP when he emigrated from Great Britain, where he hadbelonged to the SPGB.]*

My dear comrade Larry:

Your contribution was gratefully received. And your Application forMembership was a welcomed surprise. In due season, you will hear fromheadquarters.

This is a personal letter expressing my views. For my benefit, pleaseexplain what you mean by “educational value of various institutionswithin 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 strugglebut they are limited to hours, wages and shop conditions. Socialists cando good work in unions and many do, but they still have to learn thatthe highest phase of the class struggle is the political struggle. The issue-oriented antiwar and feminist groups are good sources for recruits tosocialist consciousness but, in themselves, they are liberal and “radical”and have yet to learn that the issues they address — War and Man’sWorld — are products of capitalism, which cannot be solved within theframework of that system. Socialists can do valuable work within suchgroups carrying on socialist propaganda. Ironically, the same can be saidof any groups of workers, not excepting hard hats and reactionaries.

If anything has been amply demonstrated within the last 75 years, it isthat “reforms” by “socialist” parties have not been able to change thereal conditions of the working class. These “practical realists” with their“in-the-meantime” activities have sidetracked the movement from whatis truly meaningful. All those dedicated energies have diverted over-whelming numbers of workers from genuine socialism. Had all theseefforts and all that enthusiasm been devoted to socialist education, justimagine how much further advanced and inspiring the movement wouldbe today. What is encouraging is that, in spite of them, we see many signsof the times that workers are waking up!

A final word. Working for free speech, removing property restrictionsand qualifications for voting and getting on the ballot, etc. is not in thesame category at all, nor is struggling for the right to sell socialist litera-ture on the street and pass out leaflets, etc. Such activity, although manyreformers support it, does not have the object of making capitalism runmore smoothly. These measures are essential to carrying out socialist work.In the recent election, I voted for some referendum items on the aboveissues. They were the only items on the ballot worthwhile. You mightbe surprised to discover that there have been articles in socialist journalsstating that if a socialist candidate were elected by a majority of socialistsin a single area, he might vote for a measure that would benefit workers— knowing that the voters back home didn’t support reforms and wereaware 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 letterfrom 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 forscientific 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 empha-sized that I never said socialism was inevitable without qualifying theword “inevitable.” What I did say was that socialism was inevitable givencapitalism, and barring catastrophes, which is another kettle of fish. Ifone ignores these significant qualifications, it is easy to build a case thatI maintain a belief in “designs of nature,” “fatalism,” or any other teleo-logical 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 ContactsSecretary for Haringey Branch of the SPGB) wrote to the WSP’s NAC: “... Ourbranch has been in contact with a student from the Flemish (Dutch) speakingpart of Belgium. His name is Dirk Wouters... He is, to all intents andpurposes,a Socialist and at the moment is ploughing through the collected works of AntonPannekoek with a view to comparing his ideas and ours. I remember when Ivisited you some years ago Comrade Rab telling me that Pannekoek knew yourParty well and in fact, when overfor a scientific meeting in 1937or 1938, insteadof hob-nobbing with the bourgeois scientists came to address a meeting of theW.S.P. It occurs to me that anecdotes like this and any surviving correspondencebetween 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 articlehe is writing, by the way, may eventually appear in the Socialist Standard if it issuitable. ” Following is the letter Rab wrote to Wouters.]*

Comrade Dirk Wouters:

Comrade Adam Buick asked the WSP-NAC to send you informationabout Anton Pannekoek since you are comparing his views with those ofthe World Socialist Movement. He also mentioned that you were writingyour thesis on the World Socialist Movement. Coincidentally, ComradeHuard [of the SPC’s Montreal group] wrote me that you were contem-plating 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 aMarxist. He well understood the interrelationships of [different branchesof] science. Both he and his colleague, Paul Mattick, have written articlesfor the WS. We were very close in our views on most matters, except onWorkers Councils and on the ballot.

His views on the ballot arose from his Workers Councils concepts. To himthe 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 onlyfunction as the central organ of power. The ballot was a deception, merelya democratic form and not democratic essence.

However, he overlooked that it is not the economic phase that is thehighest expression of the class struggle, but the political phase. The eco-nomic 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 theruling class that stymies workers from revolutionary changes. Titles anddeeds, the military forces, etc., are in the hands of the ruling class throughits control of the State.

The essence of Marx’s writing (from the Communist Manifesto on) wasconsistent in stressing the need for political action; and this view hasstood the acid test of unfolding events.

Just because the state is the central organ of power, it requires the politicalaction of a resolute, determined class conscious majority to accomplishthe transfer of the means of living from the hands of the parasites to thepossession of society, as a whole. That is socialist political action.

What confuses the question is the activities of social democrats and theBolsheviks, who call themselves “communists.” Their political activitiesare confined to administering the capitalist state, and instituting reformsfor 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 SPGBwho visited the U.S. (Boston and New York) for a few weeks in themid-Seventies.]*

Dear Comrade Rowland:

Excuse the delay. In addition to being constantly diverted, I’ve beenmulling over in my mind just how to reply to your interesting andimportant 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 “Liber-tarian Communism No. 5; and 3. Who are the sectarians and ivory-towerinhabitants?

But first a generalized summary:

Members should not fear to express opinions. We should not discour-age reexamination and questioning. We should bend over backwardsto gain and retain members, allowing for differences of opinions (notdifferences on principles). We should be narrow enough to excludeall who are not socialists but broad enough to include all who are. (Ibelieve there is no quarrel among us on what constitutes a socialist.)

Of course, it is understood that a representative of the party, speakingunder party auspices, states the case as agreed upon by the majorityand makes it clear whenever he expresses his own personal opinions.

*[The paragraphs above are taken directly from “Is There Room for Differencesof 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 doin a union — for that matter in any non-political organization he orshe may be associated with — will indicate the many socialist activitieswe should engage in. Also please note ad clipped from the WS underheading “What Can I Do?” They make clear that the SPGB and its com-panion parties are all “activists” in the meaningful use of that term!

Secondly: In “Libertarian Communism No. 5” appears this statementthat confuses me: “We should be free to participate in any struggle orto join any working-class organization which does not have anti-socialistobjectives.” But how does one define an “anti-socialist” objective? The

Third-world countries all call themselves “socialist,“ as do Israel, and thesocial-democratic countries. This also applies to many liberals, progres-sives 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: “Revo-lutionary Socialism: What does It Mean Today,” contains a serious nonsequitur. When did the SPGB ever state or imply that the class strugglelimited attempts to defend living standards, separate from the strugglefor socialism? What they have pointed out, time and again, over theyears, is that the political phase of the class struggle (its highest expres-sion) is the struggle for introducing socialism, whereas the economic phaseof the class struggle is involved with the resistance of the workers to theencroachments 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 limita-tions of the economic phase is also “sectarian.” (The above refers to pages20-22 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 wasfavorably impressed with your capability in writing.) If there is one leit-motifthat distinguishes most anarchists it is the emphasis on “individu-alism.” The one shining exception is Kropotkin. His Mutual Aid and hisAn appeal to the Young are gems. In it, he speaks of the Socialist Move-ment and refers to himself as a socialist.” It is as fresh today as it waswhen he wrote it.

The two classic writings on the contrast of Socialism and Anarchism arePlechanov’s work under that title and Adolph Kohn’s articles in the SSduring the Twenties or thereabouts. Kohn demonstrated that, essentially,the individualism emphasized by so many anarchists really is a bourgeoisconcept. Personally, I have empathy with many philosophical anarchists.Especially I admire the Anarchists’ actions in the Spanish Civil War. Incontrast with the Bolsheviks, the Nazis, the great powers, and their dupeswho used the situation to test their military armaments and strategiesunder the guise of “fighting for democracy,” the Spanish anarchists werereally stirred by the goals of genuine democracy. Nevertheless, “Anar-chism” & “Socialism” are not synonymous terms.

That is why I disagree with your assertion: “To link socialists and anar-chists into one category to build up a sizable revolutionary organizationto oppose the forces of capitalism must expand their propaganda outputand 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 sectarianare the bourgeois experts and authorities. Their analyses and activitieshave proven to be the result of ignorance and confusion of the natureof capitalism. Their “remedies” constantly prove to be futile. This alsoturns out to be true of the practical realists of both the New and the OldLeft, together with the social democrat activists. If the experiences of thelast 75 years demonstrate anything, it is that these “activists” are actuallyrunning around in circles getting nowhere, when it comes to increasingsocialist understanding. If anything they are the ones who symbolize“Ivory-Tower inhabitants.”

If success is measured in numbers, most of these Leftist groups — withall their activities — are not much better off than the Companion Partiesof Socialism. Note their continuous “self-criticism” articles bemoaningtheir mistakes of yesterday.

The complaints of the many splinter groups of the Left, both new andold varieties, arise from disappointments and discouragements at theirlack of results, despite their sincere and dedicated “activism.”

One important factor is their feeling of being “leaders” and “professionalrevolutionaries,” even if this is not stated overtly.

I can vividly recall when there was a great stirring in the depression daysof the Thirties, especially in Detroit. The workers in the auto industries— without leaders or agitators — spontaneously wanted to organize intounions. The ambitious careerists and the Commies were taking creditfor organizing the workers into unions, through their efforts. (Also therewere squabbles among these “heroes” for credit.) It was as though theywere taking credit for the rising of the sun.

Marx’s comment in the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy (para-phrased) is pertinent: It is not ideas that make material conditions butmaterial conditions that give rise to ideas. Supplement this with VictorHugo’s famous quip: “Nothing is more powerful than an idea come ofage; it is stronger than the strongest armies.” While I’m at it, here’s anothercliche: “He who only waits does not serve the cause of socialism.”

In conclusion: The World Socialist Movement is far from being sectarianor living in an ivory tower. It is a realistic, practical movement with a sci-entific analysis of what’s to be done which has stood the acid test of beingcorroborated by unfolding events — the one thing that counts.

The latent strength of the SPGB and its companion parties is its demo-cratic framework, free from administrative bureaucracy but governed bythe majority of its membership.

It is a pity that we no longer have the Forum, where this letter properlybelongs.

Dear Comrade Rowland, here’s my hand in comradeship & affection.

**TUNE 11, 1974**

*[These next three letters are correspondence between Fred Thompson (ofthe IWW) and Rab regarding Rab’s Introduction to How the Gods WereMade. 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 Keracherfor a new edition of How the Gods Were Made. Glad to hear it.

I happened to be reading something of the struggles within the FinnishSocialist Federation, and the attacks after the 1907 Iron Range strike onthe Finns for being godless. The Socialist Federation of course respondedthat “religion is a private matter.” It reminded me of the old discussionin socialist circles on that question: SPA taking the position that religionis a private matter and welcoming those of various faiths; I believe SPGBtook the position that since religion is a social fact it is not a privatematter, 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 steadilytaken the position that a union should not attempt to dictate a member’spolitics or religion, etc.

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

A lad working with Friends Service Committee — can’t think of hisname — told me he is from Boston and that you told him to give meyour 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, notprimarily 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 har-mony with an understanding of the social forces at work in society. Itsgeneralized conclusions are confirmed and corroborated by unfoldingevents. That is the acid test. This is great merit of Keracher’s How the GodsWere Made.

Regarding John Keracher, I intend to praise his contributions to socialistunderstanding. Also, I will be critical of his “Dictatorship of the Prole-tariat” confusions and his support of the Soviet Union.

I agree with you that religion is not a union matter. It could not be oth-erwise, given that Unions are primarily involved in the economic phaseof the Class Struggle. Enclosed you will find examples of what a socialistcan do in a union, i.e., emphasizing sound unionism and presenting thecase for socialism. Incidentally, I’ve been active in the union on commit-tees, and “Jimmy Higgins” tasks; but I’ve always declined nominationsfor administrative offices because to hold a union office would put meunder obligation to carry out the instructions of the union membership:supporting COPE, urging buying of bonds, etc. To me, democracy in aunion is paramount. To my surprise, I was given a special party by myunion Local at my retirement at age 80 — independent of the regularretirement rituals.

I forgot to mention that in the Introduction, I’m thinking of mentioningour personal relationships. Despite any differences of opinions thatdeveloped after the Russian Revolution we remained fast friends. In fact,when visiting Boston to speak for the Proletarian Party, he stayed withme 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 Chicagomany years ago. We even thought of collaborating on “Signs of theTimes” 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 aboutsocialism. I expect our difference there is that I see socialism, or theending of exploitation, as the full flowering of unionism, or the struggleto abate exploitation, while you tend to see them as efforts on ratherseparate planes. For integrating them, theoretically, I have the backingof such statements as Engels’s “Socialism is the expression in thought ofthe class struggle in fact.” More practically, I mean by that in practice, I’dlike to see union papers explaining that prices the world over (except incontrolled economy where subsidy has been used to avoid the price rise)have risen chiefly because too many of our class have been assigned byour masters to different work than the work we should be doing, so thatour pay and the profits made on our labor from such work gets offeredfor a more limited supply of the needs of life, and that the basic remedy isfor unions to start reckoning what work we should be doing instead, andpushing for that — and to certainly do something different than pressfor the right to do harmful and vicious work such as armament.

Yes, I could probably have taken for granted without writing you, thatin an introduction to How the Gods Were Made you would mention thedifferent views that have been expressed within the socialist movementregarding religion and the relation of the socialist movement to it. Thatis good. When we first reprinted The Pullman Strike, I was disappointedthat we had not added at least a page or so to give the main facts of thestrike and to suggest what books say what about it. Since then in ourreprints we have tried to be helpful to a wide range of readers, by addinginformative rather than polemic introductions, and this has helped theworking stiff reader who digs history on his own account, and has got amuch wider class room use for the various books. The Right To Be Lazycoming out now has a life of Lafargue, very brief, but hard to come byotherwise; and some explanation of the circumstances under which hewrote it, and notes on the folks he talked about. I think it will be a bettereducational tool that way. With so few people knowing anything aboutKeracher, an account of him will not only make the book somethingplainly written by a real person, but also tie its debunking use to con-structive social effort. How about a listing of five or six books one couldrecommend 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 totell who Keracher was, what sort of a fellow, his prime interests or con-cerns. 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 differ-ence in evaluating the Russian revolution, etc., but of course not goinginto the pros and cons of the arguments. I expect you, he and I all seethe movement as bigger than its sundry organizations and parties, andconsequently the need for the solidarity of a varied left, a differentiatedleft, capable of intelligent discussion of its differences. Some of my youngfriends 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 fromEngland, he is now a New Englander who contributes regularly both to theSocialist 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 confinemy comments to your 4 points and ignore the rest.

Point 1. Yes, Socialism does mean “the conscious democratic self-activityof people in control of the means of life.” Socialism is a social system.This is not an “ism.” No contradiction exists between “In socialismpeople live in such a way” and “Socialism is living in such a way” (youremphasis). That is mental gymnastics ... The seed of socialism is laid inthe womb of capitalism. It is a process transforming capitalist thinkinginto 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 enact-ments.” The distinguishing characteristic of the socialist revolution isthat it will be — for the first time in history — a majority revolutionin the interest of the majority, which has become historically necessary.It will use the state machinery to transfer the means of living from theparasites to society as a whole. This is not an abstraction.

Point 3. This comes from substituting “human activities” for “socialistactivities.” I’m encouraged very much by the “human activities” we areseeing. They are signs of the times. Material conditions are giving riseto socialist ideas. My personal opinion is that socialists should work —side-by-side — for such objectives as civil liberties. (By no stretch of theimagination do we fight for them as reforms — but as socialist weaponsin the struggle for emancipation.) But we should refrain from becomingpart and parcel of such groups. The lessons of experience have demon-strated this conclusively. The ecology protesters, the communal practices,the neighborhood groups, the sincere, dedicated humanists with theirsocial concerns are good prospects for socialism, but they lack socialistclass consciousness, and when the chips are down they are steeped innon-socialist concepts. That is where we enter the picture — spreadingsocialist understanding. As for militant unionists, workers councils andthe like, many are on the right side for the wrong reasons. No-one hasbeen more active than myself in union activities. (See Comrade Rowlandfor examples of the socialist work I’ve done in that field; also articles inthe WS.)

Let me define what I consider a socialist. It is not how scholarly he maybe in Marxism and the sciences. He may never have read a word of Marxor socialist literature. He simply needs to realize that: 1. Capitalism canno longer be administered or reformed in the interest of the workingclass or of society. 2. Capitalism is incapable of eliminating poverty, wars,crises, etc. 3. Socialism can solve the social problems confronting societytoday, since the material conditions are ripe for socialism, save the lackof a socialist majority.

*[The letter ends here. It is very unusual for Rab not to end with some kindof 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 wehave it.]*

*[Trevor Goodger-Hill, a former member of the SPC’s Montreal Local, sent thefollowing 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 maybe on the side of reforms and amelioration of society’s problems. Rab, Iwas well schooled by you and others in the party and there is no way Iwould bother to write and print anything that I felt would not contributeto people understanding capitalism better, and trying to persuade them toeliminate it. Some of your and my words may be different, and maybe ourmethods (I no longer believe a political party serves a useful function), butI have and intend to spend every available moment of energy left to me bycapitalism to overthrow it by changing people’s ideas. Never, Rab, wouldI ever ask for your, or another socialist’s energies, for anything other thanfighting capitalism. Certainly not to help get out of paying some tax bill.

Incidentally we paid the tax because I came to realize, partly through yourletter and partly through reading through part of the civil code on pay-ments of debts, etc. (supplied by a lawyer friend) that the argument I wastrying to work into the letter wouldn’t work. In this particular booklet I ampreparing, my purpose is to publish correspondence between the schoolcommission, who arrogantly order Lise to send her son to school, and let-ters from Lise (written by me) in reply, confronting them with a differentview. While it’s not by any means a piece of socialist analysis, I am trying topoint out to people that they are responsible for what they do and the typeof society they create — a fact that comes out nicely I feel in the juxtaposi-tion between the tone of the school commission and our letters. The cor-respondence is not yet finished, and I intend to write a short introductionto the booklet, pointing out a few other salient facts.

Once we have the booklet finished, we intend to distribute it to news-papers, radios, teachers, etc. and get a bit of a controversy going, since itcould temporarily embarrass the government a little. It won’t for sure bringdown the government or capitalism, but if the publicity and reading of thebook itself makes a few people stop, think and comprehend a little, andhopefully leave them with the feeling that they can fight back, then we’ll besatisfied. 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 ofyou all. And we really wish George, Karla (or anyone else who could makeit) would visit.

Best ever,

Trevor

**AUGUST 13, 1974**

My dear Trevor and companions:

You have your problems and headaches with your cooperative farming ashave your predecessors through the years. They will be honored for theirefforts. At least you have the satisfaction of doing useful work for its own sakeand not for the cash nexus. In a real sense, you are a forecast of the futurewhen human beings will be living meaningful, useful lives doing the thingsthey love and enjoy doing.

It is good news that you are now “ready for the next bout of work whichshould continue until next fall.”

I can’t resist the temptation to say a few words on your feeling that “a politicalparty does not serve a useful purpose.” Without belaboring the matter, theone basic problem today is the prevailing ignorance, confusions and supersti-tions. Just as soon as the vast majority wake up and become convinced ofthe necessity for socialism (and not sooner), they will take steps to introducesocialism. Only a conscious majority can accomplish that. The spreading ofsocialist knowledge and understanding is the function of a socialist politicalparty. To transfer the means of living from the parasites to society as a wholerequires political action. The central organ of power for the capitalist class isthe state machinery. I trust you don’t believe that human beings are incapableof understanding their own interests. It is simply not true. By the very natureof things (biologically) human beings are not, speaking generally, idiots ormorons. The fact is that they have been brainwashed by the head-fixingindustry.

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 reachedthe 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 tospend every available amount of energy left to me by capitalism to overthrowit by changing people’s ideas,” and: “They will learn to fight back in the onlypossible way by getting rid of capitalism.” You recognize that your bookletwill “temporarily embarrass the government a little. It won’t bring down thegovernment 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 theresomething new about this (inflation) problem today?” in comes the latestissue of the SS (Sept. 1974). It will save me the headache of coming togrips with the gobblygook of the radical pundits’ analyses of the newcauses 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 acidtest of corroboration and confirmation by the one thing that counts: theunfolding of events. They were all generalists dealing more with pro-cesses, interrelations and the common characteristics than with specificsand particulars. (All of them made serious errors, so far as detailed spe-cifics are concerned.)

I can’t think of a better example than the cause of capitalist wars. No twowars have identical factors giving rise to them. All the literature on warsemphasize a multiplicity of causes for capitalist wars. Yet, when the chipsare down, all capitalist wars are the consequence of the market economywith its commodity relations and can’t be understood by ignoring it. (Iwas disturbed by Dissent’s constant concern for the “correct policy” by theU.S.A. in its foreign affairs, as I wrote you at one time.)

Above all, socialism is the science of generalizations. See enclosed chart Idrew 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 scientificeyes, i.e., revolutionary eyes, rather than subjective eyes with a view to“practical, realistic” strategy and tactics. The “theorists” are the realistsand 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 toHow the Gods Were Made.]*

Dear Rab

Congratulations. I think your introduction is very good. It brings backmemories. I remember that in 1919 you conducted the first class I attended.And I have a hazy recollection that one Sunday morning Beardsley led theclass. He was some kind of musician and had a sharp mind.

And of course I remember Kohn — his quick wit, sarcasm, and wide rangeof knowledge. I recall a crack he made: “The trouble with Batt and Ker-acher is that they try so hard to be Marxists and Bolsheviks at one and thesame time.”

Rab, was there a Workers’ Socialist Party in Detroit in 1919, 1920 and lateryears? I remember attending meetings at the Electrical Workers Hall onAdelaide, but I’ve always been under the impression it was a loose Marxiangroup 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 toknow Moses Baritz. From what I heard about him, he must have been acolorful character, brilliant, aggressive, well educated ... and in addition anaccomplished musician.

Imagine the SLP still claiming that “religion is a private matter”! Theyshould go to Mexico and learn how the Catholic Church strives to keepthe peasants and poorer sections of the working class in ignorance. Womenare told to bear lots of kids. Private matter indeed!

I was amused at your reference to Jesus freaks. They have quite a number ofthem 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 thepressing personal problems stemming from this insane system. Many peoplethese 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 theSocialist Standard under the name “Coster. ”He has also written several bookson various subjects, including an anecdotal history of the SPGB called TheMonument.]

Dear Comrade Bob (Barltrop):

Under separate cover, I’m mailing you a copy of the new edition of Lafar-gue’s Right to Be Lazy, published by the Kerr Co. I believe that is worthyof review in the SS. The Introductory Notes by Fred Thompson coversthe history of socialist experiences during the 19th century, especially asthey were connected with Paul Lafargue. One item was the accusationagainst the Marxists of being “impossiblists.”

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 IWWHe was the editor of their journal for many years. (Fred Thompson isreminiscent of Gilmac, a lovable fellow, with his charm, patience andcharacter.) In the ’40s, the party sent me on a propaganda tour to theMidwest. 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 myoptimism on the “Signs of the Time.” His response was that he was con-sidering a pamphlet on that very topic, and reeled off to me what he wasgoing to include in it: examples in plays, films, novels, magazine articles,popular expressions. He asked me if I would collaborate with him on thebook. I agreed but nothing came of it. Being 1,000 miles apart plus bothof 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 KerrCo. on details of the new edition of How the Gods Were Made and to meetFred Thompson. Needless to say, Comrade Lennie (my son-in-law) wasimpressed with Thompson. I’m sure you are aware of the arrangements fora joint publication of that pamphlet. The Kerr Co. wrote the NAC askingif I would write the Introduction, to which I agreed.

Speaking of the 2nd edition of the HTGWM, Fred enabled me to hurdlean obstacle in writing my Introduction to the pamphlet. The Kerr Co.

has a board, consisting of a couple of [comrades from the] old Prole-tarian Party, which had owned the Kerr Co. for many years. Also on theboard are Fred Thompson and Burt Rosen, determined to rescue theKerr Co., with its publications, from extinction. The Proletarian Party isnow extinct. But the two old-timers objected to my Introduction becausethey thought I slanted it on behalf of the WSP. Actually what I did was tocontrast the pre-Russian Revolution Keracher (who was a Marxist sup-porting the SPGB’s D. of P.) with the post-Russian Revolutionary Ker-acher, who supported Leninism. (In fact, the WSP had several debateswith the Proletarian Party on the matter.) I refused to compromise. ButFred Thompson cut the Gordian knot. He suggested I shorten my Intro-duction 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; butunfortunately he was not in a position to accept Rab’s nomination to theNAC that year. ]

My dear Comrade Ronald (Elbert):

Did I ever reply to your most interesting and significant letter of January20, 1974? I would feel guilty if I hadn’t. I can’t conceive of my neglectingsuch a communication. My backlog is accumulating faster than I can keepup with it. This morning I decided to go through it. Believe me, it was afour-hour task. In the process, I uncovered your letter. Suffice it to say, itscontents did my heart good. It thrilled me to see your excellent grasp of thefundamental aspects of the socialist case.

I’ve been associated with “socialism” all my life. Both my father andmother were “revolutionary socialists” in Russia before they emigrated toBoston in 1893. In fact, my father joined the SLP in Boston the same yearthey arrived in this country. (In 1893, the SLP was sound. It was in theearly 1900’s that DeLeon “improved” on Marxism with his “IndustrialUnionism” concept of socialism.) My father was a charter member of theSPA 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 Iresigned from the SPA in Detroit to become a charter member of the WSPMy mother was far sounder than my father. Although she was inspiredby the Bolshevik Revolution, she was skeptical that it would introduce asocialist society. So you see, I don’t deserve credit for being a socialist; butthe Elberts of the movement do. You became aware of socialism despite thefact that you were not exposed to socialist environments.

One thing that became obvious to me after reading your letter, is that youhave 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 havein the WSP: so few do so much! Might I suggest you write Comrade HarryMorrison, volunteering to assist him in replying to correspondence and otheritems? 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 out-side Boston, who are consulted on specific questions which would requireserious consideration. Nominations for national officers are made at theannual conference and then submitted to a vote of the membership. Itwould be wonderful if circumstances permitted you to attend the Confer-ence 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 comradesfrom 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 fromthe two top officials of his union, the International Typographical Union.]

Dear Pensioner Member:

The Boston Typographical Union at its regular meeting held on November23, 1975, unanimously voted for a motion made by Brother Chris Pauli,Chairman of National Press Chapel, authorizing this local to send a letterto all pensioners requesting information as to the extent the reduction infraternal benefits has affected them in order that this local can better assesstheir plight. The return letters to go to a committee of pensioners appointed tomake recommendations and offer information and assistance in securing aid.This union is now in the process of appointing the committee andformulatingthe program. As soon as this is completed, the officers will notify you. Pleaseexpress your opinion on the above stated action so that we may prepare anevaluation of the effect that the reduced pension benefit has upon you.

Henry Vitale John McManus

President Secretary-Treasurer

**DECEMBER 8, 1975**

Boston Typographical UnionDear Brothers:

Some years ago, a close friend of mine who is a professor in the economicsdeptartment of Northeastern University (and an advisor on income taxproblems on the radio for the CPA organization) asked me about the ITUpension plans. After reviewing them, he suggested I make an appointmentfor him with Stan White (at that time president of the Boston Local) todiscuss the weakness of our pension plans, especially in light of the pensionplans prevailing in other unions. Stan said at that time that his hands weretied and that it was a matter for the Executive Council. In a way, I blamemyself for not making an issue of the matter then.

In reply to the question how I’m personally affected by the reductionin pension benefits, I’m fortunate in that I receive the maximum socialsecurity benefits on account of my age, 82, and my length of service; butI’d get that anyhow.

A real and serious dilemma confronts many pensioners. Should theygive priority to their own serious plight, or to the union and its activemembers who are adversely affected by the shrinking membership anddecreasing available funds? Only the individual pensioners involved cananswer this.

I’ve had several letters in The Typographical Journal dealing with whatconstitutes sound unionism, and with socialism.

Regarding unionism, I’ve emphasized that it is not true that there is aharmony of interests between the union and the publishers. Publishersare concerned with profits and labor-saving devices, while we unionmembers are concerned with wages, hours and shop conditions. Theidea that we should be “reasonable” and consider their side as thoughwe were one happy family is a snare and an illusion. When the chips aredown, it becomes apparent that there is a conflict of interests involved.I’ve emphasized also that the membership is the real union, not the offi-cers and committees. I made the point that the craft unions, with theirinternecine battles over jurisdictions, etc., never served the interests ofthe 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 spiteof today’s ever-greater recognition of the need for an industrial unionmerger, steps in that direction are extremely slow, largely due to concernfor specific provisions. This problem arises from the notion that we need“good leaders.” What we need is good, sound members. That the mem-bership is the union cannot be emphasized too much.

On the subject of socialism, I’ve emphasized that the chaos and insanityof our dog-eat-dog jungle society, capitalism, poses serious economicproblems for everyone. In 1975, with our highly developed technologyand science, nobody starves because we can’t produce enough food. Yetmany people are starving because food (like other commodities) is pro-duced only for profit, not for the satisfaction of human needs. The timeis ripe for a sane society based on the common ownership of the meansof living by and in the interest of all members of society. Our heads arein 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 broughthappy memories of my own childhood. I was fortunate that my par-ents were revolutionary socialists from Russia. From my birth in 1893I was exposed to socialist ideas (including freedom from religioussuperstitions)...

I’d really enjoy having conversations with you, if the opportunity pre-sented itself.

As for the Proletarian Party, it went out of existence about 6 or 7 yearsago. It had an irreconcilable contradiction: it wanted to be both Marxistand Bolshevik at the same time. The WSP had many debates with theProletarian Party in Boston. Keracher remained a close personal friend.The first time he came to Boston, he stayed in our home, to the dismayand disapproval of the P.P. members. He never repeated that blunder,which is understandable. He hosted my son, Billie, when he won a prizeto go to the World Fair in Chicago. And as to the Introduction I wrotefor How the Gods Were Made, it was approved by the Editorial Com-mittee. The obstacle is fear of lack of enough sales to warrant the invest-ment. We are obligated to buy 2,500 copies. The NAC is now in theprocess of surveying the companion parties and others as to how manycopies they estimate they would order. We don’t want them to remainon our shelves.

As for DeLeon, up until he “discovered” his “Industrial Republic ofLabor” he was a sound, revolutionary, scientific socialist. During the1890s, there would have been no reason for a WSP in the USA. Statedbriefly, there will be no working class in socialism, requiring workers’ con-trol. The WS has had numerous articles dealing with the SLP. Socialismis classless and has common ownership. Note Lenin’s praise of DeLeonfor anticipating Soviets.

**APRIL 27, 1976**

[From Frank Marquart to Rab.]

Dear Rab:

The Spring number of the WS is very good. I hope “Bicentennial Hal-lucinations” gets read far and wide. What a welcome antidote to thehoary cliche-ridden bicentennial speeches one hears over TV! Ren has allthe makings of a good historian. And I found your “Panorama of Evolu-tion” most interesting. Have you ever thought of contacting high schoolscience teachers about giving that talk on evolution to the students? Youshould explore this avenue.

Yes, I will ask Penn State Press to send you a review copy, especially sinceRab is mentioned in the book.

About George Ramsay. One Sunday morning in 1919 I attended a classtaught by George in the old House of the Masses. I can’t recall the titleof the text but it was a blue, hard-cover Kerr book, one of the manysocialist classics they published in those days. I guess like everybody elsewho met George for the first time, I was impressed by that big, well-built Scotsman (Nils Akerval once referred to George as “an Olympianfigure.”). Soon after that Sunday, George took a job on a boat; he was aseaman in those days.

When he returned to Detroit again, he worked in an auto body shop asa dingman, in those times a highly-skilled, well paid craft. Eventually, asyou 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 flam-boyant; he spoke in a calm, straight-forward style, more like a teacherthan an orator. I also recall that he attended a class taught by Tom Bolt,and George always made a contribution by elaborating on points raisedduring the class discussion. I remember a humorous incident. It was on aSunday and our group returned from a day at Cass Lake in time to soapbox in the evening at Michigan and First Streets. The Proletarian Partyspeakers held forth on the opposite corner. Joe Brown opened the meetingfor us; he was followed by Red Robinson who, after speaking for about15 minutes, was followed by Ramsay. A chap named Bill Witt spoke forthe PP. George’s talk was particularly interesting that evening because hedrew on examples from places around the world to which he had sailed— Australia, France, British Isles, etc. Witt was losing his audience andGeorge’s talk attracted more and more people. In despair, Bill Witt tookhis 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 discontinueour meeting and return to “the club,” as we called our headquarters.

By the way, Red Robinson and George were very close friends and ifyou have not already done so you should write to him for backgroundinfo about George. I assume he is still in New York. George rose out ofthe proletariat to become a fairly prosperous businessman, but he alwaysremained loyal to the SPGB. He was not an intellectual type, say, likeCohen, 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, bothsocialists (later Dave lost all faith in socialist activity), both married tosisters (in fact, the two families lived in the same house for some timeduring the twenties). Yes, Dave could really fill you in about George.George Ramsay belonged to a breed that has all but vanished. Few arestill around and won’t be around much longer. Jack London immortal-ized the breed in Martin Eden. Self-educated sons of the working class,grounded in socialist classics, able to present the case for socialism in anintelligent manner. Please send me a copy of what you write abut him.

Yes, by all means, yours for a sane world! — Frank

**MAY 24, 1976**

Dear Frank (Marquart):

Due to the pressure of priority duties[[12]](#footnote-13) I put aside replying to your letter ofApril 27th. This turned out to be a lucky break. In the interim, I receivedtwo letters that will be of interest to you. My first impulse was to quotefrom them but I decided to photocopy them for you.

I’m grateful to you on two counts: 1) Furnishing me useful informationon Ramsay. It stirred many memories. Comrade Robinson passed awayin N.Y. City about a year ago. He was a member of the WSP and had vis-ited one of the Party annual conferences in Boston. Joe Brown and I wereclose pals. I recall his first arrival in Detroit and his enthusiasm for ScottNearing, who was instrumental in introducing him to socialist ideas inToledo. Also Davenport and Glicman. Davenport and Marie lived inBoston while he was working for a radiator company. Later, on a trip toFlorida, I visited them in Deland. They were neighbors. There was quitea contrast between Davenport and Glicman, and likewise between theirwives . I don’t need to describe Davenport, you knew him. But HenryGlicman was still very enthusiastic about socialism from the point of viewof philosophy and theory (not in socialist activity per se). Marie, Mrs.Davenport, was an ardent commie but free of commie viciousness. Sheis an intelligent, concerned person, imbued with enthusiasm for Russian“socialism.” She subscribed to many left-wing magazines and you couldhave a discussion with her. On the other hand, Mrs. Glicman was antag-onistic 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 mem-oirs with the object of reviewing it in the WS ... Judging from FredThompson’s letter, you made no reference to the existence of the WSP inthe old days. You surely were aware of the “tea drinkers” and their HQ.You surely were aware that Comrade Tom Bolt, to our surprise, joinedthe WSP when he became convinced on his own of the validity of itsposition on Russia. And he was Keracher’s closest friend. It was a tributeto his integrity that he put principles first. Then you had read my Intro-duction to the Keracher pamphlet on how the WSP and the Proletariangroup parted company over the Russian issue and how we, both of us,had collaborated prior to the Russian Revolution, realizing the situa-tion that existed (Keracher’s influence in the Michigan SPA). Both Kohnand I wrote articles for The Proletarian, who endorsed the SPGB and itsDeclaration of Principles. They even printed a special announcementpublished by the WSP because we were not in a position to have ourown journal. I’m perplexed how come you disregarded the WSP, whichplayed such a significant role in those days in Detroit.

I earnestly trust you don’t view the following two incidents as brash brag-gadocio. On two occasions I, unwillingly, cooperated with the Proletariangroup in dire emergencies. Davenport and I happened to drop into theHQ of the Proletarian group in the afternoon when they had received, forthe 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 meto open their meeting. I explained to them that I would not endorse theirattitudes. Then they put me on the spot: How can you not take advantageof an opportunity like this to assert the basic necessity of street meetings tospread socialist understanding?[[13]](#footnote-14) In spite of Davenport’s insistence on notspeaking, I knew I’d feel like a heel if I refused. This, in spite of an unusualcircumstance which I had explained to them. Arising out of a suggestionI had put in a box provided for such purposes, I was called into the mainoffice [at work] and was told that I was appointed to head the project at afabulous raise in pay, on condition that I did not speak on the streets. Youremember the “Service Department” in the Ford plants. I actually hadconducted a small class during the lunch period in the plant. It was a verysuccessful meeting. But when I went to work the next morning, I got firedand was told: “You can’t be trusted!”

The other occasion was just after the Russian Revolution. The Prole-tarian group had arranged a mass meeting in the House of Masses. Thehall was crowded. Keracher, Renner and Batt were held up in a meetingout of town. It was getting late and the audience was getting restive. Thechairman came to my seat and pleaded with me to fill in the breach. Itold him I was opposed to the very object of the meeting. I asked himto remember I would not defend their stand. He agreed. I did speakon the necessity of political power in the hands of the working class, asa class, a la Paragraph 6 of the Declaration of Principles. I must havebeen effective because of the thunderous applause.

You might drop a line to Fred Thompson for a copy of his review of yourmemoirs when it appears in The Industrial Worker.

.. .Incidentally, would you like to receive the NAC minutes? If so, whynot drop a line to the National Secretary of the WSP, Len Fenton, atHQ? None of the companion parties have secret meetings or are engagedin conspiracies. Our files are open to anyone desiring to see them. Wehave been on no subversive list to my knowledge. However, the CIAhave ample references to me and many of our comrades as revealed bymember 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. tomy last letter in which I was quite critical of you. It completely escapedmy mind when I mailed the letter to you. I wanted to tell you that if Iwas doing you an injustice because your book may have been writtenprior 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 overlookrelevant 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 theVagabond 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 clarifymy terms.

The heart and core of my letter was: What earthly reason is there forworkers to take pride in their work and be disciplined? If you succeededin installing this pride and discipline in the workers, I fear they would befired for holding up production. You know damn well that the capital-ists, as a class, are not concerned about quality (except in their ads) andthat 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 sayingis that the World Socialist Movement is small — and you are correct. Youdo 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 youwill find that these “practical realists,” being almost as small in numbersas we are, aim their tremendous activity towards reforms and practicalmeasures. When elected, they support capitalism. In their concern forsuccessful results, they always lose sight of socialist objectives, except forlip service given on special occasions.

The WSP and the rest of the World Socialist Movement say that nolonger can capitalism function in the interest of the working class or, ofsociety as a whole!

The practical, realistic “socialists” are dogmatic and sectarian, out of har-mony with the urgent needs of our time, while WSPers are the revolu-tionary, scientific and practical realists when it comes to solving socialproblems today!

Affectionately yours,

Rab

P.S. I should add that the socialist revolution must differ from all pre-vious basic changes in social relations in one important way: It will be thefirst time in history that revolutionary change will be in the interest of thevast majority, instead of being a transfer of power from one ruling classto another ruling class. Today, this basic change in social relations hasbecome necessary. Socialism cannot be imposed on the majority againsttheir wishes. Socialism is inevitable, barring astronomical disasters, self-destruction by atomic warfare, etc. In the long run, it is not ideas thatgive rise to material conditions, but material conditions that give rise toideas. It is the greatest contribution of Marxism to recognize this, andthat is also the latent strength of socialist movement! That is what youheard 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 is does to humanbeings, including both victims and beneficiaries. The system affects capi-talists 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. Indi-viduals are products of both the material conditions that surround themand of inherited biological factors. No baby was ever born with any ideas— these are all acquired after birth — but all babies are born humanbeings, and part of their inheritance is a social, gregarious instinct.

Despite the feminist movement, capitalism has been largely a man’sworld, and still is. But technological strides are diminishing the sex factorto a large degree. Incidentally, a socialist woman for whom I have a highregard, my mother, once said, many years ago in 1908: “a wife is a slaveof 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 mailingit with my compliments for a dedicated socialist. As for the minutes, youwill 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 costis only a little more than $10.00. Again, I admire you for your thoughtful-ness 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 dis-bursements. We do not subdivide postage expenditures into categories.

A word on Comrade Bob Nugent. He and I are bosom pals; althoughwe live far apart, I’ve visited him in Madison, NY, and he just recentlywrote to me to take a vacation and visit him again. He is a scholar, inthe best meaning of that word. There are phonies galore claiming to bescholars merely because they have degrees stating so. Bob never went tocollege. He is self-taught and has done much research in many fields. Hisoccupation: a handy man doing odd jobs — a proletarian scholar, whoputs to shame all the “experts” and “authorities” who are so honored byall the media. Above all, he is a wonderful human being.

(There are some socialists of whom I could not express that same senti-ment. 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 oldfriend and sympathizer from the 1940s.]

My dear Rose (Goldstein):

Superficially, it seems that the workers are dumb. On the other hand, itcannot be denied that they are never exposed to socialist ideas — certainlynot by the so-called socialists, radicals, liberals, commies, etc. These sin-cere, 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 administeringcapitalism or too busy fighting actively for futile reforms destined forfailure (as far as the conditions of the working class is concerned), tothink of “socialism” except on special occasions. They all scorn us as being“dogmatic sectarians.” The question is: Who are the dogmatic sectariansand who are the practical realists? Ironically, these so-called activists don’trealize that it is later than they think. It cannot be overemphasized thatcapitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interest ofthe working class, or of society as a whole. Conditions are already over-ripe for socialism. I’m very optimistic about some significant signs of thetimes which can be seen in current novels, plays, and movies; these showthat a ferment of socialist ideas is going on. The wheels are churning inpeoples’ minds even though the ideas have not reached their lips.

The latent strength of socialism is that the lessons of experience corrobo-rate the validity of the case for socialism, and repudiate the illusion thatreformist activity actually does anything for the workers. What we needtoday is not activist leaders (“blind leaders of the blind,” as Arthur MorrisLewis 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 isa small error in it, which was pointed out to me by Peter E. Newell in apersonal communication dated 5/23/2008: “Rab quotes Oakley Johnson aswriting that Charles M. O’Brien was elected on the Socialist Party of Canadaticket, as a member of the Alberta parliament in 1909, for the Crows NestPass coal mining constituency. He was actually elected, at a by-election, onMarch 22, 1909, for the Rocky Mountain constituency ... O’Brien waselected 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 ProletarianParty 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, fairlywell 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 ofshoes was thus the background of the son’s life. Keracher came to thiscountry in 1909, joined the Socialist Party in 1910, and began to studyMarxism. He set up his own shoe store in Detroit, and proceeded tohold evening classes in the back of his store. Out of these small studyclasses grew the Proletarian University, an ambitious dream, realizedonly briefly. Taking an active part in party politics, Keracher soon dis-placed state-wide socialist leaders.

Is this accurate information to include in that life of Keracher if we everget it off the ground?

The article speaks of Dennis Batt, Charles M. O’Brien “who in 1909had been elected on the Socialist Party ticket as a member of the Albertaparliament for the Crows Nest Pass coal mining constituency.”

Most of the article is an account of how Keracher had been much influ-enced by the SPGB, but not sharing their appraisal ofthe 1917 revolution— how his intention to launch a communist party avoiding reformismwithout first trying to capture SP, resulted in the other fission betweenCP and CLP [Communist Party and Communist Labor Party]. Expect youwill find it interesting. I’d like your reaction to it, your estimation of itsinaccuracies. It is more detailed than Draper’s account.

I enclose a notice of a book the IWW is publishing this fall, though I fearit 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 socialistswho 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 itto Harry Siitonan, a fellow ITUer. [International Typographical Union].

[The note to me, below, is stapled to a carbon copy of the above letter toThompson.]

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 men-tioned that I was encouraged by them, but that if any group appeared onthe 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 socialistworkers can capture the state machinery to introduce a socialist society.Where we part company with these groups is in our recognition thatcapitalism cannot be reformed or administered in the interest of theworking class or of society, as a whole.

I dealt in detail with Batt, Charlie O’Brien and with Keracher along thelines 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 Albertaparliament. We had an article in the WS about 35 years ago dealing withthe agitation for socialism in Western Canada up to the Yukon. I toldhim 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 AutoWorkers’ Union, with classes and lectures in its earliest years. I gave a talkat one of his classes. He did effective work as far as he could go. He hadproblems and some Detroit associates were unhappy about his compro-mises; I don’t think he could avoid them. I’m unhappy because there wasnot one word in it about his socialist convictions. He was silent about hismembership 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 hiscorrespondence 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 andRonald Elbert, two recent recruits to the WSP. They are serious abouttheir 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 inthe WS during the last 6 issues.

**NOVEMBER 3, 1976**

Day after Election Day, the day thatHarrington urged his fellow “socialists”to vote for the “lesser of two evils” — JimmyCarter. 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 WorkerRemembers]. Unfortunately, every time I started, I had to drop it for apriority item. But this time I’m determined to stick to my guns. Youdeserve no less!.

George Gloss says he will be pleased to display your book. George hasjust been released from the hospital. He had a heart attack and must takeit easy. His son, Kenneth, is managing the store.

I’m disappointed, that in your book, you hardly mentioned your roleas a socialist. That is integral to your union activities, is it not? In myhumble opinion, your socialist concern was exemplified in your debatewith Scott Nearing — a highlight in your career — and also in the articleyou 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 associateyourself with socialism.

On top of that, I was very surprised that in speaking of Davenport andCanter, you made no mention of either man’s association with socialism.

You must remember that Bill Davenport was the first Secretary of theWSP in 1916. In that capacity, he wrote the Manifesto on why we orga-nized into a socialist party. You yourself wrote of Davenport’s connectionwith the Jack London letter that appeared both in the ES and WS. Thetruth is, the first act of the WSP was to circulate the Manifesto Davenporthad written to all interested parties — including Jack London and theSocialist Party of America. As soon as the SPA received their copy, theywrote back that they had already registered the name “Socialist Party ofthe United States” according to their comrades in Kansas — so, imme-diately, we changed our name to the Workers’ Socialist Party. (Later, wechanged our name to the World Socialist Party because we were beingconfused with the Socialist Workers Party, especially when we had plat-forms on Boston Common. As an aside, in New York City and Detroitaround the 1920s, some members called themselves the Socialist Educa-tion 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 movementis not only inspiring but accurate. He is to be admired for his guts andhis sound convictions. Canter spoke my language in the role of socialistin a union. He was not only a militant member, but he emphasizedthe members of the union and the corporations are not one big happyfamily, but involved in a basic conflict of interests. He played a similarrole to mine in the ITU. My articles in the TypographicalJournal not onlyfeatured the meaning of sound unionism — a far cry from the policy ofthe ITU along the lines of craft unionism, patriotism, the COPE etc.,but they printed my articles on sound unionism, emphasizing that themembers are the union, not the officers, as well as my articles explainingthe case for socialism. I was the eyesore of management, calling themon their violations of contracts. (Incidentally, I refused nominations forlocal offices and serving on committees because to me, my allegianceto democracy would necessitate my carrying out motions passed by themembership, such as urging supporting COPE, selling war bonds andpatriotism, etc.) The one satisfaction I had was that the members (largelyIrish Catholic bigots) with only a very few exceptions, were supportingand agreeing with me and were fast friends.

Here’s my hand in comradeship! Despite my criticisms, I’m aware thatwhen 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 empha-sized that, as long as you base your case on the broad generalizations,interrelations and processes, you are on solid ground. It is when you getinvolved in particulars and specifics that you can get into hot water. (Ido not deny it is unavoidable to deal with them.) I need only use threegiants (Marx, Darwin and Morgan) for illustrations. Marx’s MCH andLaw of Value. Unfolding history has shown that Marx made errors insome of his speculations and interpretations, especially of current events.One thing I like about the Socialist Standard is their frequent referenceto Marx as not being infallible. It has laid to rest the idea that we areworshippers of Marx, endorsing his every statement.

I once wrote an article on “How sure can we be of our knowledge?” Itrepudiates the importance of “facts” in a vacuum. This reminds me ofan unusual experience I once had. I was called for jury duty and was inno position to claim sickness or my work. I was working at that timein the City Printing Plant. The judge addressed us venire men, empha-sizing that our job is to find a verdict on the “facts” beyond a reasonabledoubt. When my name was drawn, I immediately spoke to the bailiffand requested an interview with the judge. He refused, saying it hadnever been done. I insisted. The judge agreed to see me. I said I wantedto know what a “fact” is. He looked at me as though I was an idiot. So Isaid: “if I was harassing and irritating you and in your anger you hit mein my face, wasn’t my irritating you just as much a part of the ‘fact’ as youhitting 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 morningwhen I returned to court for my jury work, the bailiff stopped me. “Whatare 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 annualConference? It included a dispute between the Aukland and Wellingtonbranches on the use of the words “workers” and “people” on their elec-tion leaflets. I took the liberty of sending a joint letter to both branchesexpressing my views. Quibbles over semantics often arise. Emotions werearoused because the leaflets referred to “New Zealand people” and notto “New Zealand workers.” The reason I’m mentioning this is there is animportant 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 politicalvictory is in the interest of the working class and, at the same time, in theinterest of society as a whole. True enough, the highest expression of theclass struggle is the class-conscious, revolutionary socialist majority at theballot box. But insisting on “workers” as mandatory on a leaflet gives theimpression of “sectarianism.” The people are workers, the vast majorityof them. Besides, we do have capitalists who are damn good socialistsboth 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 fromfellow worker Fred Thompson indicating a great respect and admirationfor you.

If I’m not mistaken, I may have written you about Fred Thompson inthe past. He is a genuine scholar (in the best sense of that word) and awonderful person. In his youth he was a member of the SPC in NovaScotia. However, he soon afterward became enamored of the IWW. Justto show the merit of the guy, many years ago when I was on a propagandatour of the Midwest USA, he was of inestimable service, arranging meet-ings for us in Chicago and Milwaukee besides arranging two debates onthe contrasts between the WSP and the IWW in Chicago and Detroit.In fact, we were going to collaborate on a pamphlet on the encouragingsigns of the times, indicating the wheels are turning in the heads of theworkers (though not on their lips) for socialism. Many comrades in theWSP 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 contemplatedbook by a professor in Dalhousie University in Halifax, in re the earlydays of the Canadian socialist movement. Here is the note he wroteback:

Many thanks for the letter from Pritchard, which I shall treasure aswell as transmit via Xerox, and for the article reminiscing on old SPCveterans. I believe I met only Gribble, Lester, Mackenzie. Gribble’sarrest got me acquainted with the SPC. In Vancouver, a plumber whoread economics, can’t recall his name.

In three days will be my 83rd birthday. Enclosed is a copy of the invita-tions 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 savedit, and treasure it). I had some suspicion of something going on (livingin the same house) but was not sure. I’m sorry they did not confide inme. There were close personal friends in the shop [the Hearst composingroom where Rab worked] who had subscribed to the WS and read socialistliterature that the family only knew of through my conversations, butthey did not know the names or addresses. (I never mentioned this tothem, and, as it was, the house was jammed like a can of sardines.) Itwas a memorable and unforgettable experience. There were so many I’dnot seen for years. It was rewarding to hear remarks like “I’ll never forgetwhat 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 inthe 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 theParty and I’ve been a member ever since its inception in July 1916. It’snot age that counts, but knowledge, understanding and fervor — andthat is what the letter accompanying your application exposed!

Enclosed is a copy of our Constitution. For your information, the duesare $2.50 monthly. Anyone not in a position to pay dues may apply forexemption from dues.

Here’s my hand in comradeship and affection,

1. Rab, Local Boston Treasurer

P.S. Looking forward to greeting you at Karla’s house for a meeting onSunday, Jan. 2.

**DECEMBER 20. 1976**

Dear Fellow Worker Dubuls:

Please find, under separate cover, some interesting reading matter havinga strong bearing on your views as expressed in the Boston Sunday Globeof December 19, 1976.

You are quite correct “that the capitalist mode of production in SouthAfrica is the foundation, indeed the motor that keeps that racist, vilesystem of white privilege strong and alive, while the black people, wewho continue creating the wealth of that country, continue to live insub-human bondage.”

On the other hand, you maintain “the struggle of my people is one fornational self-determination (my emphasis) in a land that has always beenours.” On the surface, that appears to be correct. In a historical sense, itonce was correct!

But this is 1976, almost 1977. Today’s tribal society in Africa is a farcry from African tribal society before Europe and also America invadedAfrican soil. Africa has gone through quite a metamorphosis in the last250 years. The major difference is that where once, African tribal societywas based on a community of interest of the whole population of thetribe, today it is based on the property interests of a ruling section withinthe tribe — a significant difference. Anthropologists, generally, recognizethis distinction. It can be traced to the different social relations in tribalsociety and those in a modern capitalist nation. Unwittingly, you recog-nized this difference by speaking of “national self-determination.” Youcannot name any country that does not claim to be the representative ofthe whole population, but you know better, as you put it so well in yourfirst point, above. Let me emphasize that this is no quibble!

All native African countries today are but neo-colonial satellites of oneor another great power. There are only three countries left on the globe— Russia, China, and the USA. They all have their satellites. USA has asits satellites: the NATO nations, Canada, Australia, etc. Russia has its, to asignificant extent much of the Third World; and so does China, especiallyin eastern Asia. And all three share satellites in Asia Minor and Africa.

Would you be surprised to learn that today “countries,” as such, arealmost obsolete? We live in a shrunken globe, speaking economically. Itis closely interrelated with the same customs, clothes, architecture, litera-ture, music, etc. We live in an international world. When we watch TVtelecast programs, we cannot be sure what country we are looking at, andwe see it live from all corners of the globe when it is happening. Whatwe do have are about 130 nations, members of the United Nations, whoare 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’sresponse, dated Dec. 30, follows.]

Dear Rab:

I mislaid your last letter and kept hoping it would turn up, but it didn’t asyet so I am writing to ask you two questions: 1) Did the Western Socialist doan obituary of George Ramsay, and if so, could I get a copy? 2) Did the WSreview my book, and if so could I get a copy?

I recall that you said something in your last letter about George Gloss’s bookstore. Has George, or his son, contacted the Penn State Press about a discountrate 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 manuscriptwhen Ifinished writing it and before it was published. I did send a copy toDavenport and asked him to offer any needed corrections. But the manuscriptwas returned, with the P.O. stamp: “Moved, address unknown. ” It was a badoversight not to send the MS to you.

I want to subscribe for one year to the WS. Bill me andpayment willpromptlyfollow.

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 copyto Martha [Ramsay]. However, it did not appear in the WS. I’ve notbeen on the Edit. Comm. for a few years. After 35 years of being con-tinually on the Edit. Comm. the comrades relieved me from serving onthat committee. However, they had asked me to continue proofreadingthe WS, which gives me an opportunity to make suggestions regardingarticles. I do not attend Edit. Comm. meetings — the reason I’m not onthe committee is that I’m involved in routine matters. I open the mail,process subs, mail literature orders, and handle many details, such asanswering minor inquiries, as the factotum of the party office. This, ontop of my Treasurer duties and my personal correspondence, not to men-tion 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. Imade no issue over it. After all, they had a backlog of good articles whichtook priority. Besides, they only knew Ramsay from my comments. Henever communicated with HQ. One exception: Comrade Serge Huardof Montreal — a human dynamo — publishes Socialisme Mondiale, ourFrench journal, which has a good circulation in Italy, France and otherEuropean countries. It is printed by the Victoria, BC, comrades. Huardwanted 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 theparticulars. You can appreciate that Gloss’s physical reverses have beenserious. However, I suggest you write him a letter — it will give him akick — and suggest that his son write the Penn State Press for informa-tion about displaying your book in his shop. (And who is there in thepublishing 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 FredThompson for my reactions to your book, I praised it as a Union analysisand document. But I was disappointed that you did not say anythingabout the role of a socialist in a union, which should have been an inte-gral part of your book. I got the impression you were avoiding that phasedeliberately. (I’m not ignoring your wonderful classes. I’m aware of theproblems you had!)

I’m sending you some recent issues of the WS. You will note three gen-erations of Rabs in these issues. There are now a total of eight membersof the Rab family in the party. In WS #5 - 1975, my son-in-law has anarticle “The Sanity of Socialism”; in Spring 1976, he also had articles“Ideology I & II,” and the patriarch great-grandfather has one, “Asimovon the Future” in Fall 1976; my granddaughter has one called “Femi-nism Is Big Business,” and in Winter 1976 my grandson-in-law has atop-notch article: “The New Messiah,” dealing with Jimmy Carter.

I am sorry to report that Ella, the matriarch of the family, is confinedto a wheel chair. She had a stroke some time ago. But she retains hercharming, sweet disposition.

Finally, the holiday season reflects the human nature of gregariousnessand 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 lackof articles picturing the details of a socialist society. One thing is sure,however: neither we nor anyone else is capable of predicting details of theworkings of socialism. Let me emphasize that socialists (once they havebecome the vast majority) will know what to do, based on the prevailingcircumstances at the time (i.e., material conditions). The best we can dofor 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 Wil-liam 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 hisillustrations...

Many articles imagining socialist society have appeared in the WS overthe years. Enclosed you will find a few illustrations in recent issues .The best illustration is #5 - 1975 WS which has a transcript of our TVprogram called “The Sanity of Socialism.” Also read my article on IsaacAsimov, which begins on page 13 of the Spring 1976 WS. I like Asimov’sconception of people’s behavior after what he calls “the fourth revolu-tion.” He is not a socialist, but no socialist would argue with his con-ceptions. 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 picturingsocialism is that every member of society will enjoy a common right ofaccess to the means of life.

One more thing, every issue of the WS expresses your very excellentdescription of outworn capitalist relationships: “state ownership, reformlegislation and labour party spur-of-the-moment solutions.” What betterdemonstration can be given of the necessity of socialism! Who can denythat capitalism’s inability to prevent wars, unemployment, crises, infla-tion, etc., indicates that the times are ripe for socialism? We in the WorldSocialist Movement stand alone, in that other organizations give lip ser-vice 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 thereal meaning of that word. But I’ve been fortunate to have been exposedto the socialist classics through some top-notch socialist educators, suchas Kohn, Baritz, Hardy, Gilmac, and others who were my tutors. Andthe one thing they all emphasized is the necessity of studying the socialistclassics. Two words of warning: 1. You can be a damn good socialistwithout ever having read one word of Marx. All that is necessary to be asocialist is to understand what socialism is, and to realize that capitalismcannot be reformed or administered in the interest of the whole socialcommunity. What is needed is a vast, fervent majority of class-consciousworkers using the powers of the state (the central organ of capitalistpower) to transfer the means of production and distribution from thecapitalist 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 arenot familiar to the general membership but they do the Jimmy Higginswork: cleaning up after meetings and affairs, speaking to their fellowworkers and friends, distributing leaflets, keeping stores supplied withour journals, putting leaflets in barber shops, laundromats, etc., sellingliterature at outdoor meetings, attending study classes, etc.

1. However, at the same time, for those want to engage in propagan-dizing 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 theenclosed literature list some books and pamphlets that I especially recom-mend to you. (Of course there are other valuable books, as well.) If youcome 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-Duhringby Engels and Theoretical System of Karl Marx by Louis Boudin. Bothof these are out-of-print, unfortunately, but I’ve got copies in my homelibrary that I’ll be happy to lend you because of their great merit. Notonly are they very important, but also they contain the gamut of basicscientific socialism. The wonderful and amazing thing is they are still asfresh as if they had been written in 1977. These two books have stoodthe acid test of time: unfolding history and developments have corrobo-rated and confirmed their analyses. In addition, I’d recommend Engels’sSocialism, Utopian and Scientific. They are 3 chapters out of Anti-Duh-ring 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 theliterature list is worth getting, besides several recent issues of the SS dealingwith Russia. I would also recommend you get a copy of the latest For-tune Magazine (February 1977). As you may know, Fortune Magazine isthe bible of Finance Capital. The February issue contained a well-docu-mented article showing that Russia is only second to the USA in being aninternational capitalist power, having banks, corporations, and all kinds ofagencies and financial institutions in countries all over the globe. Coinci-dentally, the same issue has a lead article demonstrating that the USA doesnot have a “free enterprise” system. No one can consider Russia to be asocialist country after reading this article. The SPGB has several copies ofthe Russian pamphlet Soviet Millionaires. Write them for a copy. This docu-mentation will stun your Russian defenders of Russia. The same applies toChina, and the 3rd World “socialist” countries, which are only neo-colo-nial 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, itsays that barter is simply an early form of commodity exchange.\* Thedifference is that barter does not require money. The exchange does notyet have a universal measure of value (money). Commodity exchangerequires a general social equivalent. It can take many forms from cattleto gold. Barter is very primitive and was never a social system. Primitivepeople did not have barter, despite the school textbooks. Two examples:When the white man first contacted the Eskimos, they were surprisedthey had no words for “mine” and “thine” in their vocabulary. An Eskimohad the use of his spear but it was not his property. Morgan empha-sized the communal nature of the American Indians before they were

contaminated by the European invaders. What distinguished primitivemen was common ownership. Later, after they discovered agricultureand herding, the concept of bartering arose. It can be seen in the biblestories of Genesis. Barter has existed in chattel slave, feudal and even incapitalist societies but never [was] of any important consequence as asocial system.

**MARCH 21, 1977**

Dear Comrade W Jacee:

It’s a pity that circumstances beyond your control prevented you andyour wife from visiting Boston. I note that Comrade Murphy is nowturned 80 and that the two of you were shipmates on the Australian coastfor over 50 years. That makes the three of us in the same age bracket. I’m83 years old, and still as active as ever.

I can recall the First World War days, when British seamen from theSPGB carried messages back and forth; and more especially the Americancomrades escaped to Mexico and Canada (one comrade, Fred Evans, wasprotected by an Indian tribe in Canada). Who will forget the experiencesof Comrade Baritz in the Antipodes? One interesting anecdote is whenComrade George Ramsay of Detroit and Moses Baritz met at a streetcorner in New Zealand, neither realizing that the other was not thou-sands of miles away. Baritz was an unusual fellow. He was a scholar anda musicologist, he had the most unusual memory of anyone I knew (wewere very close). Above all, he was an outstanding class instructor andsocialist propagandist. He was either admired or despised by comrades.He had the limitation of acting irresponsibly at times. I believe thereare more anecdotes about Baritz than any other Comrade, includingFitzgerald, in the early years of the SPGB.

It was a Baritz class that made a revolutionary socialist out of me in1915, in Detroit. Shortly after that, Comrade Adolph Kohn, anotherexile from army service in England, joined Baritz there. A quiet, scholarlyperson, Kohn was the opposite of Baritz (but generally admired by Baritzand everyone). It was noticeable that Baritz was very careful when hemade remarks in Kohn’s presence. It was Kohn and I, in July 1916, whosent out notices to announce the organizing meeting to form the WSPin Detroit. In the interim, Baritz had gone on a notable propaganda tripto Canada, which, at that time, was a hotbed of large meetings held intheaters, and the publication of the Western Clarion in Vancouver. TodayI’m the only charter member of the WSP still in the party.

Incidentally, I had previously been a member of the Socialist Party ofAmerica, from 1909 to 1916. Among the 42 comrades who attendedthe organizing of the WSP, 19 of us were members of the Branch 1 ofthe Detroit SPA who resigned in a body . John Keracher, secretary ofthe Michigan Socialist Party, was a member of our class and supportedthe SPGB — in fact, the first issue of The Proletarian featured his sup-port of our Declaration of Principles. Keracher even succeeded in gettingthe SPA-Michigan to officially adopt the SPGB position on religion andreforms. His mistake was in imagining his group could work from withinthe SPA. (We remained staunch friends; when he came to Boston toaddress the Boston local of the Proletarian Party, he stayed in my houseto the consternation of their members. At that period the Boston Localof the P.P. and the Boston Local of the WSP had held a few debates. TheProletarian was then an anti-Communist Party [journal], but supportedthe Russian Dictatorship of the Proletariat...

Comrade Alf Murphy will not be forgotten by the Boston comrades. Hisletters to Comrade Morrison were always read at NAC meetings withgreat pleasure, and more for their contents than for his generous dona-tions. We were impressed by his dedication and devotion to the move-ment. When you next write him, tell him that the Boston comrades havefond memories of him. It is typical of him that he still talks socialism andlooks optimistically to the future. Please give our address to his niece soshe can keep us informed about his progress. You can bet your bottomdollar, were I ever to visit England again — which is very doubtful — I’dvisit and tell him his optimism is justified. In spite of everything, it isbecoming more and more obvious that capitalism cannot be reformed oradministered in the interest of the working class.

In a way, it is no tragedy that the Australian comrades were forced tochange the name of the party. As I wrote recently to Comrade Furey,the name “socialist party” has become a shame and disgrace to genuinesocialists. And you are correct that either the so-called communists or thesocial 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, andthe Rebel. The title really summarizes the theme of your story. In myhumble opinion, it will prove to be the classic definitive biography ofJack London. (I note that the Signet edition of The Sea-Wolf lists allprevious biographies.)

Your concise comment: “Though not understanding the principles heendorsed, he was imbued with a working class viewpoint,” is a compre-hensive epitaph for London. It says it all.

I enjoyed your final chapter especially. Your analysis of what constitutes “lit-erature” 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 comeoff the press, fits your description of “literature.” Rarely do WS, SS, and otherparty journals contain such things. There are two outstanding exceptions:The SS article on the coronation of a king, and Mackenzie’s articles in the oldWestern Clarions, published in Vancouver prior to and during World War I.They were gems that are still reprinted on occasions in our journals. I wouldsay both of the above belong to the Jack London type of literature, and in thesame category I would place Trevor Goodger-Hill.

Jack London’s comments on the Klondike reminded me of an interestingarticle in the #7 - 1959 WS, which I’m mailing under separate cover. Itdeals with our comrades in British Columbia, Yukon and Alaska. Youwill recognize some of the names, I believe.

Our Comrade Fred Evans (now deceased) escaped the American Armyby going into the wilds of Western Canada. He met a tribe of Indianswho protected him all during the First World War. He won their friend-ship by relating to them Morgan’s account of primitive tribes.

Pity that you and I were not in contact with each other when you firststarted on the Jack London book. How long ago was that? We had manycontacts in San Francisco who knew or knew of Jack London. The onlyone left who might have been of help is Comrade Al Pearce. He was a pal ofJack McDonald who conducted a study class in San Francisco. He was oneof the best writers for the WS, a clear thinker and was quite convincing. Bythe way, Al Pearce symbolizes, for me, the backbone of the movement. Heis not a speaker or a writer, but a dedicated worker for socialism: my idealsocialist. To this day, he sends money to the party almost weekly.

Comrade Lennie [Feinzig] was quite impressed by the understanding andenergies for socialist work — both in H.O. and outside H.O. — of theyoung members of the SPGB he met in London. And I can appreciatethat. Nothing could be more encouraging or important. I was especiallypleased 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”? Somecomrades 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 meknow. I consider [it] the most important thing I ever wrote, as a lessonof experience covering 61 years in the WSP and 9 years previously in theold Socialist Party of America. If I hadn’t arrived in Detroit in 1915, andmet Comrades Baritz and Kohn, I doubt I’d ever have become a genuinesocialist. Believe it or not, I consider Baritz a superior class instructor toKohn. Baritz put you on your mettle, while Kohn merely questionedyou and then merely gave you the answer. I remember to this day howangry I was when the class gave a watch to Kohn and ignored Baritz. Onehumorous comment, Baritz was very careful not to make any bonerswhen Kohn was around. Kohn was the better scholar by far, but not asgood a teacher. You must have heard many anecdotes about Baritz. Hewas a character, and he also was very talented as a musicologist. I’ll justtell you one example: Detroit had a mushroom growth due to war sup-plies. The bourgeoisie were anxious to have a synthetic culture. Theyinvited three leading grand opera companies in the USA and they allrefused. There was a third-rate opera company that agreed to perform,and the newspapers played it up. One of the leading papers hired Baritzas a critic with instructions to praise the production to the sky, to whichhe agreed but, lo and behold, he exposed their incompetence in thereview he wrote of the opening night. The second night he invited me tobe his guest. When we came into the theater, the usher barred the doorto us. Baritz raised holy hell, shoved the usher aside, and dragged me inwith him. Nobody could unseat him! But enough of this twaddle.

I’m making a motion in tomorrow’s NAC meeting to order 15 copies ofyour Jack London book.

**MAY 26, 1977**

Dear Comrade Furey:

This will be a rambling letter dealing with your general inquiries, begin-ning with your question about my name.

My name is Isaac Rabinowich, but ever since my school days, my nick-name 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 Iconceal it, but such were the circumstances. My son, Billie Rab, had hisname changed legally. I never wanted to do that, because I’ve always hadan emotional reaction to the cowardice and hypocrisy of the so-called Jewswho change their names for “practical” reasons. They are the very ones whofight 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 theirancestry. Like every one else, they are mongrels. Their ancestry cannot betraced to the ancient Hebrews, who also were mongrels. It is laughable tocall Israel the homeland of the modern Jews. What meager evidence thereis suggests the descendants of the ancient Hebrews are limited to the few“Spanish” Jews who traveled through Egypt and the Mediterranean, NorthAfrica and southern Europe; and they constitute a very small percentageof the so-called modern Jews. The Russian and German Jews are all theproduct of conversion to Judaism starting in the 10th century AD. Eventhe Jewish encyclopedias admit this. At the time of capture of Jerusalem bythe Romans, many Romans adopted the Jewish religion (it was the customof those times to adopt the religions of captured peoples), and that cut offa big slice of the Mediterranean “Jews”... Sammy Davis, Jr. and ElizabethTaylor are Jews because of having been converted to the Jewish religion. Soit has been a matter of principle to me not to bother changing my name, inprotest 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 sometimesflew a Russian flag, and at other times a Polish flag. My parents were notonly bi-lingual; besides English and Russian they also spoke a smatteringof other Slavic tongues; plus Yiddish; Hebrew (the Latin of the Hebrews),and German. I was very fortunate in my parents. They had already becomeatheists and socialists in Russia. The first thing my father did after comingto Boston was to look for a socialist group. He soon discovered there was abranch of the Socialist Labor Party in Boston, and he joined it. In fact, inthose days the SLP was a genuine socialist party, and if they had continuedwith the same principles and policies, there would have been be no reasonto organize the WSP. It was not until nine years later that Daniel De Leonformulated his “Industrial Republic of Labor,” in which the workers dem-ocratically will operate the factories — assuming there will be a workingclass in socialist society.

My father and mother were very vocal in expressing their views. He even-tually opened a tobacco shop and my mother, especially, always talkedsocialism to the customers, while my father liked to expose the nonsenseof religion. He was very well posted on the Bible and enjoyed quoting theBible. It so happened the store was in an Irish Catholic neighborhood andmy father had interesting discussions with the parish priest, who used tovisit him often. My parents kept the store open on Jewish holidays, and onone occasion, the pious Jews (there were many Jews in the neighborhood)stoned the store and broke the windows. You can see I deserve no creditfor being a socialist.

The socialists in Boston organized a socialist Sunday school in Bostonaround 1897. It lasted until 1906. One highlight of that Sunday schoolhappened in 1906. After Moyer, Pettibone and Haywood were foundguilty of killing the governor of Colorado, at the time of the famous strikeagainst the Rockefellers, because of his brutality against the Federation ofMiners and burning up their tents, the many labor unions throughout theUSA organized demonstrations. In Boston, a monster parade was arrangedin which all the labor unions participated. The socialist Sunday School waspicked 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 theSocialist Party of America protested against the sectarians of the SLP, myfather became a charter member of the new Socialist Party, joining in withEugene Debs and Morris Hillquit. My mother disagreed with his action.Later, at the organization of the Communist Party in Boston, my fatherjoined it, and again my mother disagreed with him. By that time, I was inWSP, and wrote her my own reactions. She agreed with me. An interestingincident: 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 thepoint of incoherence; I have included only a few excerpts from it. I rememberhow excited Rab was about those new Russian editions (referred to in the firstparagraph).]

My dear Comrade Johnny Roberts:

As for socialist reading matter, every issue of the WS contains a list ofvaluable pamphlets and books. In addition, the next issue of the WS, dueto be mailed next week, will contain a list of Marx and Engels pamphletsand books recently published in the USSR which, unlike earlier Sovieteditions of these works, have not been tampered with, These editions arepriced much lower than the same items published in England and theUSA.

As for pamphlets and books written by me, I’ve been very remiss in thatrespect. One of my greatest regrets is that I didn’t keep a diary. I’m theonly charter member still in the Party. My memory is faulty and the his-tory of the Party, including companion parties would be of great interest.As to writing, I’ve confined myself to articles and personal letters dealingwith socialist principles and policies, and also “Letters to the Editors” ofnewspapers, 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. Never-theless, he did leave a good number of published writings, and also somewritten 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, thesewritings 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 concep-tion of the universe as being a oneness, a unity, an eternal, absolute truth,all embracing, infinite and unlimited. It is impossible to conceive of any-thing outside the universe. To attempt it would not only be useless, butfolly. The parts composing the universe partake of its infinite nature, i.e.,of existence. A mahogany chair has the characteristics of all chairs, regard-less of where it is found, on earth or in the heavens above. Yet, at the sametime, it is finite. The chair is built, wears, breaks and decays into otherforms. 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 moreto find out about it. However, we can know its classification and function.Though the intellect does not fathom all, yet it is true understanding. Weknow that it is a chair, not a bed or a table. Still further, we know it is amahogany chair, not an oak or an ash. All things existing are attributes ofthe 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 itselfis the absolute truth — the whole truth. Within this absolute universe,everything is interrelated and in a process of change, e.g., the evolutionof the earth from its original gaseous mass, unable to support life, to itspresent form with its “wonderful civilization.” The early materialists of the19th Century strove at understanding by cause and effect. Dietzgen wellillustrates the limitations of this theory by his example of the stone. Whenwe throw a stone in the water, ripples result. Were these ripples causedby the stone hitting the water? The elasticity of the water is just as mucha 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 thestone explained the phenomenon. By using the apparatus of the mind cor-rectly, we come to understand that the world unity is multiform and allmultiformity a unity. Dietzgen admirably states the proletarian characterof modern logic in the concluding paragraph in the 11th of his 24 “Letterson Logic” to his son Eugene. Our logic, which has for its object the truthof the universe, is a science of universal understanding. It teaches that theinterrelation of all things is truth and life, is the genuine, right, good andbeautiful. All the sublime moving the heart of man, all the sweet stirringsin his breast, is the universal nature or universe. But the vexing questionstill remains. What about the negative, the ugly and the evil? What abouterror, pretense, standstill, disease, death and the devil? True, the world isvain, evil, ugly. But these are mere accidental phenomena, only forms andappendages of the world. Its eternity, truth, goodness and beauty is sub-stantial, existing, positive. Its negative is like the darkness which serves tomake the light more brilliant, so that it may overcome the dark and shinemore brightly. The spokesmen of the ruling classes are not open to such asublime optimism, because they have the pessimistic duty of perpetuatingmisery 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 thisconfusion regarding our position. The similarity of the concluding state-ments of many of the articles is striking: “Whenever a majority of theworkers understand and decide to do it — to establish Socialism.” “Themoral is obvious. up with socialist education.” “Our immediate task isto arouse a Socialist understanding, to the end that we . may . estab-lish Socialism.” In a word, a Socialist revolution first must take place inthe 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 pre-vious revolutions. For the first time has a social revolution become pos-sible and necessary in the interests of the great bulk of the population,the working class. The revolution can not be rammed down the throatsof the workers against their understanding or desire. A Socialist workingclass, conscious of its position in society, has no need for special programor blueprint plans. Whatever measures are dictated by the particularsocial forces then operating will be adopted by a Socialist proletariat. Thesocialization of production, together with the concentration of capital,has already laid the economic foundation for Socialism. Political igno-rance, rather than the lack of schematic policies, is our major difficulty.“The best laid schemes o’ mice and men Gang aft a-gley.” Historic cir-cumstances tear up plans and programs like so many scraps of paper.

Our “practical program,” if you please, is clear and definite. It is predi-cated upon the scientific analysis of capitalist society. Let our Declara-tion of Principles shout it out from the housetops: — “The workingclass must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of thepowers of government.”

In order that we may the more readily see the limitations of practical pro-grams, let us briefly review such measures as are advocated by the allegedSocialist 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 droppedfrom their application for membership form. Their capitalistic characterwas brazenly flaunted during the mayoralty campaign just ended in NewYork City . We found Norman Thomas urging (comrade) La Guardia,Republican, to quit in his favor because of their “unity of purpose.” (NewLeader, Nov. 19, 1929.) Need more be said? Thus we see the pitiableconsequences of thirty years of the “practical” policies of that most prac-tical S. P. of A.
2. Not to lag behind their foster-mother, the Workers (Communist) Partyexceeded the S. P. of A.’s most fantastic antics by proposing 102 demandsin the last presidential campaign. So involved was their practical programthat it required 64 pages, “The Platform of the Class Struggle,” to statethese 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 fora new line of action by the Communist Party. It gets one dizzy trying tokeep pace with their constant appearance of seeming to shift positions.
3. On page 21 we find demanded the “immediate enactment of a Fed-eral law . for a . forty hour, five day week . and forbidding all over-time.” As the industrial process increases the productivity of the workers,the masters see to it that the working time is reduced. It requires not thedemands of the C.P., but the needs of capitalism for the inauguration ofshorter hours with, incidentally, fewer workers. This is a measure thathelps capitalism run more smoothly, and is a favorite palliative of capi-talist reformers. Observe Ford and Hoover.
4. On page 24, we must “struggle against the speed up system.” Just asreactionary was the resistance of the cotton workers in England to theintroduction of machinery, and their smashing of the machines.
5. It is further demanded, on page 40, that an independent, federatedLabor Party, composed oftrade unions and labor organizations, be formed.This measure does not support the working class. A political party is anexpression of class interests. The varying programs of the different unitscomposing this proposed federation are inimical to Socialism. There canbe no unity of policy based upon such a hodgepodge. Unity can only bebased on a common understanding of the need for Socialism. A revolu-tionary scientific, working-class party is hostile to all parties which serveto deceive and side-track the workers.
6. Another pearl of wisdom appears on page 45. Here is demandedthe abolition of all indirect taxes. The Communist Party does not tireof demanding. Unless you have power to enforce them, demands aremeaningless verbiage. Inasmuch as the working class does not pay taxes,whose battle is the Communist Party fighting, anyhow? Their programis not based upon working-class interests, but, like that of their foster-mother, of disreputable memory, suits the needs of the petty, cockroachcapitalist.
7. On page 48 is demanded a 5 year moratorium on farm mortgagedebts, including debts on chattels (and farm hands, too, I suppose). Theworking class, of course, is “burdened” with mortgages!

But why continue with these demands ad nauseam, such as “propagandaagainst alcoholism,” “fixing of low rents” (presumably so that wages maybe reduced). Remember, there are 102 demands by these practical people.If all this activity resulted in the arousing of revolutionary understandingthere might be some justification, but sorry experience has shown that itonly results in apathy because of the false hopes raised, then dashed.

1. We are now confronted with Cinderella, the neglected twin sister ofthe Communist Party, i.e., the Proletarian Party, “more communist thanthe Communists,” which has discovered that the Soviet is the transi-tional form of the proletarian state! (The Proletarian, p. 10, Jan. 1926)A Soviet is merely a council. Applicable to the historic circumstances ofdeveloping Russian capitalism though it may be, no evidence is forth-coming that, in highly developed countries like England, U.S. and Ger-many, such special machinery will be needed to accomplish the prole-tarian revolution.

The Proletarian Party, too, has a “practical” program. They “call for theunfaltering support of the class-conscious workers everywhere” to “themovement of Anti-Imperialism among the backward nations,” becausethey “fight ... the Imperial Capitalist Class.” A travesty on Marxism,indeed. The class conscious workers, everywhere, have nothing incommon with the nationalistic struggles of backward nations. What liesbehind the developing national consciousness of China, India, Nica-ragua, Arabia? — the economic interests of different sections of thebourgeoisie. Countries like China, India and the rest, are blossoming outinto capitalist countries on their own hook. No longer are they merelysources of raw materials and markets for the disposal of commodities.

The newly rising bourgeoisie in such backward countries find the ideo-logic expression of their economic and political needs in movementsof nationalism. They are anti-imperialist only whilst being choked bythe capitalist imperialism of England, the U.S., and the rest of the greatpowers. They aim at monopolizing for themselves the natural resourcesand the opportunities for profit by exploiting the workers of their respec-tive countries. A pity it is that such befuddlers should seek to enlightenthe workers on Socialism.

1. Finally, we have the Socialist Labor Party. In their letter, “The SocialistLabor Party and War,” addressed to the parties affiliated with the“Socialist International Bureau,” is stated officially their practical pro-gram: — “Not a ‘general strike’ of the workers but a ‘general lockout’ ofthe Capitalist Class is our slogan. And this can only be done by orga-nizing the workers, industrially, to take and hold the means of produc-tion.” Of course, “only” eliminates any other means. On page 10, of theSLP Manifesto of 1921 is stated flatly: — “the might of the WorkingClass lies on the economic field and there alone” (emphasis theirs).The lip service the SLP have always paid to what they term the “politicalarm of labor” is seen here in its true colors. A study of history will showthat control of economic resources is only made secure by control of theState. For example, with all their economic influence the rising capitalistclass in France and England were economically and politically shackledby feudalism and the absolute monarchy. It was necessary for them toachieve political supremacy in order to make secure and extend their eco-nomic power, as the French bourgeoisie did in the French Revolution. Itis impossible for the working class to take and hold industry as long asthe state is in the hands of the capitalist class. All the industrial unions inthe world are powerless in face of the armed forces of the modern stateswith their machine guns, bombing planes and poison gas. Moreover, thispower is placed in the hands of the capitalist class by the workers them-selves. To expect these workers to do two diametrically opposite thingssimultaneously, 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 tothe capitalist class in order to live. The objectives of a union are con-fined to questions of hours, wages and conditions, problems within thefour walls of capitalism. A union, regardless of type, to be effective todaymust depend primarily on numbers rather than understanding. Everchanging productive methods as well as the continuous introduction ofnew industries, make unions powerless to cope with even their imme-diate problems. Their view that the industrial union is the only means oftaking 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 notwhat “practical” measures to advocate. The Declaration of Principles onthe last page states our position. Our task at the moment is to carryon the work of socialist education. The capitalists rule today becausethe workers sanction and uphold the existing form of property relation-ships. “The possessing class rules directly through universal suffrage. Foras long as the oppressed class, in this case the proletariat, is not ripefor its economic emancipation, just so long will its majority regard theexisting order of society as the only one possible ... On the day when thethermometer of universal suffrage reaches its boiling point among thelaborers, 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 discussionjournalpublished by the SPGB, though companion party members frequentlycontributed to it. In 1961 it ceased publication for lack of submissions.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

What should be the minimum requirements for membership of a SocialistParty? They should be broad enough to include all who are Socialists.There is no justification for barring Socialists from membership. Theyshould be narrow enough to exclude all who are not Socialists.

Since the criterion for membership is based on whether an applicant is aSocialist or not, it becomes necessary to define what is a socialist.

Broadly speaking, a Socialist is one who understands that Capitalism canno longer be reformed or administered in the interests of the workingclass or of society; that Capitalism is incapable of eliminating its inherentproblems of poverty, wars, crises, etc.; and that Socialism offers the solu-tions for the social problems besetting mankind, since the material devel-opments, with the single exception of an aroused Socialist majority, arenow ripe for the inauguration of Socialism.

This is the Socialist case. It is not difficult to grasp. Membership in aSocialist organization does not require being erudite pundits or profoundstudents. There is a unity of agreement among us that the above is theminimum requirement of being a Socialist.

However, there is a justifiable fear that there is a danger that we may openthe doors to confused “Socialists,” non-Socialists, or even anti-Social-ists. This fear exists because a Socialist party is democratically controlledby its membership. An influx of such elements could transform a gen-uine Socialist party into its opposite. Therefore, we must summarize thebarest minimum of Socialist principles upon which all Socialists agreeand upon which there is no compromise. The principles that weld ustogether with a unity of views may be stated as follows:

SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES

Socialism has three aspects, viz., a science, a movement, and a system ofsociety.

As a science, it is materialistic. It recognizes that everything in existenceis interrelated and in a constant process of change. (In a very real sense, itmight even be considered that Socialism is the science that integrates allbranches of science into a correlated whole.) Specifically, it explains socialevolution and, more particularly, the nature of Capitalist society.

As a movement, its very essence is to exert all its efforts to arouse theworking class and all others to become Socialists so that the majoritybecome conscious of their interests and institute Socialism. The Socialistrevolution is majority, conscious, and political. Such a revolution isinherently democratic.

As a system of society, it may be concisely described as a social rela-tionship where the interests of every member of society and society as awhole are in harmony; where everyone cooperates by giving according tohis abilities and receiving according to his needs.

On these Socialist principles, there is no compromise. On these Socialistgeneralizations, it might be said we are dogmatic. Our dogmatism appliesto processes and scientific analyses. (On the other hand, we do not haveany authoritarian dogmas or creeds. See E.W.’s splendid commentson the Bolshevik behavior, in this respect, in the April 1953 SocialistStandard..)

Further, we do not compromise with the Capitalist system. We oppose itand are organized to get rid of it. Nor do we compromise in our defenseof the Socialist case and Socialist principles.

Finally, the above Socialist summary is what distinguishes us from allother parties claiming to be Socialist. No other party, outside the com-panion parties for Socialism, holds these views. That is why it is unlikelythat there would be two Socialist parties in any one country. Shouldanother Socialist organization appear on the scene, steps would be takento 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 posi-tion and activities, especially in the light of unfolding events. Forum isa healthy and sound demonstration of such a Socialist attitude. It is avaluable asset in illustrating the fact that thinking is not a violation ofSocialist discipline. Socialists must not be afraid to think or express opin-ions lest they be brought up on charges. To those who view the com-panion parties as being rigid sectarians, Forum is a living refutation. In asocialist party there is plenty of room for differences of opinions.

Whilst it might be said that Socialists are dogmatic, in the scientificsense, on fundamental Socialist principles, i.e., on generalizations andprocesses, they should not be dogmatic on specific details. We are onsolid ground as long as we confine ourselves to scientific analyses of pro-cesses. The moment we become specific in telling history what it mustdo, what it can only do, etc., history can make liars out of us. Specula-tions are useful and interesting but not fundamental. Also, we can besadly mistaken in laying down formulas to be adhered to for all typesof problems and situations. Witness the quarrel in Forum regarding theprinters’ union (strike-censorship issues).

Illustrative of my point is A. Turner’s article in the March issue. It doesnot take much imagination to hear some rumbling that Comrade Turnerhas “repudiated” the class struggle and should be brought up for charges.Can anyone argue that the Socialist revolution is in the interest of allmankind, including the Capitalists? We become dogmatic (in the Bol-shevik-Catholic sense of authoritarian dogma) to consider Turner’s view-point as anti-Socialist.

Still more effective illustration is the article in the April 1953 Forum sug-gesting (horror of horrors) a “revolutionary” revamping of our Declara-tion of Principles. Comrades can hold such views and still be membersof a Socialist party; for, are they not Socialists?

One additional word regarding what is a Socialist. He is not only onewho understands and agrees with the Socialist case but also does somethingabout 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 Torysocialists, the French Radical Socialists, the totalitarian “socialist” govern-ments including the black, brown and red shirts, the New-Deal-Fair-Dealcreeping “socialists,” the Labour Parties of Europe, the Asiatic “socialist”and “communist” governments as well as those in Africa and SouthAmerica, the colonial “socialist” groups, the various alleged socialist organ-isations throughout the world such as the Social Democrats, Trotzkyites,the Communists parties, syndicalists, I.WW, Socialist Labour Party andthe Companion Parties for Socialism in Great Britain, Ireland, Canada,U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand. Then there are the anarchists, Chris-tian “socialists,” pacifists and a whole host of others. By no means have weexhausted 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 forit 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 andthe entire gamut of conflicting and opposing interests express themselvesin terms of socialism. They must in order to rally support. Even thoughsocialism is not accepted by the world, it has become recognized andestablished as the hope of mankind.

M. Rubel describes very well the general nature of socialism that stirs andinspires everyone: “A society from which exploitation would be banishedand in which the unfolding of each individual would be the conditionof the freedom of all.” This is the basic appeal of socialism as an ultimateobjective which serves as a rallying cry to muster support for the variousgroups marching in the parade of “socialism.”

Let us suppose that some other word came into use to express the veryessence of socialism, its “conceptual content.” This new word would thenbe subjected to the very same difficulties. The old word “socialism” wouldlose its meaning and significance. The new word would become abusedin the same manner as the old one. Changing the name would not solveany problem for it doesn’t come to grips with the real situation.

Rab wrote this obituary for Fred Jacobs, which was printed in the WesternSocialist for Sept-Oct 1958.

**FRED TACQBS**

Word has just been received of the death of Comrade Fred Jacobs in SanLeandro, California, on August 30, 1958. He was about 77 years old.

He was first and foremost, a rebel against capitalism. In the days beforeWorld War I, he was a Wobbly (IWW). Comrade Jacobs knew theexperience of having his head bashed by police clubs during an antiwardemonstration in Boston, in 1919, in the name of “democracy.” Ironi-cally, this same police force, two years later, went on strike in the famousBoston Police Strike. Many of these police strikers learned invaluablelessons 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 policenever have the right to strike against the government.

Having arrived at a socialist understanding, Comrade Jacobs did yeomanpioneer work in the difficult job of laying down the groundwork for theorganization of a Boston Local, WSP. He cooperated in getting classesgoing, in carrying on street meetings, arranging propaganda meetingsand debates and making our views known during the period of 1922-1929. Comrade Jacobs’s steadfast devotion to socialist activity in thesetrying circumstances is a great inspiration to all socialists.

In the late ’20s — in the absence of a Boston Local — he joined up withsome New York comrades who adhered to our principles (the SocialistEducation Society). Closer contact with New York comrades speeded upthe organization of Boston local and the reorganization of the Workers’Socialist Party. In 1929, the persistent socialist work that was carriedon by Comrade Jacobs and others took root and a Boston local finallyappeared on the scene. It wasn’t long before Detroit comrades organizeda local so that the first convention of the reorganized WSP was held inNew York City on December 13, 1931.

The birthplace of Local Boston was in Comrade Jacobs’s picture framestore. He served as its first secretary. His store had often served as themeeting 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 kindsof assignments, arranging for halls, committee work, etc. He was self-effacing. He rarely missed a Party activity. He was no public speaker norwas he very vocal at party meetings. But, when he did speak, everyonelistened, for he had the rare faculty of only speaking when he had some-thing to say and he made his comments brief.

He wrote occasional articles for the WS, which were usually written in asimple 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 Partyfunds. About ten years ago, he had to move to California to live with hissister on account of advancing age and poor health. His socialist interestdid not lag, by any means. He kept in touch with the California com-rades and visited the comrades in San Francisco whenever he had anopportunity. He kept hounding the NAC to get out leaflets. To him,the written word was of paramount importance. In this connection, hewas never known to go out without having old copies of the WS to handout to pedestrians, on street cars and in subways, or wherever he metworkers.

We extend our sympathies to his sister and brother. Comrade Jacobs willbe missed.

**IS LABOR THE CAUSE OF INFLATION?**

Union BulletinVol. LII, No. 11September 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 thetreasury of the steel trust. This is the best financial report in the historyof 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 pro-duce phony figures to show that high wages are the main cause of infla-tion. A study of economics shows that wage increases, instead of beingthe cause of price increases, are a belated response on the part of theworkers 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 higherwages if the labor we buy for the wages is improved and increased.” What agenerous public-spirited character this fellow is. He is saying that if you con-tribute 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 pasttwo years, The Wall Street Journal, Fortune, U.S. News and World Report, Busi-ness Week and others have been reporting on a series of conferences by repre-sentatives of steel, oil, rubber, automobiles, electric manufacturing, railroadsand others, including publishers, about reducing labor to the status of mereadjuncts of the big companies. The general opinion of these worthies is thatunions 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 canbe to put up a fight. They have a healthy treasury, enthusiastic members,and have been promised financial support by other unions. They areengaged in a test of strength. They are fighting our battles as well as theirown. Our sympathies are with the steel workers out on strike — the onlyweapon we have, when the chips are down.

In this concerted drive by capital to smash unions, we must keep ourheads clear. We should not fall victims of the propaganda that the dangerto our economy is the selfishness of labor who, by their greed and featherbedding, cause the inflationary spiral of higher prices.

*This article appeared in the March 1960 Forum (Vol. 2, No. 5).*

**IS THERE ROOM FOR DIFFERENCESOF OPINION IN A SOCIALIST PARTY?**

First of all, let me emphasize that “opinion” and “principles” are not syn-onyms. By “principles” I refer to the acceptance of the Declaration ofPrinciples as a satisfactory generalisation of the socialist case. There arecertain socialist principles upon which we do not compromise, especiallyin 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, June1953, I defined a socialist as:

Broadly speaking, a socialist is one who understands that capitalism canno longer be reformed or administered in the interest of the workingclass or of society; that capitalism is incapable of eliminating its inher-ent problems of poverty, wars, crises, etc.; and that socialism offers thesolutions to the social problems besetting mankind, since the materialconditions, 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 rela-tively few items on which we take an uncompromising position. All thecompanion parties stand together — as one — on such questions as: theconscious, majority, political nature of the socialist revolution; the mate-rialist nature of existence; the Materialist Conception of history and thegeneralisations of Marxian political economy; the resulting implicationsof the above on such issues as leadership, reformism and religion; and onsocialism, as a system of society.

The difficulty comes in frequently raising an opinion to the stature ofa principle. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there areinnumerable matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of opin-ions. Opinions may be formed regarding: speculations on details of thefuture; events and factors in the current scene; attitudes on any numberof things; even conflicting anticipations projecting detailed workings ofa 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 senseto any and all situations and problems. For sake of illustration, here are afew “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 physi-cists, 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 phasesof socialist problems with his fellow members. Forum, the internal partyjournal of the S.P.G.B. itself, is an excellent demonstration that there isroom for differences of opinion within a socialist party.

The autonomy of several companion parties reflects the recognition ofthis understanding (aside from the fact of national problems of eachparty). For example: Would it be anti-socialist or unprincipled to allowauthorities, having something to contribute in their specialised field,such as mathematics, Africa, art criticism, or whatnot, to speak at a partymeeting, provided that we tied it up with socialism? Not all the partiesagree on this procedure. Was it a violation of socialist principles whenThe Western Socialist published valuable socialist articles by non-mem-bers of the party? (Incidentally, experience has convinced me that weshould have made it quite clear the writers were not members and werenot speaking for the party.) Those items are matters of opinion and notof principles.

It is very pertinent to observe that, over the years, the many conferencesand referenda of the companion parties have made many changes in pol-icies and procedures (some well-advised and some ill-advised). They allwere, in the main, matters of opinion, were they not?

An unfailing guide to distinguish between opinions and principles is tobear in mind: socialist principles deal with processes and generalisations,whereas, usually, opinions deal with specifics and details. We may besadly mistaken on particulars but are on invincible grounds on the gen-eralisations of socialism, which are based on scientific analyses and arenot blueprints.

Members should not fear to express opinions or to speak out lest therebe dire consequences. We must avoid an atmosphere that discouragesreexamining and questioning. We should bend over backwards to gainand retain members, leaving wide room for individual differences. Weshould be narrow enough to exclude all who are not socialists yet broadenough to embrace everyone who is.

It is understood that a representative of the party speaking under partyauspices states the party case and that he makes it clear whenever heexpresses his own personal opinion.

Rab, W.S.P

(This is not a new question, by any means, but it is an important matterto thrash out. Your comments are eagerly awaited. Those interested mayreply through the columns of Forum or by writing me personally at 62Woodcliff Road, Newton Highlands 61, Mass., U.S.A.)

**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 contextyou bemoan the fact that:

“The bitter complaints and generalized recriminations by many met-ropolitan Army reservists now returning to civilian life after active dutyduring the Berlin crisis are now deeply disquieting.”

Their sergeants, you contend, are concerned about a “lack of realism, aself-centered arrogance, a blindness to the dangers of the cold war andto their duties as citizens.” You are disturbed because “some reservistspromise ‘revenge’ at the polls in November.”

You go on to emphasize that the reservists should be concerned aboutthe “real worry that Mr. Khrushchev’s attack upon a free Berlin and ourlegitimate interests (that) might lead to war.”

And you conclude with the admonition about

“The Wall across the city with its bitter reminder of imprisoned mil-lions of broken lives and divided families and the sidewalk monumentsto those who have died simply in the search for freedom.”

In my view, it is indeed encouraging that many reservists did not con-fine their gripes to the typical complaints against “leadership, training,equipment and duties.” You do not object, of course, to this sort ofcomplaint but see it as “disheartening” (that) many of the men went farbeyond . to condemn all and sundry for their call-up, to characterizethe Berlin crisis as ‘Kennedy-manufactured’ with a purpose to ‘impressthe public.’”

With the march of time and the unfolding of events, it is becomingincreasingly evident that the Russian and American imperialists bothtell the truth — when they condemn one another. One has to be blindindeed, not to see that the present cold war (and tomorrow’s hot one) isover conflicting “legitimate” economic and social interests, which havenothing to do with differences in ideologies about the “Free World and

Democracy” or “Totalitarian Communism.” The Unites States is not ademocracy, nor is Russia communist.

There are two questions your readers might ponder:

1. In the following statements which country is being described? (A) Itis 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 theoutbreak of war. (C) We are continuously being harassed by the enemy.
2. Where does this situation not exist? Constant reminders of brokenhomes and divided families and fears of expressing unpopular viewsbecause of fears arising from insecurity.

Your “angry reservists” are actually to be commended, even if they arenot entirely clear in how they fix the blame for their predicament. OldAbe 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 allof the time.” The time will come when the real enemy — world-widecapitalism — will be recognized and abolished.

Irving Robbins,

Boston, Mass.

**OBITUARY FQR MANLIQ REFFI**

It is with a feeling of deep sadness that we record the passing of ManlioReffi in Boston on August 26, 1962, at the age of 65. Reffi, the onlyname by which he was known during our long association with him, wasnot a member of the World Socialist Party, nor could he be said to be inagreement with all of our attitudes and aims. Yet Reffi cheerfully contrib-uted prodigious efforts on our behalf during the years since October of1939 when the Western Socialist was moved from Winnipeg to Boston.For this old-time linotype operator and all-around printer supervised theprinting of our journal, giving of his knowledge and abilities far beyondthe call of his professional duties. If The Western Socialist has maintaineda high standard for such journals, if it has indeed improved through theyears 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 work-manship as essential to life.

Not that Reffi always followed the old bromide “Shoemaker, stick toyour last.” He has been known to intervene, on his own, in the altera-tion of a title or the change of a word. Whenever challenged on this, hewould reply: “Every good printer has the right to interfere in such mat-ters when he feels it is for the good of the journal.” He understood whatour writers wished to convey, he sympathized with us and shared withus the satisfaction of seeing each new issue born — the satisfaction, hewould say, that a mother must feel on the birth of a baby. All of us whoknew 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 Johnsonfor “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 approachto 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 envi-ronment which this generation and its predecessors have created. Thecrime 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” wouldwrestle with “the basic social problems of the age.” Modern society isa class society, where the ownership of the wealth produced by the vastportion of the population (the working class) belongs to (is the propertyof) the relatively few owners of the means of wealth production (thecapitalist class). We live in a property society whether it be privately orstate owned. The sanctity of property rights is the holy of holies. Basi-cally, crime consists in violations of these property relationships in theirmany and various aspects. (An exception can be made for the relativelyfew pathological “crimes.”) Possibly the classic treatment (in the scien-tific sense) of crime can be seen in Bonger’s Criminality and EconomicConditions:

While most authors who have published studies upon the questionhave thought it unnecessary to give an exposition of the economic sys-tem in which we live, or perhaps have given a little attention to it alongwith other social conditions, I shall begin by setting forth the presenteconomic system “as that upon which the other parts of the social liferest.” These I shall treat in their turn in so far as they are connectedwith criminality ... Then I shall investigate the question of how farcriminality, under its different forms, is the consequence of the condi-tion we have found. (page 246)[[14]](#footnote-15)

In a particularly interesting observation, Bonger stated that “the theoryof Marx and Engels results in our having a method of investigationalready marked out.” His detailed, documented study ranged over theentire field of specific crimes. It would take a column of this journal justto list the various categories he analyzes. Of special interest to our readerswould be his observation on militarism:

But the army serves not only to act against the foreigner, it has equallya domestic duty to fulfill. In the cases where the police cannot main-tain order the army reinforces them. The army most especially is activeat the time of great strikes, when so-called free labor is to be protected,that is, when employers are trying to replace the striking workmenwith others who, in consequence of their poverty, or their lack of orga-nization, put their personal interests above that of their comrades.

Our present militarism is, therefore, a consequence of capitalism. Thedouble duty of the army proves it; for its function is to furnish thebourgeoisie with the means of restricting the proletariat at home, andof 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 theold, discredited theory that no one “can be seriously expected to devisemeans of correcting all the deficiencies in human nature that lead toviolations of the law.” Just what does he mean by deficiencies? “Greed,”“selfishness,” devil-take-the hindmost “callousness,” “criminality,” “bru-tality,” and other “sins”? These are but descriptions of human behavior.Given class relations and property interests, such behaviors are the conse-quences. In a dog-eat-dog society, dog-eat-dog behavior results.

No responsible criminologist any longer gives credence to the theorythat “criminal types” are responsible for violations of the law. “Humannature” and “human behavior” are not synonymous terms. “Humannature” refers to the biological nature of man. We inherit human char-acteristics, such as our highly developed thinking apparatus and our gre-gariousness, etc., which distinguish us from our ancestors in the animalkingdom. Humans do have “instincts” (unconditioned responses) trig-gered by physiological, unconditioned stimuli. Such instincts as rage,fear, love are traceable to biological evolution. These physiological emo-tions are transmitted through the genes in our chromosomes. However,there are no hereditary carriers of moral concepts or ethical values. Thesecan 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. Humanbehavior is the product of the milieu to which we are exposed. To projecthuman nature as the cause for the violation of laws is to forget that lawsare man-made and are constantly subjected to changes and amendmentsin response to changing requirements in society.

The editorial urges the President to “convert the idea of punishment intothe protection of society and the rehabilitation of the offending indi-viduals.” Protection of whose society? Present-day society is governed bya ruling class whose interests are in conflict with the vast portion of thepopulation. In fact, capitalist society is typified by conflicts of interest onevery level. Inherent to such a society is the need for punishing offendersof those in power. To quote Bonger: A crime

is an act prejudicial to the interests of those who have the power attheir command ... Power, then, is the necessary condition for thosewho 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 con-front all sectors of society? To a world in which success is measured byyour cash resources? How you get it is unimportant, providing you do itlegally or don’t get caught.

Finally, truth will out. Even the *Washington Post* must recognize it. Thissame editorial acknowledges: *“Crime is not committed in a vacuum. It isthe product of the environment which this generation and its predecessorshave created. ”*

Yet the editor advised the President that we cannot banish crime onaccount of “human nature.” Socialists do not rely on either the Presidentor the Washington Post to banish crime. That task is ours, the workers ofthe world.

— RAB

*This was written in 1974. It is noted in the WSP Conference Report for1974: “With reference to Com. I. Rab’s Introduction to Keracher’s How theGods Were Made, the Editorial Committee hopes that this pamphlet will beissued as a party publication. Negotiations are now in progress [with the KerrCompany] 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 notknow 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’SHOW THE GODS WERE MADE**

John Keracher was born in Scotland in 1880. He spent the early yearsof his adulthood in England, where he was exposed to the ideas of theSocial Democratic Federation. Thus, his entry into the Detroit Localof the Socialist Party of America in 1910, soon after his arrival in theUnited States in 1909, was a natural outgrowth of his background.

As a human being, Keracher was full of lively wit and good nature; his calmmanner went unruffled by obstreperous opponents, critics, and hecklers. Ican readily attest from personal experience that to those seeking personaladvice or enlightenment on socialism, he was like an oasis in the desert, aquenching cactus. He was uncompromising in his principles but refrainedfrom ad hominem attacks, and confined himself to the issues as he sawthem. He relied on the logic of his arguments to counter critics.

Throughout both periods of his career, as identified later, Keracher alwaysretained the same admirable qualities — both with me and with others,alike when we agreed and when we disagreed. In addition, he was anoutstanding organizer, lecturer, and writer; and one always willing to dohis share of the “Jimmie Higgins” tasks.

This introduction to the 2nd edition of How the Gods Were Made describeshis valuable participation in the American socialist movement until hisdeath in Los Angeles in 1958.

It is significant and encouraging that the demand for Keracher’s pam-phlet How the Gods Were Made necessitates a new edition. Its great meritlies 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 inmodern society.

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

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

The apologists for outworn religious superstitions emphasize that religionis, primarily, concerned with moral and ethical principles. But, despite thesenebulous explanations, it cannot be denied that the essence of all religionsis the service and worship of God or the supernatural. Actually, man madeGod in his own image, in spite of the contention of religionists that thereverse 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 weget answers they always prove to be physical, material ones. This appliesto the social sciences, including morals and ethics, as well as all otherbranches of science. Science has made tremendous advances in the lasthundred years. It might be said that as our knowledge and understandinghave 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 societyand the resultant search for happiness by psychological adjustments tothe immediate environment.

Keracher shows how religion diverts workers from realizing their primaryclass interest: to get rid of the wage-slavery of capitalism, and to inau-gurate socialism, which is practical and necessary here and now. Quiterelevant 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 arenot professional Atheists but rather, atheists in the scientific sense. Atone time in history, because of man’s lack of knowledge, religious expla-nations of natural phenomena were the only possible ones. Today, theMaterialist Conception of History together with modern science pointsup the fallacies of religion, as Keracher amply demonstrates.

How did Keracher become involved with the necessity of exposing thedangerous illusions of religion? The answer is best found in his ownintroduction to this pamphlet. More generally, the following backgrounddescribes the nature of his long political activity.

Detroit became a boom town from the years 1910 to 1918. Becauseof the growing automobile and other industries, it attracted hosts ofworkers seeking “good-paying” jobs. An added stimulus was the adventof World War I, with its cost-plus government contracts for heavy andlight military supplies.

Among the influx of workers to Detroit were Canadian socialists fromacross the border, who had been active in carrying on socialist work.They were soon followed by Canadian and British “slackers” runningaway from British conscription.

Contemporaneously, the Detroit Local, SPA, was involved in a bitterinternal controversy between the large majority of “socialist” reformersand the small minority of socialist revolutionists opposing the principlesand policies of the Michigan Socialist Party. Most conspicuous in this dis-pute was Comrade Keracher on the side of the Socialist Revolutionists.

Two other factors existed at this time: the publication by the Kerr CooperativePublishers of (a) their International Socialist Review with its many Marxistarticles and (b) the Marxian classics and other pamphlets. They served auseful purpose in stimulating the reading of meaningful socialist literature.Subsequently, when the Proletarian Party purchased the Kerr Company forthe purpose of perpetuating the supply of socialist literature, Keracher, inturn, made an excellent administrator and a valuable contributor.

The combination of these circumstances led to the establishment of anoteworthy Marxian study class in Duffield Hall — a highlight of theperiod. Comrades Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn of the Socialist Partyof Great Britain were the instructors, with Keracher playing a leadingrole in this class by enlarging it to include debates and lectures. The classproved invaluable in spreading an understanding of Marxian science andthe validity of the principles of the SPGB.

In July 1916, 43 members of the study class, including 19 members ofLocal Detroit, SPA, of whom this writer was one, decided it was timeto organize a genuine socialist party in the United States along the linesof the SPGB. The Workers’ Socialist Party of the United States resulted.Worthy of note is that Keracher defended the members of the new partywho were being heatedly criticized for resigning by members of theDetroit Local, SPA.

By this time, Keracher had become state secretary of the Socialist Partyof Michigan. He was deeply involved in advocating that the next stateconvention of that party supplant reforms to patch up capitalism with aplank for revolutionary socialism. He also urged that the Party’s positionon religion be changed from being considered as a private matter to oneof social concern. He and his supporters were successful in changing theconstitution of the Socialist Party of Michigan to conform with basicsocialist objectives. At the time, this was a bombshell!

Under these circumstances, it was understandable that he was unable toparticipate in the organization of The Workers’ Socialist Party. Whilstrecognizing the need for a new genuine socialist party, he was unable tojoin it. Instead, conditions being what they were, he, together with thesocialists remaining in the SPA in Michigan, organized an educationalgroup within the Party to disseminate socialist ideas. Thus was born theProletarian University, soon followed (in May 1918) by its publicationThe 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 WageSlave.” In addition The Proletarian published an official statement by theNational Secretary of the Workers’ Socialist Party, Lawrence Beardsley,with its endorsement. At that time, the Workers’ Socialist Party was notin a position to have its own journal.

There were two Kerachers — the pre-Russian Revolution one and thepost-Russian Revolution one. Beyond question, the pre-Russian Revolu-tion Keracher was a Marxist. This cannot be said unqualifiedly of hispost-Russian Revolution position.

On November 7, 1917, came the startling news of the Russian Revolu-tion. Distinct from the earlier Kerensky Revolution, it spoke the lan-guage of Marxism. It issued proclamations, the most stirring being theAppeal to socialists in Germany and elsewhere: “We have seized power inour country, take power in yours and come to our aid.” It aroused emo-tional fervor and inspired the hope for international solidarity for thesocialist revolution! However, despite the previous pledges of the SecondInternational that, in the case of war, comrades on opposite sides wouldnot fire on each other, but would shake hands across the lines with thegreeting, comrade! — events proved that the professed “comrades” werepatriotic nationalists, not socialists.

Had a genuine socialist movement been predominant in Europe, theremight have been a different story to tell. In the absence of a socialistmajority, a socialist revolution was impossible, both in Russia and therest of the world. Certainly the material conditions in Russia were notripe for socialism in 1917. Lenin himself put it very well: “Reality saysthat State Capitalism would be a step forward for us. If we were able tobring 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 dic-tatorship of the proletariat during the transition period between capi-talism and communism which Lenin called “socialism,” the ProletarianUniversity became enthused with this doctrine and joined in the effortsto organize a communist party in the United States in support of theBolshevik regime.

In contrast, the SPGB and its companion parties maintained that thematerial conditions in the highly developed capitalism of 1917 were ripefor socialism, except for the lack of socialists. Further, they contendedthat “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 sup-porters of Soviet Russia calling for quitting the Second International andjoining the Third International. This referendum was sponsored by threegroups: the Left-Wing group, the Foreign Language Federation, and theMichigan group. The referendum was carried by a majority of ten toone. However, the Executive Committee of the SPA vetoed the refer-endum 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 issuedfor a national conference of the three groups to formulate a national dec-laration of principles and to conquer the Socialist Party of America forrevolutionary socialism.”

On May 24, 1919 the charter of the SPA-Michigan was the first to berevoked on the grounds that it had “amended its constitution to repu-diate legislative reforms.” In short order, both the Foreign Language Fed-eration and the Left-Wing were expelled.

In the ensuing meetings of the three groups, differences between themmade it difficult to organize a communist party to represent Americain the Third International. The Michigan group could not fit in withany other group but was tolerated on a technicality. To its credit, it hadrefused to accept any office or to affirm any responsibility for the pro-grams that were adopted. It was finally settled by orders from the ThirdInternational 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 orderedthat the Proletarian University become a party institution under its supervi-sion. The Michigan group refused to accept this decision and chose to leavethe Communist Party for good. In June 1920, the Proletarian Party wasorganized by Keracher and his comrades. Draper describes it as a “small,self-satisfied sect.” Obviously he was no sympathizer of either the new Pro-letarian Party or of the SPGB and its companion parties. However, the fac-tual accounts in his Roots of American Communism are historically accurate.

The post-Russian Revolution Keracher was a Leninist-Marxist, caughtin the dilemma of two “socialisms” — Marxian socialism as a system ofsociety, and Leninist “socialism” as a transitional dictatorship of the pro-letariat. Yet, when the chips were down, Keracher’s Marxist backgroundinterfered with any blind conformity to Soviet dogma.

The reader of How the Gods Were Made may be inspired to read otherKeracher pamphlets, as well as other socialist literature. As of September1, 1974, the Kerr Publishing Company has produced altogether eightKeracher pamphlets, of which three are now out of print. It is hopedthat one of them, Economics for Beginners, may be reprinted in the nearfuture. The three Keracher pamphlets now in supply are: The Head-FixingIndustry; Frederick Engels; and Crime, Its Causes and Consequences.

It is impossible to present fully the various facets of the socialist casein these necessarily brief pamphlets. They serve the important functionof introducing the reader to socialist thought and encouraging furtherstudy in the classics.

Keracher was not only an organizer and propagandist for socialism, hewas a pamphleteer in the tradition of Tom Paine. His clarion call to theworking class was to get rid of the bedlam of outworn capitalism andto replace it with the sanity of socialism. His pamphlets attempt to dis-seminate socialist knowledge and understanding — essential ingredientsof 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 asa social system.

As a science, it is called the Materialist Conception of History. It tracesthe broad outlines of the social evolution of mankind from its earlybeginnings up to date. It indicates the processes by which primitive manadvanced into tribal society; thence into warrior chiefdoms and chattelslavery; later into feudalism, and now into capitalism, with socialism onthe horizon. It describes the social forces within an earlier society thatgave rise to its successors.

As a movement, it is the class-conscious organization of the working classto spread socialist knowledge, understanding and fervor to introduce asocialist society — which has become possible, practical and necessaryhere and now. The tremendous strides within capitalism of technologyand science have laid the groundwork for socialism. The alternativefacing mankind is socialism or chaos. The lessons of experience haveamply shown the futility of all the efforts to reform or administer capi-talism in the interests of the working class, or of mankind as a whole,for that matter. Nothing is more inspiring than participation in the onemeaningful task today, establishing a world fit for human beings.

As a society, socialism is common ownership and democratic controlof the means of life by and in the interest of all society. Everyone givesaccording to his abilities and receives according to his needs.

Capitalism is a commodity society, in which the drive is for profit andaccumulation of capital. The Law ofValue reveals the economic relationsof capitalism. It also gives rise to the Class Struggle between Capital andWage-Labor.

Finally, in capitalism, there is a need to measure economic values in orderto “quantize” costs and prices of commodities. Such needs are nonexis-tent in socialism because there is common property to take whatever isavailable for everybody to take whatever their hearts desire.

In socialist society there will be no such things as banks, money, com-merce, etc. Nor will there be such things as police, armies, courts, jails,crime, poverty and the other manifold effects of the conflicts of interestat every level of capitalist society. These are all earmarks of property rela-tionships, whether they are private or public properties.

*[The following was sent to Frank Marquart for publication in an unknownjournal]*

**THE MISSING INGREDIENT**

Nothing can be more basic than the realization that socialism is, by itsvery nature, a classless society. It is not composed of workers, as such.This concept is a carry-over from capitalist social relationships. Such aview is alien to the social relationships of socialist society, and gives riseto such expressions as “workers’ councils” as features of socialism, whichtypify several “democratic, libertarian, socialist” journals.

Can it be denied that the socialist revolution has for its object: theestablishment of a system of society based on the common ownershipand democratic control of the means of production and distribution ofwealth by and in the interest of society as a whole?

It is not a quibble to emphasize both that the socialist revolution eman-cipates not only the working class but all mankind from the chaotic limi-tations of outworn capitalism, and also that the revolution must be thework of the working class.

Nor can it be denied that the immediate goal, today, of class-consciousand revolutionary socialists is to gain political power in order to transferthe means of production from the parasites to where it belongs, the newsocialist society. The capitalist class is powerless when confronted by adetermined, overwhelming majority of socialists. It is an illusion to thinkthat the workers in the factories can institute socialism while the politicalmachinery remains in the hands of the capitalist class. The revolutionarypolitical struggle for power is not to be confused with parliamentaryefforts to reform the effects of capitalism.

The very essence of scientific, revolutionary socialism is that the politicalstruggle 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 the1990s and 2000s with Ann Rab Feinzig, Bill Rab, Bob Weisberg, Ralph Rob-erts, Bella Wheeler, Caroline Rab, and Hank Faunce. All of these are avail-able in the WSP Archive (presently located in Somerville, Massachusetts) onaudiocassettes; most, but not all, have been digitally transcribed as well.

These chapter notes draw in part on the oral histories, in part on other mate-rial in the WSP Archive, in part simply on my own memories (for ChaptersFive, Six and Seven), and some of them derive from other sources, includingWikipedia and Google.

— ***Karla Doris Rab***

***Notes for Chapter One***

Mayshe was an active Zionist, spending a good deal of time and energyas a fundraiser for the State of Israel. After his wife Rosie died, he retiredto 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 theBack Bay neighborhood where he had hisoffice. Becky’s family had also immigratedfrom Navaradok.

This oil portrait of Sarah Fried-berg Rabinowich was painted by herdaughter Leah. The date is unknown. Ithangs in the home of Leah’s son LarryNathanson, who was kind enough toallow it to be photographed for inclu-sion in the present book. (The originalis in color.)

Notes for Chapter Two

p. 14 “Kerr’s International Socialist Review” is a reference to the KerrPublishing Company, owned by Charles H. Kerr. All during the period ofthis chapter, the Kerr Company was the world’s leading English-languageradical publisher. It represented a current in the American socialist move-ment. Openly and uncompromisingly revolutionary, sympathetic to theproletarian socialism of the Industrial Workers of the World and intrac-tably opposed to militarism, the Kerr Company vigorously opposed thewar, both before and after U.S. entry. As a result, the International SocialistReview was banned from the mails under the infamous Espionage Act.Repression, splits in the Socialist Party and the decimation of the IWW alltook their toll and, by 1928, Charles H. Kerr retired from the companywhich he had directed for 42 years, turning much of the operation over toJohn Keracher and other members of the Proletarian Party.[[15]](#footnote-16)

p. 16 John Keracher. According to Ann Rab, Keracher had kept com-pany for a time with Ella Riebe before Rab came to Detroit. (There ismore information about him in the note for page 20.)

p. 19 Olga Rivkin remained a lifelong friend of the Rab family. Theonly image I have of her can be found on page 70.

p. 20 ff SPGB-type socialists in Detroit at this period included (besidesRab himself):

Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn, members of the SPGB. More informa-tion 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 prob-ably the same person referred to as “Wilfred Gribble” in Peter E. Newell’sThe Impossiblists: A Brief Profile of the SPC. Wilfred or “Wilf” Gribbleis described by Newell as “an ex-sailor in the British Navy” who, as amember 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 BayCity, 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 (ina letter dated May 24, 1976) that “Comrade Tom Bolt, to our surprise,joined the WSP when he became convinced on his own of the validityof its stance on Russia.”

John Keracher (1880 - 1958), who never joined the WSP, although hewas certainly influenced by the SPGB comrades he met in Detroit. Ker-acher eventually launched a statewide party education program based onstudy of the classics of Marxism which culminated in the “ProletarianUniversity of Detroit,” within which Keracher himself was the mostnotable 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 moreinformation is also easily available online.

pp. 25 — 26 By 1921, when Rab left Detroit, members of the DetroitSES included all those mentioned earlier, except for Keracher (as explained)and Baritz, who by that time had already left Detroit. Bill Davenport waslater to become an Assistant Director of the UAW Education Department.Morris Field, Davenport’s father-in-law, also in the SES, was later a directorof the UAW Education Dept. Other members of the Detroit SES included

Nils Akervall, Frank Marquart, and Gordon Coffin. When Coffin diedin 1960, Marquart wrote the following reminiscence in a letter to Rab:“I first met Gordon [Coffin] around 1921. I recall the event clearly; for itwas the day I made my maiden soap box speech at Hillger and JeffersonAves. I recall that [Walter] Green, [Tom]Bolt, and, I believe, Thorpe werethere too. Green followed me on the soap box, after my short, nervous talk... Gordon in those early Twenties used to attend classes at the DetroitSocialist Education Society ... During the Depression he was one of theactive guiding spirits among a group who conducted a forum, which drewlarge attendances in those dark days ... He taught classes back in the Twen-ties.” The Detroit SES and the New York SES got started around the sametime, 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 courseof her long life, and I have honored her by reflecting this in the spellingused in this book. All during her childhood, she was “Anna” but as ayoung woman, an artist and a vibrant revolutionary Socialist, she became“Anne.” All the reports she wrote as Secretary of Boston Local are signedAnne Rab, as are some of her paintings and sketches (except for the onesshe signed “ARab”). Later, settled into the quiet routine of a housewife,she dropped the “e” and became “Ann.” (The checks she wrote are signedAnn 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 lec-turing in New York, then went to NewZealand and Australia, continuing hissocialist teaching. After being deportedfrom New Zealand he was in turndeported from Australia to his nativeEngland, where he remained for the restof his life.

As for Adolph Kohn, here is an excerptfrom an unsigned obituary printed inthe Western Socialist for February 1945:

With a small band of stalwart socialists he

[Kohn] stood against the current of con-fusion caused by a false understanding of

the nature of the Russian Revolution. He vigorously advanced the socialistanalysis that, in the absence of a high degree of industrial development andthe lack of a socialist conscious working class (inside and outside Russia),Socialism was impossible; that a capitalist economy existed in Russia andwas in the process of expansion, regardless of the socialist pretensions onthe part of those in control of the government.

As a Detroit comrade writes: “Many of us would have gone haywire onthe Russian Revolution if it wasn’t for Kohn. If it were not for the con-tinuous listening to Kohn’s analysis and patient explanation, I alongwith 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 in1923, there was already a branch of the SES in New York, Moses Baritzhaving visited there after leaving Detroit. Alf White, known as Whitey,another SPGB comrade who had been in Detroit earlier, was part of theNew York group until he returned to England in 1932.[[16]](#footnote-17) SES comrade H.Scott Frampton, a native New Yorker who later would serve as Secretaryof the WSP’s National Executive Committee, had heard “an attack whichBaritz launched against the S.P. of A., in a [Socialist Education Society]branch headquarters in Brooklyn.”[[17]](#footnote-18) Frampton’s wife Jean was also anactive member; she served a term as Secretary in 1932. Besides the Framp-tons, 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 YorkSES. A former IWW organizer, he was the central figure in the 1934 TaxiCab Drivers Strike. During the strike, drivers had to fight not only thebosses, but also a Mafia-controlled Teamster leadership. Orner’s pre-emi-nence in the strike was used by Clifford Odets in a 40-minute play aboutit, Waiting For Lefty, to dramatize the class struggle at a dark time for theworking class. In fact, Orner is said to have narrowly missed a mob assas-sination through quick action by other WSP members, where Odets hadLefty dramatically murdered offstage: Lefty (like Godot) never arrived at astrike planning meeting, but the cab drivers went ahead and struck anyway.Orner remained a very active WSP member until his death in 1973.[[18]](#footnote-19)

Other members of the NY SES who lived out of state were Evelyn andBob Housely, in Atlantic City, NJ; and Jack Kilgour, a Scottish seamanwith an amazing repertoire of sea shanties and a rousing tenor voice tosing them, who lived in Stroudsberg, PA.

p. 32 Friedberg’s Lock and Electric Shop

pp. 33 - 34 Sacco and Vanzetti

The paragraph cited is from an unsigned article in The Western Socialist. Iclaim artistic license to have included it here, but it is the kind of thing Rabmight 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 socializationin America for the thousands of Jewish immigrants pouring into Bostonfrom 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 itsearly development) was one of several educational and recreational clubswhich 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 participationof both girls and boys. Even after Lina Hecht’s death in 1920, the HechtHouse, at the top of the hill on Lorne Street in Dorchester, continued itssocial 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 Rabtook charge of the club. Rab is towards the center of the group, the smallest manthere. In the back row, the second man from the left is Ralph Ober. Next to Oberis Kriggy, and to his left is Max Kutzer. I cannot identify the next man, butafter him is Red Wolf. In the third row, the second man from the right (with amustache) is Louie Shapiro. The man on the extreme left in the second row is EdSeifert. 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 Sha-piro, Louis Spiegel and Maurice “Red” Wolf.

Krigman (“Kriggy”) is mentioned often in Bill Rab’s oral history. He becameBill’s business partner after WW II and remained active in the WSP untilhis death in 1950. (There are images of him on pp. 35, 54 and 446.)

Jonah Goldberg, who served for a time as the Secre-tary of Boston Local, married Rab’s sister Dina (withwhom he is pictured, left). He later changed his nameto Jon Gilbern. He did not remain very active inthe 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.

Max Kutzer joined the WSP and became an official speaker for BostonLocal by 1935.

I have little information about Ralph Ober, except that he was an oldercousin of Ralph Roberts (a WSP comrade referred to elsewhere in thischapter, who mentions him briefly in his oral history), and a brother ofDoris Ober, also a member of the Party who died in 1939 and whosename I was given as a middle name. (Doris Ober is mentioned frequentlyin Ann Rab’s oral history, and also that of Bella Wheeler.) Ralph Oberwas a charter member of Boston Local in 1932.

In the photo to the right, the man witha cigarette in his mouth is Louis Shapiro.

Behind him is Ralph Roberts, who was nota Vagabond but was in the WSP. (I cannotidentify the woman.)

Louis Spiegel was active for a time in theBoston SES and was a charter member ofBoston Local. (The Spiegel family, Louis’sparents and siblings, were the Rab family’supstairs neighbors on Capen Street.)

“Red” Wolf (left) was formally a member foronly a few years, but he remained in close socialcontact with Boston Local as a sympathizer andfriendly critic until his death.

Ed Seifert was a very active member of the Partythroughout his life, as was his wife Ruth.

Seifert, Wolf and Kriggy were all close familyfriends (whose children were my childhoodfriends).

Other members of the Vagabond Club included James Clark, Allen Fishman,Fred Freedman, Sidney Goldstein, Bernard Gould, H. Hannington, SidneyKalish, Julius Levowich, Samuel Nitkin, Sam Pitkin and Ray Richmond.The only one of these who remained in close contact with Rab was Rich-mond, who moved away from the Boston area after completing his educa-tion but was a frequent visitor to our home over the years and, along withWolf 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 isMax Kutzer; then two boys I cannot identify. In the middle row, fourth from theleft, is Ralph Ober, and on the far right is Rab. In the very back row, I think that’sEd Seifert and Rab’s son Billie (who did like tohang out with the Vagabonds).*

*On the right, Rab climbs a pole on an outingwith the Vagabonds.*

p. 37 Below are two photographs of BillieRab at Camp Nitgedaiget.

p. 41 Proletarian Party and JohnKeracher. (See also Chapter Note for p.

20ff) Keracher’s “Proletarian University,”which at first appeared to endorse theprinciples of the SPGB, had become more

aligned with the Bolsheviks and was expelled from the Socialist Party ofAmerica (SPA) in May 1919. The ostensible reason for the expulsionwas the Michigan section’s vehement antireligious stance, which wascontrary to the Party’s statutes. That September, Keracher participated inthe founding of the Communist Party of America in Chicago. However,unlike most of those who were joining the Communist Party at thistime, Keracher did not believe in an imminent Bolshevik Revolution inthe United States. He opposed the Communist Party’s “underground”work and the formation of Left unions. In January 1920, Keracher’sMichigan group was expelled from the Communist Party and formedthe Proletarian Party.

Keracher moved from Detroit to Chicago in the 1920s, moving to LosAngeles in the 1950s. He remained involved in the Proletarian Party untilhis 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.[[19]](#footnote-20)

For more about Rab’s personal relationship with John Keracher, seeSelected Letters, p. 390.

pp. 45 - 46 The SES becomes the WSP. Enough SES members-at-largelived in Detroit to allow them to form a new Local on October 19, 1931,hinted at in Babe Green’s letter of April 9 th on p. 44. These included GordonCoffin, Joe Brown (“close pals” with Rab and a Sheet Metal Organizer forthe AWU [AFL precursor of the UAW]), Nils Akervall, Henry Glicman andW. Ashton.

p. 47 This is a sketch that 12-year-old Anna Hope Rabinowich drew of hermother, Ella, around the time the family moved to 198 Walnut Avenue.

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 WesternSocialist; on p. 65 of the November issue, it is announced: “On Sunday,Oct. 22, 1939, with ‘War and the Working Class’ as the topic, LocalBoston 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 MeetingHouse on Nov. 10. The subject was ‘Lest We Forget’...”

p. 63 For more about the transfer of The Western Socialist from Win-nipeg to Boston, see The Impossiblists: A Brief Profile of the Socialist Partyof Canada (pp. 225-226), by Peter E. Newell (Athena Press, London;available through Amazon.com).

Aldino Felicani (1891 - 1967), an Italian-American anarchist, typogra-pher, editor, printer and publisher, had been the treasurer of the Sacco &Vanzetti Defense Committee. More information about him is availableon the Web.

p. 67 Aime Martinat (right) was an activemember of Boston Local, but by the time Ibecame involved in socialist activities per se,he had moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Heattended the 1950 Conference, which was heldin Detroit, as a member-at-large. This photo-graph of him, which was given to me by hisdaughter Tani, shows him as I remember himappearing in the mid-1940s.

(NB: To the best of my knowledge, neitherAime nor anyone else helped Rab conceptu-alize 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 Har-riett married a fellow WSP comrade named Mike Cooper; she was Har-riett Cooper during most of the time she was in Detroit Local. The coupledivorced, and when she returned to theorganization in the late 1980s, it was asHarriett Machado, of Pasadena, CA. Thisis a photograph of her in the late 1940s.

p. 73 Many of the issues involved inwhat was called “the Anne Rab contro-versy” come up frequently in Rab’s cor-respondence. In the Index at the endof this book are references to Unions,

Unionism, Violence, Membership(requirements for), Socialist (definition of), Socialist Revolution, etc.

pp. 74 - 75 Frank Marquart, who was four orfive years younger than Rab, is the author of AnAuto Worker’s Journal (1975), in which he describeshow he became a socialist while working in theauto industry. He was at different times a memberof the Socialist Party of America, the ProletarianParty, and the WSP. He had heard Scott Nearingspeak in 1918, and had arranged for Nearing tolecture Local #3 of the UAW on the Spanish CivilWar during the Depression. In 1947, Marquartwas still an education director at a UAW local andan active member of the WSP in Detroit. Not too

long after that, however,he resigned from theWSP, at least in part onaccount of the Anne Rabcontroversy. For moreinsights about FrankMarquart, see SelectedLetters, pp. 195-197.

There are also referencesto him in the Index.

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 herinnermost devotions really lie: with the socialistmovement. For instance, in spite of an alleged‘antipathy’ to the WSP, she does manifest concernfor real socialist work done by the party. With allher ‘quarrels’ she is really only ‘quibbling.’” (froma letter dated November 30, 1960, not includedin the Selected Letters, but available in the WSPArchive.) [I made the sketch of her shown here in1957, based on a photo taken in 1956.]

p. 75 Harry Morrison had first come to Boston (via Canada and Cali-fornia) in 1939, when he was about 27. On that visit he met and marriedSally Kligman, who was already a member of Boston Local, then continuedhis travels until 1947, when he settled in Boston permanently. Morrison, afrequent contributor to the Western Socialist, used the pen name “Harmo”in his writings. There are many references to thisactive and assertive comrade in the Index of thisbook.

The visitor from Montreal was Alex Primeau(right), a close sympathizer in the movement for along time, though he considered himself an Anar-chist. He was also an accomplished artist in severaldifferent media, including photography. Whilestaying with the Rabs during the WSP Confer-ence in 1947, he made pastel sketches of both Rab and Anne. Primeaux alsotook 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, takenin the back yard of 62 WoodcliffRoad sometime in the 1950s. Herfather, Gordon Coffin, was one of theearly members of the organization inDetroit. Mardon had visited Boston in1945-46, where she formed very closepersonal ties with the Rab family. Sheand my mother considered themselvessisters, and Mardon began her lettersto my grandmother with “Dear Mother Ella.” She has maintained herstrong, wise and continuous support of the WSP(US) from her first visitto Boston until the present.

p. 93 It may not be exactly fair to say that Introducing the World SocialistParty was never published. It was published as an article in the WesternSocialist, and reprinted later as a short (three double-sided pages) leafletheld together with one staple. (This leaflet, for the record, includes thecontroversial sentence just as Canter originally wrote it.) A leaflet, how-ever, is not the same as a pamphlet; for one thing, it has no cover.

p. 95 Pictured at right is Comrade SamOrner (referred to in the Notes for ChapterThree), as he looked in the 1950s. Ornerwas a key figure in the organization ofthe New York Local; but his home wasin Tenafly, NJ. At different times, he wasa member of NY Local or a member atlarge. He was “out of sync” with mostof the New York comrades, whose revo-lutionary fervor by the 1950s paled intofrustrating insignificance beside his (orRab’s). Rab and Orner were very close.

p. 96 Faunce was a radio personality in the Boston area until his retire-ment in the early years of the 21st Century. During our oral history ses-sions, he recalled the music and musicians at the Dock Square headquar-ters 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 theWSP’s principles, and has probably “planted more seeds” of socialismthan most members have, especially on the “Jazz and Commentary” pro-gram he hosted for many years on WMFO-FM radio.

*p. 98 "Gloucester Crowd"*

Here are some comments about the Gloucester crowd, spoken by BobWeisberg in his oral history. (Weisberg had connected with the Rabsback in Capen Street days, and was one of those close sympathizers whowere sometimes dues-paying WSP members, sometimes not; but alwaysknowledgeable about the socialist position.)

The Gloucester crowd belonged to one of the left-wing groups, but Idon’t remember which one ... The Gloucester crowd had members. Ifyou 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, somuch 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 todo anything else. If you set the table, you didn’t do anything else. Ifyou washed the dishes, you didn’t have to do anything else. Somebodyelse cleaned up the table . Somebody would be sweeping. Well, thatwas it for the weekend. You didn’t have to do anything else. It was agood system. But they always had a good dinner on Sunday. And theybought a big turkey. And anybody that was left, that didn’t go back tothe city on Monday to go to work, they would eat the leftovers.

p. 99 Gilbert McClatchie’s wife, Hilda Kohn, was the sister of AdolphKohn (who had been instrumental in introducing Rab to socialism in1916). Gilmac was Kohn’s brother-in-law.

p. 104 More photographs from the wed-ding of Karla Rab to George Gerell (not hisreal name, at his request), on December 18,

1960:

This first one shows guests arriving; mymother is kissing Comrade Mel Braveman(one of the musicians who had joinedthe WSP in the Forties) while Gerellshakes hands with Mel’s wife Gloria,who is talking to Helen Wolf (wifeof Red Wolf, who took the picture).

Behind Gloria is Bob Weisberg, whowas around the Rabs since he was achild on Capen Street, Dorchester.

The next one shows me welcoming more guests: in the doorway are PaulMattick, 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 oneanother for years before the wedding: JonGilbern (on the far left) and Red Wolf.I’m in the middle having changed out ofmy beige wedding dress and into the suitI wore to drive away in; behind me areHelen Wolf and Lennie. The other twowomen are Rab’s sisters, Dina and Leah.

p. 107 Steve Butterfield, 1965(right)

*pp. 108 - 110 R*eportof*B*oston *L*ocaltothe *1966A*nnual *C*onference

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

“Local business meetings are held thelast Friday of every month.

“The Party buys time on local radioWCRB FM, every other Friday andSaturday. On Fridays, there is a one-minute spot announcement. The Sat-urday evening radio broadcasts haveproven one of our best sources for new contacts. These broadcasts con-sist of a 5-minute talk on some aspect of the socialist case, delivered byCom. Karla Rab, and an advertisement of our other activities, includingthe Western Socialist, delivered by the WCRB announcer [Dave Mac-Neil]. This year, some of the topics covered included: Vietnam; theclass struggle; buying and selling; the socialist society; and many others.(Note: most of these talks have been either written by K. Rab or adaptedfrom such sources as the WS and the SPC leaflets. We are most eager forcomrades, particularly those who are geographically isolated from othersocialist activity, to contribute radio scripts — 4.5 minutes or 2 type-written pages in length.) The radio activity elicits quite a large responsefrom WCRB’s listening audience, about half of it negative — this isaddressed to the station — and the rest sympathetic, or at least curious.We receive an estimated 4 or 5 requests for information each week. Onone occasion we received a letter and a $15.00 donation from a listenerin New Hampshire who later came down to one of our meetings...

“The heart of all our local efforts here inBoston is the regular propaganda meetingat Headquarters, where an average of 4 or5 Party members meet from one to severalnew contacts each week. These meetingswere held on Fridays until recently, but inMay they were transferred to Sundays, inorder to take better advantage of the Sat-urday evening radio exposure. The meet-ings are planned in advance by the LACand a typical month might include: a lec-ture or panel discussion by Party members;a film showing followed by a discussionperiod; a program of tapes from Com.

W.K. Rab’s tape library; and an informalsocial. During the past year, we had paneldiscussions on Automation’ with Coms.

Fenton and G. Gerell, and on Alterna- Joni’ who took thisPhoto wastives to Capitalist Society’ with Coms. G. a strongsympathizer. Once aGerell and Jerome. Com. Morrison spoke month we held LAC meetingson ‘Slavery, Old and New’; Com. I. Rab in one anothers homes> wherespoke on A Socialist at the Smithsonian we socialized and .plannedInstitute’; Com. Fenton on ‘Power Poten- activities f°r the next fomtial’ and Automation’; Com. K. Rab on weeks-‘Human Nature’; Com. G. Gerell on ‘The Paradoxes of War’; [and there]was ‘A Symposium on Socialism’ in which four comrades gave very brieftalks: H. Morrison on Economics, K. Rab on our indictment of capitalismand reforms, W. Jerome on Russia and on the socialist society, and I. Rabon materialism. Just recently, we were lucky enough to have visiting SPGBcomrade Anne Young address us on conditions in Britain.

“All these events have been part of our regular weekly program. Fromtime 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 severalhours over WNAC-AM radio, on the ‘Comment’ show with Fred Gale;and — as a bonus — the station later aired excerpts from the program asan advertisement of how exciting the Fred Gale show is.

“Again on Nov. 8, Com. Morrison participated in a radio debate with EdLemansky of the Progressive Labor Party, and our views gained a wideexposure.

“At the Vietnam protest march on March 26, several members of theLocal distributed socialist literature in front of the Arlington StreetChurch, where the march ended. Special mention should be made ofthe 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 samechurch, or at least its parish hall, where Com. H. Morrison addressed theArlington Street Church Singles Club on “Capitalism and Socialism.”There was an audience of about 125 people, and Com. W.K. Rab madea tape of the proceedings.

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

“Traditionally, Boston Local has always had some social, as well as purelypropaganda, activity. This year saw two socials:

“The first one was held New Years Eve at the home of the Rabs and Fen-tons in Newton. This was a great success from every standpoint: a goodtime was had by all and the Party netted $ 150.00.

“The annual May Day social, this year at the home of the Gerells, was alow-budget affair not intended to raise money, but to provide an envi-ronment conducive to socialist conversation...

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

“Respectfully submitted,

“Karla Rab, sec’y, Boston Local”

p. 113 Chubi, nee Jenny Kligman,also sometimes used the name Rebo.This photo of her, visiting me whenmy daughter Sara was a toddler, wastaken in 1965.

p. 114 The WSP Conference Reportfor 1971 contains a 3-page proposalby W.K. Rab which propheticallyrecognizes that the WSP is turninginto an organization of members atlarge, and that Boston Local com-rades are incapable of handling theresulting work. WKR suggests that LA Local from now on handle gettingout Conference Reports after each conference, that NY Local handle allcorrespondence resulting from ads, that Com. Nugent be put in charge ofkeeping the members at large in touch, and giving them activities they cando from where they are, etc., so that the administrative work is effectivelydistributed among the membership. The following year (during which noaction was taken on Billie’s proposal), Rab himself introduced “the ques-tion of how interest in the movement might be maintained by isolatedmembers-at-large.” Again, no action was taken.

p. 114 — 115 In 1971 Rab attended the SPGB’s Easter Conferenceand renewed many friendships and acquaintances. While there, he alsospent time in Paris with Georges Valentino, who had been a supporter ofthe WSM since coming across the SPGB in the 1960s. Valentino likedto 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 “theenemy,” with whom they recognized they had no quarrel. (An obituaryfor Valentino appears in the May 1996 issue of the Socialist Standard.)

Notes for Chapter Six

*pp. 119 - 120*

This is a picture ofsome members oftheRab family who wereat his 80th birthdayparty. Len Feinzigis in the upper left-hand corner. Ellaand Rab (his arm isaround her shoulder)are there towards themiddle. BetweenRab and Ella, theface of Dina, hisyounger sister, is justvisible, and to her left (behind Ella) is her younger daughter, my cousinJudith. 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 wifeMary. Continuing clockwise, I am sitting on the floor in front of Nat, nextto Ann Rab, my mother. Bill’s daughter Denise is to the left of Ann in thepicture, with her arm around her brother Karl. George Gerell is betweenKarl and Lenny. There were other family members present who didn’t getinto this very informal photo, including Nat’s son Leon Rabin, and Leah’sson, Com. Larry Nathanson.

A Tribute to Ilse Mattick (1919 - 2009), as printed in The BrooklynRail, September 2009, can be found on-line at http://www.brooklyn-rail.org/2009/09/express/a-tribute-to-ilse-mattick-19192009. (I amgrateful to June Roberts, widow of Ralph Roberts, for bringing it to myattention.)

pp. 125 - 127 During the period when Ella was wheelchair-ridden,Rab needed cataract surgery. In those days, that involved a long recoveryperiod during which the patient must avoid various activities that wouldput 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 wentback to Woodcliff Road, where almost immediately he bent over and hadto be re-hospitalized — so he came back to my place again, and this timeremained for six weeks. During this time, he read to Sara and Adam, andplayed with them. I cannot express how grateful I am that we all had thattime together before he began the descent into Alzheimer’s that beganwith Ella’s death.

A few days after Ella died, in December 1979, I asked him if he wouldlike to come live with me permanently. His response was, “I would liketo do that, but it would hurt Anna’s feelings.”

p.127 Harry Morrison wrote three book manuscripts while “in retire-ment” from the WSP. The first, The Socialism of Bernard Shaw, was pub-lished in 1989 by McFarland & Company and distributed by the WSPuntil it was out of print. Morrison was never able to find a publisherfor either of the other two. One was on the subject of the author JackLondon; the other on millionaires in the USSR.

George Gloss developed medical problems that interfered with his abilityto work full-time at the bookstore; his son Kenneth entered the businessin 1973, dropping out of a doctoral program in chemistry to help hisailing father. There is a great deal of fascinating material on Gloss andthe Brattle Book Shop readily available on-line. One example amongmany is “A Bookseller to Remember,” which informs the reader that“during his reign at Brattle from 1949 until his death in 1985 the book-shop moved or was displaced 7 times. Each time the shop moved Glossgave away his entire stock on the final day” [[20]](#footnote-21) — which is, of course, anexaggeration: Gloss was far too shrewd a businessman to give everythingaway while living under capitalism.

pp. 127 - 128 Bill’s and Carrie’s reminiscences here (as elsewhere) arefrom their respective oral histories.

p. 133 Rab’s death. Like Ella before him, and like Ann and Lennieafter him, Rab had donated his body as an anatomical gift “for the pro-

motion of anatomical science” (to be used to instruct medical students).See his 1961 letter to Dr Benjamin Spector.[[21]](#footnote-22)

Notes for Epilogue

p. 137 In 1973 Elbert had joined the WSP while studying Spanish lawat the University of Madrid, in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt toearn a degree in comparative law. Under the pen name of “Roel,” he hadwritten many articles for The Western Socialist, and attended several Partyconferences in Boston (where he usually stayed with the Rab Juniorson Floral Street). On at least one of these occasions, he met Rab, whowas impressed with his ability as a writer and corresponded with himduring the 1970s: “[Y]ou are a natural. You have ... a clear, logical andeffective presentation.” Elbert remembers Rab taking him on an ener-getic walking tour of Boston during this period, and Rab thought highlyenough of him so that, in 1975, he nominated Elbert to serve as one ofthe two NAC members from outside the Boston area.\*\*

After Ron and I became life-com-rades, it didn’t take too long for us tofind ways to collaborate in workingfor socialism. With technical supportfrom Bill Rab and moral support fromSPGB comrade Steve Coleman (whovisited Boston in the early 1990s andstayed at our house in Somerville), wemade a 30-minute audiocassette tapecalled “Introducing the World SocialistParty.” Distributing this tape via ads in various magazines proved verysuccessful, and everyone who requested the tape also received a copy of a“World Socialist Catalogue” that we created for the occasion. A few yearslater, we produced a series of three tapes having the same title, combiningsome of the old five-minute WCRB radio talks with appropriate music.

Both of us liked to write, and we had already discovered that when weedited one another’s work, the result was often more effective than theoriginal manuscript. As a joint effort, we wrote a front page for the“World Socialist Catalogue,” intended to be a brief overview of what theWSP is all about:

The World Socialist Party of the United States publishes this catalogue.

Our goal is world socialism: the establishment of a system of societybased upon the common ownership and democratic control of themeans and instruments of producing and distributing wealth by andin the interests of society as a whole. Free access to what everyoneneeds, independently of whether or how much individuals may spendtheir time “working.”

Socialism is possible, practical and necessary right now — in fact, theneed for it has never been more urgent.

The only thing standing in the way is the lack of a conscious politicalmajority of the world community who understand it and want it andhave organized to achieve it. A majority is necessary because socialismcannot possibly be imposed on an unwilling populace by even a well-intentioned minority.

Besides, only a majority of the world’s population can definitivelyestablish that socialism actually does represent the rudiments of asocial organization capable of meeting the needs of all human beings.Elites separate from society, armed with nuts-and-bolts theories, canonly organize production to suit their own ideas.

The majority has to be conscious of what they want so that they canmake it work. All of us together can make socialism work.

The majority for socialism needs to be political because at the turningpoint, the socialist revolution, we will need to organize politically totake over the machinery of the state and immediately convert it into agenuinely democratic administration of the affairs of the new society.We all have the basic intelligence needed to understand this: no coterieof 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 anelectoral victory right now would be simply the opportunity to admin-ister capitalism.

Our role is educational: to argue the case for socialism in a periodwhen the simplicity of the idea has become mired in the most variedforms of ignorance and confusion. Many people have confounded itwith efforts to make capitalism work better. But capitalism, no matterhow radically reformatted, can never serve the interests of the whole

human race. It can only work for the capitalist minority who live offthe active working abilities of others. Even the Bolsheviks never gotaround to advocating the immediate abolition of the wages system.

Nothing less is worth working for. We are tired of seeing efforts toameliorate specific problems within capitalism take up so much timeand energy that no one is working on the only real solution: to get ridof capitalism itself once and for all.

So — order from this catalogue. Read what we have to offer. Listen toour tapes.

Nothing is stronger than an idea come of age. With your help, we canhave socialism by the year 2000 — and remember, that’s probablythe only way to ensure a viable planet for the generations of the nextmillennium!

Periodically, we have issued new editions of the Catalogue, reflectingchanges in the items the WSP distributes. Several years before the millen-nium, we regretfully changed “by the year 2000” to “by the year 2012.”Being optimists, we hope that with your help, revolutionary change willcome in time to establish that human intelligence can indeed solve theproblems which it has been instrumental in creating.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

H.O. Head Office (SPGB)

ITU International Typographical UnionMCH Materialist Conception of HistoryNAC National Administrative CommitteeSES 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 WorldSocialism, the reader is invited to visit [www.WSPUS.org](http://www.WSPUS.org)or [www.worldsocialism.org](http://www.worldsocialism.org).

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1. From an early draft of Rab’s unpublished 1974 Introduction to John Keracher’sHow the Gods WereMade. A later draft is included in Selected Writings, pp. 449-455. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. From Rab’s unpublished Introduction to Keracher’s pamphlet How the GodsWere Made — see p. 452. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See p. 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Rab, Oral history with Mardon Cooper, 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Oral history with Mardon Cooper, 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. From the minutes of the Detroit SES, Jan. 3, 1921. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Canter is probably referring here to a 1945 film called The Corn is Green, whichdealt with Welsh mining town where “the capitalist landscape” was particularlydepressing. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. “[A] socialist is one who recognizes and realizes that capitalism can no longer bereformed or administered in the interest of society or of the working class; thatcapitalism is incapable of eliminating poverty, war, crises, etc.; and that the timescall for arousing the majority to become socialists to inaugurate socialism, nowpossible and necessary.” — I. Rab [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The parishioners referred to were sisters, Margie and Cathy Sullivan, both activemembers of Boston Local whom I remember well from my childhood.

 “Memorandum” refers to the documents he needed to complete to finalize theanatomical gift. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Bertram A. Powers was the president of Local #6 of the New York Typographi-cal Union, which was often referred to as “Big Six.” The 114-day strike he ledagainst the city’s seven daily newspapers was ultimately successful. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. According to Wikipedia, Robert Michels “was a German sociologist ... whomoved from the Social Democratic Party of Germany [which he left in 1907] tothe Italian Socialist Party, adhering to the Italian revolutionary syndicalist wingand later to Italian Fascism, which he saw as a more democratic form of social-ism.” Source: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/robert_michels>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. The NAC has co-opted me to serve as headquarters assistant to take care of rou-tine matters: opening the mail, processing the contents, requests for informationabout 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 gen-eral factotum, had a part-time job nights and the Party paid him a small stipendfor his expenses. He got a full-time job days from the same hospital where he hadbeen working, which was an irresistible incentive: for years he has been involvedin writing a novel based on his observations on the socialist movement over 40years. He is a fluent writer with a facile pen. I envy his ability to write so clearlyand 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 com-rades on the Editorial Committee are competent critics. I’m especially proud ofhow the comrades rose to the occasion. Comrade Lenny Fenton [Feinzig] is nowNational Secretary; Comrades Billie Rab, Karla [Gerell], Mike Phillips, Joe Lyle,and Eddie Seifert have instituted new procedures, as alternatives to NAC meet-ings in NY and Boston, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. [This sentence is garbled in the original letter; I have taken the liberty here ofputting it into more recognizable English. In the original, Rab wrote: “Are yougoing to desert the importance by not taking advantage of the opportunity ofthe basic necessity of street meetings to spread socialist understanding?” This,coupled with the postscript to the letter dated June 2, which follows, seem amongthe earliest signs of the disease that afflicted Rab during his last decade. He usedto say, smiling: “There’s nothing the matter with my memory, but my forgetteryis working overtime.” — KDR]

 [The text referred to here is: “The direct barter of products attains the elemen-tary 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 onto explain that use value predominates “in a primitive society based on property incommon, whether such a society takes the form of a patriarchal family, an ancientIndian community, or a Peruvian Inca state. The exchange of commodities, there-fore, begins [as barter] on the boundaries of such communities, at their points ofcontact with other similar communities, or with members of the latter.”] [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. The American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology commissioned thenoted criminologist, Professor William Adrien Bonger of Amsterdam, Nether-lands to make a definitive study. The work was published by Little, Brown & Co.1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Source: <http://www.charleshkerr.net> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Sept 9, 1932 letter from Sid Felperin to Fred Jacobs. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Letter from Frampton to Nils Akervall dated Nov. 7, 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waiting_for_Lefty>. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Source: MIA: Encyclopedia of Marxism — Glossary of People. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Retrieved from [www.bookpatrol.net/2007/08/george-gloss-bookseller-to-](http://www.bookpatrol.net/2007/08/george-gloss-bookseller-to-)remember.html in March 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Selected Letters, pp. 229—231. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)