

Forty-Fourth
National Convention
Socialist Labor Party

April 9 – 12, 1999

Minutes, Reports, Resolutions, Etc.



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*PROCEEDINGS OF THE
44TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY*

April 9–12, 1999

Biltmore Hotel
Santa Clara, Calif.

MORNING SESSION, FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1999

National Secretary Robert Bills called the 44th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party to order at 9:15 a.m. with the following remarks:

On February 2, the National Office sent a general letter to all sections and members of the Party calling upon them to demonstrate their commitment to carry through on certain decisions made by the 43rd National Convention in 1997 and hammered into shape by the 1998 NEC Session.

It called upon them to demonstrate their preparedness to carry through on those decisions in a very specific way. It called upon them to provide the Party with the cash money it will need to turn the key and light the spark on a Party Building Program of action. What that letter said was this:

Three things are essential to the success of the first stage of the Membership Recruitment Program. One is the election of a special National Membership Recruitment Committee, as outlined by the NEC in Session. A second is devoting a part of every issue of *The People* to explain why the SLP is important and to encourage every serious supporter of the Party to take the decisive step by applying for membership.... The third element is making sure that the Party has the financial war chest it will need to coordinate and carry out the Membership Recruitment Program at the headquarters and section levels.

With these ends in mind, I call upon all sections and members of the SLP to bend every effort to make the Party Building Fund a great success. If every section and member exerts themselves to that end, the National Office, the NEC and the National Convention will have the assurance they need that

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the membership is ready and willing to move ahead toward the larger goal of bringing new life and vigor into the sections of the Party.

In a similar general letter, on March 9, I reported that “the National Office is working hard to stimulate the largest possible response from Party sympathizers and readers of *The People* for a successful National Convention Banquet and collection for the ‘Party Building Fund.’” I went on to add:

It is the membership of the Party that must lead the way and set the example for all those whose sympathies and support for the SLP provide the foundation for our expectation that new membership can and will be added—particularly to the sections—as the Party building campaign gathers steam and gets under way.

The initiative must now be passed over to the sections and the membership to stimulate themselves to respond to the need.

Many members and sympathizers have already responded by submitting their contributions in advance of the banquet. All of these contributions have been generous—generous in terms of dollars and cents, and generous in relation to the means of those who have sent them. However, not all sections and members of the Party have responded to earlier appeals and mailings. Without a response from all sections and members the fund cannot possibly meet its full potential. With that total response by every section and member, however, the fund will reach its full potential—and that, in turn, will clear away one of the major obstacles on the path toward a successful Party building campaign.

What result this passing of the “initiative...over to the sections and the membership” produced won’t be known until after tomorrow night’s National Convention Banquet collection is taken up and the proceeds are announced. That result—whatever it is—will tell the convention everything it needs to know about where the membership stands on this question.

I believe it will show that the membership is solidly behind those decisions, and that it is determined to do what’s necessary to accomplish the goals that have been set. That has been the way of things with the SLP throughout its exis-

tence—through all the trials and tribulations it has encountered and overcome.

Now capitalism is dragging us into another war. Some say it will be over soon; but others are beating the drums for an all-out assault on Yugoslavia. They say the stakes are too high to allow American imperialism and its NATO allies to settle for anything less than all-out victory. They say that the future of Europe is at stake, and that defeat will mean much more than embarrassment. It may mean a new realignment in Europe and open the door to a new East-West confrontation.

They are right to say the stakes are high—but they are much higher than even the most hawkish advocates of an all-out war against Yugoslavia have pushed forward. The future of humanity is at stake, regardless of the outcome in the Balkans. World capitalism is coming apart at the seams, not just in southern Europe, but in Africa, Russia, Southeast Asia—and no amount of bombing, no number of missiles, no armies can stop it. It's a disease, a cancer, that has grown out of the profit motive run amok. It's a sign, so to speak, that all the ills of capitalism may be on the verge of breaking out—not only in wars, but in new economic crises and all the misery they bring.

So as this 44th National Convention organizes its work, and as you, the delegates, whom the membership has entrusted with doing that work begin your deliberations, do not underestimate the importance of what you will be doing over the next few days. The future of the SLP may well depend on it—and these dangerous times make it clear that the SLP and its message are needed now more than ever before.

With these few thoughts, I hereby call this 44th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party to order.

Please make your nominations for temporary Chairperson.

Temporary Organization

B. Cozzini was elected temporary Chairperson.

J. Barnes was elected temporary Recording Secretary.

J. Seekford was appointed temporary Sergeant at Arms.

Election of Credentials Committee (3)

On motion, C. Camacho, S. Fink and L. Figueroa were elected to constitute the committee. At 9:25 a.m. the convention recessed to allow the committee to do its work. Reconvened at 9:55 a.m.

C. Camacho presented the following report:

Your committee reports the following delegates have presented credentials and we recommend that they be seated: Section San Francisco Bay Area (1): Bruce Cozzini; Section Cook County (1): Henry Coretz; Section Akron (1): Peter Kapitz; Section Cleveland (1): Robert Burns; Section Portland (1): Sid Fink; Section Philadelphia (1): Luis Figueroa; Section Milwaukee (1): Michael Mahoney; National Members-at-Large (3): Bernard Bortnick, James L. Barnes, Christian Camacho.

National Member-at-Large Charles Turner is absent.

National Member-at-Large Edna Barnes has informed the N.O. that due to travel complications she has been delayed but is expected to attend.

National Member-at-Large Frank Cline has informed the N.O. that he is unable to attend.

National Member-at-Large Daniel P. Englert has informed the N.O. that he is unable to attend.

Fraternally submitted,
CHRISTIAN CAMACHO, Chair
LUIS FIGUEROA SID FINK
Credentials Committee

On motion, the report was referred back to committee. The convention recessed at 10 a.m. Reconvened at 10:05 a.m.

C. Camacho presented the following report:

Your committee reports the following delegates have presented credentials and we recommend that they be seated: Section San Francisco Bay Area (1): Bruce Cozzini; Section Cook County (1): Henry Coretz; Section Akron (1): Peter Kapitz; Section Cleveland (1): Robert Burns; Section Portland (1): Sid Fink; Section Philadelphia (1): Luis Figueroa; Section Milwaukee (1): Michael Mahoney; National Members-at-Large (3): Bernard Bortnick, James L.

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Barnes, Christian Camacho.

National Member-at-Large Charles Turner is absent.

National Member-at-Large Edna Barnes has informed the N.O. that due to travel complications she has been delayed but is expected to attend.

1. Frank Cline—Unable to attend due to child care problem. No further explanation.

2. Daniel P. Englert—His mother who is 80 years old just suffered a heart attack.

Fraternally submitted,
CHRISTIAN CAMACHO, Chair
LUIS FIGUEROA SID FINK
Credentials Committee

On motion, the report was referred back to committee. The convention recessed at 10:10 a.m. Reconvened at 10:30 a.m.

C. Camacho presented the following report

Your committee reports the following delegates have presented credentials and we recommend that they be seated: Section San Francisco Bay Area (1): Bruce Cozzini; Section Cook County (1): Henry Coretz; Section Akron (1): Peter Kapitz; Section Cleveland (1): Robert Burns; Section Portland (1): Sid Fink; Section Philadelphia (1): Luis Figueroa; Section Milwaukee (1): Michael Mahoney; National Members-at-Large (4): Bernard Bortnick, James L. Barnes, Christian Camacho, Charles Turner (arrived late).

National Member-at-Large Edna Barnes has informed the National Office that due to travel complications she has been delayed but is expected to attend.

1) Frank Cline—Unable to attend due to child care problem;

2) Daniel P. Englert—His mother who is 80 years old just suffered a heart attack;—as reflected in the National Secretary's letter to this committee dated April 9, 1999.

This committee recommends that Comrade Englert be excused.

Fraternally submitted,
CHRISTIAN CAMACHO, Chair
LUIS FIGUEROA SID FINK

Credentials Committee

On motion, the report was adopted.

The National Secretary reported that Section Wayne County reported that it could not send a delegate to this National Convention due to personal circumstances; that Section New York City did not send a delegate to this convention but did not provide an explanation; and that the national members-at-large have elected one alternate delegate.

A motion was made and seconded to refer the report of the National Secretary's remarks to an appropriate committee when elected. The Chair ruled the motion out of order.

Election of Agenda Committee (3)

B. Bortnick, H. Coretz, C. Turner and M. Mahoney were nominated. On motion, B. Bortnick, H. Coretz and M. Mahoney were elected to constitute the committee by a show of hands: B. Bortnick-10, H. Coretz-10, C. Turner-4, M. Mahoney-6.

The convention recessed at 10:55 a.m. to allow the committee to do its work. Reconvened at 11:05 a.m.

B. Bortnick presented the following report:

After having reviewed the "Proposed Agenda" for the 44th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party, we recommend that this agenda be adopted.

Friday Morning Session, April 9

1. Permanent Organization
 - a) Election of Chairperson
 - b) Election of Vice Chairperson
 - c) Election of Recording Secretary
—Appointment of Assistant to Recording Secretary
 - d) Appointment of Sergeant at Arms (by Chair)
 - e) Election of Mileage Committee (2)
2. Determination of Attendance Policy
3. Report of Sergeant at Arms
4. Report of the National Secretary (such sections as can be read)
5. Adjournment to Afternoon Session

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Friday Afternoon Session, April 9

1. Roll Call
2. Report of Sergeant at Arms
3. Report of the National Secretary (completion)
4. Introduction of Resolutions
5. Discussion of Sections of National Secretary's Report
6. Adjournment to Saturday Morning Session

Saturday Morning Session, April 10

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Reading of Minutes of Previous Sessions
4. Report of Sergeant at Arms
5. Discussion of National Secretary's Report (if necessary)
6. Unfinished Business
7. New Business (including resolutions from delegates)
8. Determination of Committees
9. Referring Matters to Committees
10. Election of Committees
11. Adjournment to Next Session

Order of Business for All Subsequent Sessions

1. Call to Order
2. Election of Chairperson (if necessary)
3. Election of Vice Chairperson (if necessary)
4. Roll Call
5. Report of Sergeant at Arms
6. Reading of Minutes of Previous Day's Sessions (Morning Session only)
7. Unfinished Business
8. Reports of Committees
9. New Business (Last Day—only matters that can be given immediate attention)
10. *Last Day*—Reading of Minutes
11. Adjournment

Fraternally submitted,
BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
HENRY CORETZ MICHAEL MAHONEY
Agenda Committee

On motion, the report was accepted.

Permanent Organization

On motion, B. Cozzini was elected permanent Chairperson.

On motion, C. Camacho was elected permanent Vice Chairperson.

On motion, J. Barnes was elected permanent Recording Secretary.

D. Bills was appointed assistant to the Recording Secretary.

J. Seekford was appointed Sergeant at Arms.

Election of Mileage Committee (2)

On motion, C. Camacho and M. Mahoney were elected to constitute the committee.

Determination of Attendance Policy

On motion, this convention will be an open convention. The Sergeant at Arms reported four visitors present.

Report of the National Secretary

At 11:17 a.m., a five-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 11:28 a.m.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

National Headquarters

Five members of the Party make up the staff of the Party's National Headquarters. Comrades Nathan Karp and Ken Boettcher are part-time employees. Comrades Genevieve Gunderson and Donna Bills are full-time employees. The fifth member of the staff is the National Secretary.

These five do everything that needs doing to keep the headquarters in operation—and there is plenty to keep them busy.

Comrade Gunderson, of course, is the Party's bookkeeper, and she keeps a watchful eye on the Party's finances. The Party's Constitution provides for a Financial Secretary with

certain duties to perform. Comrade Gunderson performs them. Indeed, she performs most of the tasks that a fully staffed business office would perform and a Financial Secretary would supervise.

Apart from her daily bookkeeping chores and arranging for the annual audit, Comrade Gunderson handles all business office and subscription department mail. She makes out receipts and routes all subscriptions and subscription renewals to the “subscription clerk.” She processes all leaflet and Labor News orders. She makes out the weekly payroll, pays the monthly bills and prepares a monthly financial statement for the National Secretary. She makes frequent trips to banks and savings and loans to deposit or transfer funds, to open new accounts or to close existing ones. She makes daily trips to the post office in Mountain View and weekly trips to the post office in Sunnysvale. She performs the duties that should be performed by a New York Labor News agent and shipping clerk. She fills most Labor News and leaflet orders. She takes the monthly leaflet inventory. She checks in and keeps track of all incoming publications, and alerts the “editor” when their subscriptions come due for renewal.

Besides all that, Comrade Gunderson and Comrade Donna Bills work together on the third Thursday of every month to pack the cartons in which large bundles of *The People* are shipped, and to stuff, seal and meter the smaller bundles and the single subscriber copies that go by first-class mail. When they are done with that, Comrade Bills takes the hand truck and wheels the cartons to the door for the UPS driver to pick up. Then she loads my car with what she and Comrade Gunderson stuffed, sealed and packed, and delivers it to the Mountain View post office.

No doubt I have overlooked some things that Comrade Gunderson looks after, but this should be enough to give you an idea of what occupies her days.

Comrade Donna Bills is the National Office staff. She routes all incoming mail, and she opens and processes all National Office and editorial department mail. She formats, double-checks and calls attention to errors in letters written by the National Secretary. She writes numerous letters to sections and members of the Party—including reminders re-

garding overdue monthly and annual reports. She keeps track of dues and assessment payments by national members-at-large, makes out delinquency notices, fills out membership cards and fills all section orders for dues and assessment stamps and other supplies. She formats and proofreads all general letters, and prepares the order forms occasionally enclosed with them. She handles all routine contacts, and some that are not routine. Comrade Bills is also the National Office's filing clerk.

In addition, Comrade Bills designs all National Office fliers and fliers sections request to advertise their local activities. She formats, and with Comrade Gunderson's assistance, proofreads all general letters, forms and fliers to ensure that they are clean, neat and accurate before she photocopies them in the quantities needed. Working with Comrade Gunderson, she collates them, stuffs them into envelopes, seals them, affixes the mailing labels and meters the envelopes with the postage required. Indeed, between them, Comrades Bills and Gunderson photocopy, fold, stuff, seal and meter everything that the National Office mails.

Donning another hat, so to speak, Comrade Bills types all articles for *The People* that cannot be electronically scanned into a computer. With Comrade Gunderson, she proofreads all editorial copy and then makes the necessary corrections. She proofs the page proofs and marks the corrections for Comrade Boettcher to enter. When the paper is ready for the press, she calls in the press run to the printer. And of late she has taken on the additional task of designing pamphlet ads for *The People*.

Comrade Bills is also *The People's* subscription clerk. She enters all new subscriptions, deletes the expired and enters all address changes and corrections. She also maintains the National Office's mailing list.

Comrade Karp has been sorting through and packing the Party's archives for transfer to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. All the files he works with are stored in rented lockers located a mile or so from the headquarters. After he is done with one batch and has it packed, Comrade Donna Bills seals the cartons, transports them to the locker for storage until there is enough to ship to Wisconsin and brings back a new batch for Comrade Karp to go through. She does

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the same whenever the Labor News stock needs to be replenished, and she does the shopping to replace supplies as they are depleted. Every Friday she cleans the kitchen and bathrooms, and she empties the trash. And for good measure, once a year Comrade Bills also makes all practical arrangements for the National Convention or NEC Session, including those for the National Convention and NEC Banquets.

Here again, I am certain that I have overlooked more than a few things that occupy Comrade Bills' time. However, this should give you an idea of how her working hours are spent.

Comrade Karp has worked his way through thousands of National Office records and files that have been shipped to Wisconsin. He is done with the "specials" and has moved on to the routine files that remain. In addition, without his help putting out *The People* every month would be virtually impossible. In terms of quantity, he carried nearly a quarter of the National Office's share of the load in 1998. However, his contribution was immeasurable in terms of quality and in keeping *The People* distinctly and unmistakably the official journal of the SLP.

Comrade Boettcher also produced when it came to providing copy for *The People*. He accounted for about 35 percent of the National Office's contribution in articles last year. He also makes up the paper (which, in recent years, means putting in a double shift once a month), indexes the contents, uploads every issue onto the Internet, and sees to it that every issue is transmitted to *The People's* e-mail subscribers. In addition, Comrade Boettcher downloads the incoming and uploads the outgoing e-mail (of which there can be as much or more than regular mail these days), and he attends to every glitch and problem related to the Party's Web site.

*

I cannot tell you how proud I am of this staff and how much I admire their dedication and perseverance in the face of all adversity. You, too, should take great pride in what they have done and all that they have accomplished over the years. The past six years have been particularly stressful ones, and perhaps throw a shadow over the fact that they have been only marginally more stressful than the preceding five or six years.

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The headquarters staff is stretched to the limit, as you may gather from the following letter I wrote to the NEC under date of January 27:

Dear Comrades:

By now you know that the National Office has announced a "Party Building Fund" for the upcoming National Convention Banquet. That may have seemed presumptuous, but time was short and a decision had to be made.

It may also have caused some of you to wonder why a "Party Building Fund" when the National Office has done virtually nothing to implement the Party building plan you approved last May. The answer, apart from the absence of any other suggestion, is that regardless of the problems here at National Headquarters something of the sort must be undertaken, unless we are prepared to let matters slide.

As simple as the plan I recommended and you adopted [at the 1998 NEC Session] may have appeared to you and to me, you will recall my saying that "implementing it, or one similar to it, won't be easy." One of the stumbling blocks mentioned in my report to the NEC in Session was, "How... will the National Office hold up its end 'without much staff outside Comrade Donna Bills who are young and fit enough to do anything physical worth mentioning'?"

Nothing has changed on that front. If anything, the problem has grown worse. Comrade [Donna] Bills and I are worn down even more than we were last May, and reaching up and over what must be done just to keep the headquarters operation operating becomes more difficult every day. Comrade Gunderson is frail, increasingly forgetful, and needs more time to do less work than ever before. Comrade Karp increasingly has less and less energy, and I know that writing articles for *The People* takes an enormous toll on him. Comrade Boettcher [because of his part-time schedule] hardly figures into the picture at all, though he continues to churn out copy for the paper, piece the total product together, and keep up the Web site.

To make a long story short, I have no easy answer to my own question of "why a Party Building Fund," much less how to get on with a Party-building effort that has a genuine chance of gaining a sustained and orderly momentum.

The only answer I can offer is that because it must be done we might as well get on with it and see how far we get before we encounter the first log jam. Actually, I have already started, with the mailing of about 3,400 complimentary copies of the

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February issue of *The People*. I plan to report that to the membership by general letter in a few days when I make my first direct pitch to them for financial support. I also plan to go ahead now and call on the sections to recommend or nominate members for a National Recruitment Committee, and postpone all worry about the nuts and bolts of supervising such a committee until later on. Action...cushioned with just the right amount of precaution so not to dampen spirits or excite an overenthusiasm is what must be done first.

We must get the ball rolling, but we must not expect it to roll too fast, indeed, we must keep it under control. I will have more to say about this in the general letter I mentioned. In the meantime, suggestions would be welcomed.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

Also under date of January 27, I wrote the following letter to the NEC in search of some help in connection with tomorrow evening's National Convention Banquet, and in the hope that I would have more time to concentrate on this report.

Dear Comrades:

One problem that inevitably raises its ugly head whenever we approach a National Convention and National Convention Banquet is who will serve as master of ceremonies and as principal speaker. Comrades Cozzini and Bortnick shared those responsibilities at the NEC Session Banquet last May. I was the speaker at the 1997 National Convention Banquet, and Comrade Boettcher acted as the emcee. I was also the speaker at the 1996 NEC Banquet. I don't remember who acted as emcee and took up the collection on that occasion, though it may have been Comrade Karp. Comrade Bortnick and I shared the stage at the 1995 National Convention Banquet, he as speaker and me as emcee.

I would prefer not to be involved, either as emcee or speaker, at the 1999 National Convention Banquet for the usual reasons. I won't be completely done with the April issue of the paper until March 18, when I make my usual pickup of 6,000 copies at the printer's, and I will have only 21 days thereafter (Sundays included) to prepare my report. Furthermore, if I manage to squeeze out some time between March 18 and April 9 I would prefer to devote it to drafting a National

Platform and possibly some resolutions—but particularly the former—for the convention to consider than to putting together a talk. (I also have to keep my mother's situation in mind.)

Now, I am not saying that I will not act in one capacity or the other, if that is what the NEC wishes, only that I would prefer not to, for the reasons stated, and that I cannot do both even if I do one. Accordingly, at a minimum, someone else will have to come forward to fill one position or the other, and preferably two someones to fill both.

While the practical end of making arrangements for the National Convention and National Convention Banquet fall on National Office shoulders, the constitutional obligation for them falls on NEC shoulders. I must have your recommendations soon, partly to provide whomever is chosen as speaker with time to prepare, partly so the publicity can begin. Therefore, please respond to this promptly with your recommendations, or let me know if you are prepared to volunteer to speak or to take up the collection.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

Three NEC members did respond, but only one—Comrade Bruce Cozzini—felt he could be of any real assistance.

I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not picking on the NEC. The NEC the Party has today is as conscientious and capable as any that has ever held office during my 18 years as National Secretary. Furthermore, I know there are several members of the committee who would have responded as I had hoped if their personal circumstances allowed for it. I appreciate that everyone—even SLP men and women—have lives to lead and that there are certain tasks that they may not feel themselves qualified to perform.

However, the SLP men and women who make up the headquarters staff also have lives to lead and problems to deal with. If the SLP is going to dig out from under the overwhelming problems facing it today, every concerned and dedicated member of the Party will have to dig in and emulate the standard set by the four staff members who have stood their ground for so many years.

Last June, when the internal problems the Party had to contend with were coming to a head, I received a letter from

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Comrade Glenn Schelin, which I have also drawn on for the financial section of this report. However, some of the sentiments he expressed in that letter fit here just as well.

Comrade Schelin enclosed a substantial sum of money with his letter, which he said was “in honor of and in deep appreciation of the staff at headquarters and for [your] ably handling [the] Nat’l Secy and Editor jobs! To do this with a continuous shortage of help and funds is certainly worthy of praise!”

To this he added:

I also hereby acknowledge receipt of your correspondence dated May 13 and June 10, including the NEC report.

In regard to the May 13 letter I note the reported action against my brother....

* * * * *

Shameful and disgusting, to say the least.

As I see it, his insultingly asking you to “step down” is actually asking for the *closing* of the *National Office*. If you “stepped down” (which of course you wouldn’t) If that happened I’m sure your secretary—your wife—would not remain! Does this character have *two* experienced replacements to step in and take over? Enough of this sickening subject.

In a reply written under date of June 25, 1998, I told Comrade Schelin how much the praise he had bestowed on the headquarters staff was appreciated, and added:

As a practical thing, you are almost certainly correct about what would happen to the National Headquarters and *The People* if the office of National Secretary became vacant at this time. I don’t mean to sound immodest about this, but I know as well as any member of the SLP that there is no one else at present who is prepared to fill this position. There are capable men and women in our organization—as intelligent and resourceful as can be found anywhere—but none who have been willing to come forward to cast their lot with the staff, much less prepare themselves to take on the responsibilities that go with this particular job. Fortunately, I am still young enough and healthy enough to feel confident that I can keep at it for years to come, if that is what the membership wants.

Keeping me “at it” may or may not be what the membership wants. However, whatever the National Convention and

membership decide on that score, they must also be prepared to make sure that the headquarters staff is not kept “at it” alone. In the end, they are the ones who bear the bone-crunching load of keeping the headquarters operation afloat. They cannot be expected to do it forever, and certainly not without the active support of every section and national member-at-large. They are not encouraged when they are working on *The People* and it comes time to prepare the activities column, only to find that it’s hardly worth the effort. It is important to remember that the decision to persevere in the conviction that the SLP can regain its former vigor is one that has been made—not by the headquarters staff, the National Secretary or the NEC—but by the National Conventions and the membership. That decision, in my view, was the right one to make. No matter what may be aching, no matter what else may be tempting our minds and competing for our time, every one of us must put those aches and temptations aside and get on with the job we have joined hands and pledged to get done.

Last month, the National Office sent a letter to all SLP sections calling upon them to take the first step toward putting together a National Membership Recruitment Committee. The sections were requested to submit the names of two of their own members who they believe would wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to the tasks that will be assigned to them once the committee is established. It is to be hoped that every section of the Party will act on that summons and meet the June 1 deadline that was set. It will be a sign that the SLP is ready to get moving again and that all the effort being put into keeping the Party’s headquarters open and its official journal alive has not been in vain.

On motion, this section of the National Secretary’s report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

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State of Organization

1. Membership Changes

The NEC accepted two applications for membership in 1998. Twenty-three names were removed from the membership list. Eleven members died, four were dropped for non-payment of dues and three resigned. The NEC expelled five. The net loss in membership was 21.

2. Sections

There were 11 sections in nine states on January 1, 1998. Two sections were disbanded during the year. The nine other sections reported a total of 98 regular business meetings, at which the average attendance was four. The sections and the number of business meetings held by each was as follows:

San Francisco Bay Area, Calif. (12); Cook County, Ill. (12); Wayne County, Mich. (12); New York City, N.Y. (11); Akron, Ohio (12); Cleveland, Ohio (10); Portland, Ore. (12); Philadelphia, Pa. (10); Milwaukee, Wis. (7).

Section Cook County reported a net gain of one member during the year. Section Cleveland reported a net loss of three. Three other sections—San Francisco Bay Area, Wayne County and Milwaukee—reported a net loss of one member each.

3. National Members-at-Large

The Party has national members-at-large who live in 26 states and on Guam in the Pacific. National members-at-large now account for 57 percent of the Party's total membership. Twelve members live in Texas, but too far apart to organize themselves into new sections.

Membership Changes (1998)

Sections	Admit	Died	Drop	Resign	Expel	Transfers		Net
						In	Out	
1. Los Angeles (disbanded)	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	-8
2. S.F. Bay Area	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	-1

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3. Cook Co.	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	+1
4. Wayne Co.	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-1
5. Minneapolis (disbanded)	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	-5
6. New York City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Akron	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Cleveland	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	-3
9. Portland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Philadelphia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11. Milwaukee	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>-1</u>
Subtotals	0	2	2	2	4	1	9	-18
12. Mbrs-at-Large	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-3</u>
Totals	2	11	4	3	5	10	10	-21

On motion, this section of the National Secretary's report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

General Activities

1. The People and Leaflet Distribution

SLP sections and national members-at-large reported distributing 41,642 copies of *The People* in 1998. Sections accounted for 38,290 copies and members-at-large for 3,352. In 1997, the total distribution reported was 46,252.

The National Office shipped 84,645 leaflets in 1998, of which 30,535 went to sections, 9,390 to national members-at-large, 32,670 to SLP sympathizers and 12,050 to SLP leafletting volunteers. Michael Preston of Buffalo, N.Y., led the way among Party sympathizers with orders for 17,000 leaflets. The number of SLP leafletting volunteers was 15 as of December 31, 1998, of whom eight were national members-at-large and seven were SLP sympathizers. The number of leaflets shipped by the National Office in 1997 was 109,626.

In 1998, the sections reported distributing 30,875 leaflets and members-at-large reported distributing 9,066. No leaflet

distribution figures are available from SLP sympathizers. Section Philadelphia led the sections with a reported distribution of 12,050 SLP leaflets during the year; and Comrade Daniel Deneff of Sacramento, Calif., was first among members-at-large with a reported distribution of 4,020. In 1997, the sections and members-at-large reported distributing 67,584 SLP leaflets.

During last year's autoworkers strike at General Motors, the National Office sent camera-ready artwork for local printing of a special leaflet to at least three sections. However, only one of the three—Section Akron—reported having printed and distributed 100 copies of that leaflet.

The total distribution of leaflets and *The People* reported for 1998 was 81,683. The combined total reported for 1997 was 113,836.

2. Contacts

The National Office received 159 inquiries, or contacts, in 1998, compared to 135 in 1997. The increase was due entirely to the Internet and the Party's Web site. However, the 39 e-mail contacts received during the year do not reflect the number of "hits" on the Web site, which was much larger, or tell us how many people visited and revisited the Web site during the year.

The number of contacts received from conventional sources—primarily leaflets and *The People*—was 120, 43 of whom took out subscriptions to *The People*. Twenty of those subscriptions were for the four-month term. Sixteen were for six months, five for one year, one for three years. One leaflet contact took out a bundle subscription. Thirty-three of these new subscriptions came off SLP leaflet coupons. In addition, seven contacts from leaflets also ordered 100 copies of the leaflet that aroused their interest.

The increase in contacts, attributed here to the Party's Web site, should be qualified in one way.

Unless those who write the National Office by e-mail or visit the Party's Web site say how they came across that address or discovered the site, there is no way to trace that contact back to its ultimate source. None of the Party's leaflets carry the Party's e-mail address or identify its Web site

“domain” name. However, the e-mail address and domain name are printed in every issue of *The People*, and on two or three occasions the domain name has been given prominent display. Accordingly, it is possible that some of the electronic contacts received last year could be traced to distribution of *The People*, to self-serve newsstands and to commercial sales.

3. Web Site

The World Wide Web, which is part of the Internet, theoretically makes it possible for the SLP to be noticed by an enormous number of people all over the world. We are less interested in “all over the world” than in the United States, of course, but worldwide access comes with the territory, so to speak. With a personal computer and a modem linked to the Internet, anyone can communicate with anyone having comparable equipment anywhere on the face of the globe almost instantaneously. That equipment is less expensive today than it was just a few years ago, and around the world there are tens of millions of people who have access to the Internet and the World Wide Web.

The SLP has been on the Internet since 1994 and the World Wide Web since 1997. As with anything else, this new medium brings along a new vocabulary of terms that have already worked their way into the language—terms such as “domain name,” “URL address” and “Web master.”

On the Net, the SLP’s e-mail address is socialists@slp.org, and *The People’s* address is thepeople@igc.apc.org. On the Web, however, the Party’s URL address is www.slp.org.

While this new medium opens new opportunities, it also brings its own unique set of problems and challenges. One problem is how to enhance the SLP’s visibility on the Web. There already are millions of Web sites.

The federal government and every branch of the federal government have their sites on the Web. Congress has one, and most, if not all, members of Congress have Web sites of their own.

Every state government, the branches of state governments, many county governments, city governments, indi-

vidual politicians and local Chambers of Commerce have sites on the World Wide Web.

Every major corporation, thousands upon thousands of companies and small businesses from Andorra to Zambia can be contacted by visiting sites they have on the Web.

Every church, and it seems like every cult and religious sect, is on the Web.

More than 3,200 newspapers I know of, and a host of magazines, trade journals and specialized academic journals on everything from anthropology to zoology have Web sites of their own.

Families have them. Individuals have them. And there are Web sites to help you trace your bloodline back to the Vandals, the Visigoths, or to from whoever, whatever or wherever your bloodline happens to run.

The white pages are on the Web. The yellow pages are there. You can buy anything, sell anything, or arrange to swap anything you have or might want, over the Web.

In short, anything you could mention, and most of what you wouldn't, can be found in abundance on the Web—including virtually every political party or group from here, there and everywhere around the world—and seemingly every group that calls itself socialist, communist, Marxist, or anything in between.

To help people sort through this labyrinth there also are hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of “search engines” on the Web. These search engines have names of their own, of course, but the service they offer is the same—“you name it, we'll find it.”

Type in a word—type in socialism or socialist, type in Marx, Engels, even De Leon (even industrialism)—and the search engine will locate Web sites that might interest you. It will find them, list them and prioritize them—dozens of them, scores of them, usually 10 at a time. If you find what you want you can electronically “bookmark” the electronic address and, barring a power outage, return to that site whenever you like.

The trick for the company, group or person with a Web site is how to become one of the top 10 in your category, and to have something on your site for the people who find it to see, to read, to “download” onto their personal computers, to

ask questions about and to bookmark so when they come looking again you will be high on their personal list of possible choices.

There are several ways to enhance the visibility of a Web site or to increase the chances of it being found at random. One is to buy up domain names, or URL addresses, that are similar to your own. If the SLP sold bananas, for example, it might want slp-bananas.com as its domain name, but also banana.com, bananas.com, banana.org, bananas.org, and so on. If you're slow to move and do not think about it soon enough, someone else might buy up and gain the exclusive right to use those domain names. That may be what happened with bananas because bananas are not what you get when you go to those Web sites—and Socialist Labor Party is not what you get when you go to socialists.org or socialism.com, or even socialistlabor.com. Those names are taken, but not by the SLP.

However, the National Office recently bought the right to use 10 additional URL addresses on the Web,¹ and it has taken some other steps to improve the likelihood that anyone using a search engine to find Socialists on the Web will find the SLP. It is too soon to say how much those steps will improve the site's performance, but improvements already are noticeable. According to a memorandum handed me by Comrade Boettcher:

The number of hits (visits to our site) per week rose from an average of 205 during the four-week [reporting] period ending May 2, 1998, to 314 during the four-week period ending December 25, 1998. The number of hosts from which these visits were made rose from an average of 103 to 177 during the same period. The number of actual individuals lies somewhere between the number for hits and hosts.

In his memorandum, Comrade Boettcher added that since buying the new domain names and adding some other features this year, the number of hits rose again "to an average of 439 over the four-week period ending March 26, 1999,

¹ Marxism.net, Socialists.net, SocialistLabor.net, SocialistLabor.org, SocialistLabour.com, SocialistLabour.org, SocialistLabour.net, SocialistLaborParty.com, SocialistLaborParty.org and SocialistLaborParty.net.

from 217 hosts.” Comrade Boettcher went on to say:

There is no way of knowing what the increase might be over the coming year. However, a significant increase in both hits and hosts should accompany our recent Web site promotion efforts—including the addition of 10 URLs, plus keywords and descriptive text that will, over the next three quarters, make us increasingly visible to the major search engines.

Members who have access to the Web and have seen the site constructed by Comrade Boettcher know how attractive it is. However, as efforts are made to improve on its accessibility, thought is also being given to making some improvements on its appearance and on enhancing its content.

Every issue of *The People* can be read and downloaded from the site, but visitors can also find certain other things: Facts About the SLP; What Is Socialism?; the Local Directory; the New York Labor News catalogue and ordering form; Who Was Daniel De Leon?; Marxist-De Leonist Literature Online; an invitation to e-mail the SLP, and links to a few other Web sites.

Open Marxist-De Leonist Literature Online and you will find *Socialist Reconstruction of Society*, several of De Leon’s editorials and the promise of some new additions, including works of Marx and others.

Finding time to build on this good beginning is the challenge, and there is an overlap between what might be added to the site and the conventional printing projects that have bogged down. However, there also are plans to add some SLP leaflets, such as *Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers’ Power*, and several other things before long.

4. Newsstands

Reports from sections and members-at-large indicate that 28 self-serve newsstands were in operation on Jan. 1, 1998. During the year, nine were removed from the streets, leaving 19 in operation at year’s end.

Eight of the nine self-serve newsstands that were removed in 1998 were maintained by Section San Francisco Bay Area, and most were from the streets of San Francisco itself. The reasons for removing the stands were reported to

the NEC in Session last May.

The number of commercial newsstands carrying *The People* was increased by one during the year, from 27 as of January 1 to 28 as of December 31, 1998.

5. Public Meetings

Sections reported 34 public meetings held in 1998. That number includes 20 discussion group sessions, 12 fund-raising social affairs and two public lectures. Seventy-four public meetings were held in 1997.

6. Literature Tables

Section Portland continued with its weekend literature table at the “Saturday Market” from April through August 1998, and Section Cleveland reported setting up literature tables at two street festivals held during the year.

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Leaflet Distribution (1997–1998)

<i>Sections</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>Totals</i>
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	6,749	2,607	9,356
Cook Co., Ill.	2,550	2,700	5,250
Wayne Co., Mich.	3,897	5,390	9,287
Minneapolis, Minn.	1,100*	0	1,100
New York City	2,300*	0	2,300
Akron, Ohio	1,400	650	2,050
Cleveland, Ohio	3,373	3,242	6,615
Portland, Ore.	325	136	461
Philadelphia, Pa.	20,227	12,050*	32,277
Milwaukee, Wis.	5,332	4,100	9,432
<u>Members-at-Large</u>	<u>20,331</u>	<u>9,066</u>	<u>29,397</u>
Totals	67,584	39,941	107,525

**Distribution of *The People*
(1997–1998)**

<i>Sections</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>Totals</i>
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	23,227	25,404	48,631
Cook Co., Ill.	500	10	510
Wayne Co., Mich.	0	0	0
Minneapolis (disbanded)	4,325*	1,925	6,250
New York City	150*	0	150
Akron, Ohio	1,400	50	1,450
Cleveland, Ohio	3,397	3,984	7,381
Portland, Ore.	778	542	1320
Philadelphia, Pa.	1,516	450*	1,966
Milwaukee, Wis.	5,342	5,925	11,267
<u>Members-at-Large</u>	<u>5,617</u>	<u>3,352</u>	<u>8,969</u>
Totals	46,252	41,642	87,894

* Incomplete

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<i>Sections</i>	<i>Fundraisers</i>	<i>Public & School Lectures</i>	<i>Study Classes</i>	<i>Discussion Groups</i>
S.F. Bay Area	6	1	0	4
Cook Co.	0	0	0	0
Wayne Co.	1	0	0	0
New York City	0	1	0	0
Akron	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	0	4
Akron/Cleveland	3	0	0	0
Portland	0	0	0	12
Philadelphia*	2	0	0	0
Milwaukee	0	0	0	0
Mbrs-at-Large	0	0	0	0
Totals	12	2	0	20

Additional:

Section Cleveland set up literature tables at two street festivals.

Section Portland maintained a literature table each weekend at a local Saturday Market from April through August.

Contacts

<i>Sources</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leaflets	65	57	122
Miscellaneous	47	46	93
Coupons From <i>The People</i>	17	13	30
Ads in Other Publications	2	0	2
Requests for Campaign Literature	0	0	0
Local Fliers	0	0	0

* Incomplete.

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Students/Teachers	4	4	8
Sign-up Sheets (From SLP Literature Tables)	0	0	0
Radio/TV	0	0	0
N.O. Mailing to Contacts & Former Subs	0	0	0
<u>E-mail/WWW</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>39</u>
Totals	135	159	294

Subscriptions From Contacts

	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Four months	31	20	51
Six months	7	16	23
One Year	8	5	13
Two Years	1	0	1
Three Years	1	1	2
<u>Bundle Subs</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Totals	48	43	91
Subs From Leaflet Coupons	36	33	69
Leaflet Orders From Leaflet Coupons	5	7	12

On motion, this section of the National Secretary's report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Party Press and Literature

1. *The People*

In 1998, *The People* circulated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico. *The People* also was mailed to 12 foreign countries in five continents and Oceania.¹ Paid circulation during the year averaged 9,673. Press runs averaged 10,305. The press run for March 1999 was 12,600, of which 12,158 went into circulation, as follows:

Domestic subscriber copies	2,041
Foreign subscriber copies	73
Domestic bundle copies	6,713
Foreign bundles copies	431
Sample copies	2,900

Included within that circulation were 428 domestic libraries and 19 foreign libraries. Two of the domestic libraries received bundles.

One hundred twenty-two bundles of the March issue were shipped. Fifty-four went to sections and members of the Party, of which 11 were for commercial outlets. Sixty-three went to nonmembers, of which 10 were for commercial outlets. Three bundles went to members in Australia and Canada, and two went to nonmembers in other countries. Bundle sizes averaged 58 copies.

Last year, 437 new subscriptions were processed. One hundred twenty-four of those were for a term of four months, 204 were for six months, 98 were for one year, one was for two years and 10 were for three years.

In addition, 90 "old-new" subscriptions were entered, of which 22 were for four months, 14 for six months, 31 for one year, seven for two years and 16 for three years.

Accordingly, 527 subscriptions, new and "old-new," were

¹ Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Great Britain, India, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

entered during the year. Of those, 15 were from Canada and 23 from other countries.

Apart from its regular list of readers, *The People* had 144 e-mail subscribers as of March 1999, compared to 103 for April 1998 and 75 for April 1997.

On January 25, I wrote to inform the NEC “that 3,377 complimentary copies of the February issue of *The People* were commingled with the regular subscription list and mailed to certain former subscribers and contacts whose names appear on what the National Office calls its PPLOLD list.”

The PPLOLD list contains the names of former subscribers and of contacts. There were about 13,000 names on that list in January. The addresses selected for the February mailing fell within or near to the areas where sections are organized. A determined effort to increase the subscription list within those areas will be made after the entire list has been flushed out. An additional 2,900 sample copies were mailed with the March issue. Just over 2,500 sample copies went out with the April issue.

2. SLP Literature

A revised version of *Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers' Power*, which was published in the May 1997 issue of *The People*, was printed as a “new” leaflet in 1998. In addition, five leaflets were reprinted. The total of leaflets printed during the year was 110,000, as follows:

<i>Here Today and Gone Tomorrow: The Plight of America's Temporary Workers</i>	20,000
<i>Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers' Power</i>	20,000
<i>What Is Socialism?</i>	10,000
<i>What's Behind the Attack on Public Education?</i>	20,000
<i>What's Wrong With the Labor Unions?</i>	20,000
<i>Who Are the Polluters? How Capitalism Is Destroying the Earth!</i>	20,000

Apart from the 1998 NEC proceedings, there were no SLP books, pamphlets or *Socialist Studies* printed last year. All the half- and near-finished projects mentioned in my report to the 43rd National Convention remained—and still

remain—bogged down on my desk.

The pamphlet I most wanted to finish with last year was De Leon's *What Means This Strike?* It was my hope to finish with it in time to publish a centennial edition. As the year wore on, however, that hope dissolved into disappointment as my time became fragmented and my attention was diverted by other pressing problems and concerns.

3. The De Leon Project

In my report to the 1998 NEC Session, I said that “just over half” of De Leon's works from *The People* and other publications had been typed and stored on computer disks, but that a competent typist was needed to continue the work. That is how far the typing had come since the work began in April 1992.

Soon after the NEC Session, NEC member Bruce Cozzini put me in touch with an excellent typist, who has since typed two years' worth of material and moved on to a third. She cannot devote her complete attention to the task, unfortunately, because she also has other clients. Nonetheless, the work is moving forward again, and I can report that it is now 70 percent complete.

On motion, this section of the National Secretary's report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Internal Problems

1. The Minneapolis Matter

Under date of August 14, 1998, the National Office informed the sections and members of the SLP that the NEC had expelled four members of what was Section Minneapolis, as follows:

Notice

This is to inform you that the National Executive Committee, in accordance with the organizational and executive responsibilities imposed upon it by the Party's Constitution, and acting under the authority vested in it by that Constitution,

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has expelled Byron Danelius, Donald Donaker, Karl Heck and Harvey Rodich from membership in the Socialist Labor Party for their deliberate and willful refusal to comply with explicit and binding rulings of the NEC as conveyed to Section Minneapolis under date of May 13, 1998.

The NEC vote on each individual mentioned was taken and recorded separately, of course, and in each case the decision was a unanimous one.

Those decisions were taken after the NEC, meeting in Regular Session last May, censured the section for what it deemed to be “unfounded and reckless charges against the National Secretary.” The NEC, voting by mail, also adopted a motion instructing the section “to conduct its correspondence with the National Secretary in a fraternal manner and that further unwarranted accusations and offensive language will not be tolerated.”

Those decisions were taken after a prolonged correspondence that began in August 1997. The question at issue, as the section saw it, centered on its claim that a contradiction existed between two sets of Party rules—the guide for conducting SLP discussion groups and certain limitations the Party has placed on using non-Party materials at public events held under Party auspices. At one point during that exchange, the section called upon the National Secretary to issue a “ruling” to resolve its dilemma. The section was reminded that National Secretaries of the SLP do not issue edicts of that sort, and was urged to submit something for the NEC to consider when it met in Regular Session last May. This culminated in three resolutions, which the section submitted for the NEC’s consideration.

The NEC rejected the section’s resolutions, and its decisions were duly reported to the organizer under date of May 13, 1998.

Regarding “Resolution 1,” the organizer was informed “that, upon due consideration, the NEC found the section’s assertion that a contradiction exists between certain specified passages of An SLP Member’s Guide for Discussion Groups and the 38th National Convention’s ruling governing the use of non-SLP materials at SLP-sponsored public events was not well founded, that the section failed to substantiate its

contention that such a contradiction exists, or that any change in the guide or the 38th National Convention's ruling is either necessary or warranted."

Regarding "Resolution 2," the organizer was informed "that, upon due consideration, the NEC found there to be no merit in the section's contentions regarding 'resolutions proscribing agitational activities,' and that the established channels and procedures for adopting, amending or repealing rules and regulations of the Party are fully sufficient for such purposes."

Regarding "Resolution 3," the organizer was informed "that, upon due consideration, the NEC found the section's resolution, and the several allegations contained in it, to be utterly without merit or foundation in fact. Accordingly, this is to further inform you that the NEC took the following actions:

First: The NEC unanimously rejected Section Minneapolis' "Resolution 3."

Second: The NEC, by motion duly made and adopted by unanimous roll call vote, censured Section Minneapolis for the unfounded and reckless charges against the National Secretary contained in its "Resolution 3."

Despite these decisions, and despite the option it had to appeal against them to the National Convention, the section chose instead to defy the NEC with an abusive 10-page diatribe that it put into circulation last July. It was in response to that harangue that the NEC voted to expel the four members who, upon direct inquiry from the National Office, assumed full responsibility for it. Their culpability was firmly established on August 3, 1998, when the organizer responded to the National Office's inquiry, as follows:

Dear Comrade Bills,

The letter in question has been presented to the section by Comr. Byron Danelius at the regular business meeting of July 20th and has been approved by the section.

Fraternally
KARL H. HECK
Section Mpls.

2. The Schelin Affair

Under date of September 3, 1998, the National Office mailed the following notice to the sections and members of the SLP:

Notice

This will inform you that the National Executive Committee, in accordance with the organizational and executive responsibilities imposed upon it by the Party's Constitution, and acting under the authority vested in it by that Constitution, has expelled Ross Schelin of Duluth, Minnesota, from membership in the Socialist Labor Party for his repeated violation of an explicit and binding NEC ruling conveyed to him under date of October 28, 1997.

The NEC's decision in this matter was a unanimous one.

In July 1997, Schelin initiated a correspondence concerning the 43rd National Convention's decision to reject a resolution which he had submitted for consideration. The NEC found Schelin's correspondence to be factually incorrect and, in addition, offensive, and in October 1997 it unanimously adopted a motion instructing him "to refrain from further unwarranted accusations and offensive language when corresponding with the National Secretary." Schelin persisted, however, and eventually submitted a "grievance" for the NEC to consider while in session last May.

The NEC rejected Schelin's "grievance," which it found to be simply a repetition of the same accusations and offensive language that led the NEC to reprimand him in October 1997. In addition, the NEC voted unanimously to suspend his membership "for three months for violating the NEC's ruling instructing him to refrain from further unwarranted accusations against the National Secretary, as conveyed to him under date of October 28, 1997."

The sections and members of the Party were duly notified of the NEC's decision, and under date of May 13, 1998, Schelin was also notified, as follows:

Dear Comrade Schelin:

This is to inform you that your letter of April 22, addressed to the National Executive Committee in Session, was presented to the NEC in Session on Saturday, May 2. This will further in-

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form you that your letters of April 23, addressed to NEC Members B. Bortnick and B. Cozzini, were reported to the Chair and presented to the NEC in Session on May 2. In addition, this is to inform you that upon presentation of the aforementioned letters the NEC adopted the following motion by unanimous roll call vote:

“That Comrade R. Schelin be suspended for three months for violating the NEC’s ruling instructing him to refrain from further unwarranted accusations against the National Secretary, as conveyed to him under date of October 28, 1997.”

Please note that the three-month period of suspension took effect immediately; that you are expected to keep yourself in good standing during the suspension period; that evidence of any breach of Party principle or discipline could result in your immediate expulsion from the SLP; and that barring evidence of any such breach of discipline you will be automatically reinstated with the expiration of the suspension period on Sunday, August 2, 1998.

Fraternally yours,
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Socialist Labor Party
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

Ordinarily, a suspension by the NEC would automatically come before the National Convention for review. However, within three days of his reinstatement, under date of August 5, 1998, Schelin put into circulation a lengthy letter “to each member of the NEC and to other party members for whom I have an address.” Although the letter was addressed to the National Secretary, Schelin inadvertently mailed the original copy to NEC member Chris Camacho, who sent it to the National Office under date of August 13. When forwarding that letter, Comrade Camacho wrote:

I believe that Comrade Schelin is beyond rescuing. In his letter he explicitly accuses the National Secretary of trying to prevent the NEC from acting upon his “grievance.” This is a defamatory statement that flies in the face of the NEC’s ruling of May 2 that he “refrain from making unwarranted accusations against the National Secretary, etc.” Comrade Schelin is in violation of Article V, Section 14 of our Constitution. Therefore, I move that Comrade Schelin be expelled from the SLP effective immediately.

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That motion was submitted to the NEC and was, as indicated, adopted by a unanimous vote.

A motion was made and seconded to refer this section of the National Secretary's report to an appropriate committee when elected.

A recess was declared at 12:40 p.m. Upon reconvening at 12:55 p.m., discussion on the motion resumed. The motion failed. On motion, this section of the National Secretary's report was filed.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

NEC and National Officers

1. National Executive Committee

The 43rd National Convention, as provided by the Party's Constitution, elected a National Executive Committee of seven members for the 1997–1999 term of office. The names of those elected by the convention were submitted to the referendum, and all were approved by the membership.

During the term, a vacancy was created when a member resigned from the NEC. The resignation was considered and then accepted by a vote of the NEC. The NEC then proceeded to nominate the member it believed was best qualified to fill the vacancy, as the Constitution provides. The nomination was duly submitted to the membership of the Party for a general vote. The member nominated was elected to the NEC, and the results of the general vote were promptly reported to the membership.

Accordingly, the members of the NEC whose term is about to expire are Donna Bills, Bernard Bortnick, Christian Camacho, Henry Coretz, Bruce Cozzini, Michael Mahoney and Diane Secor.

Under date of December 22, 1998, the National Office issued a call for members who are eligible and believe themselves qualified for election to the NEC to submit their names for consideration by the National Convention. It is this convention's responsibility to elect an NEC of seven members for the 1999–2001 term of office.

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Ten eligible members responded to the call of December 22, as follows:

Bernard Bortnick	National Member-at-Large
Christian Camacho	National Member-at-Large
Richard Cassin	National Member-at-Large
Henry Coretz	Section Cook County
Daniel P. Englert	National Member-at-Large
Theodore Jankowski	National Member-at-Large
Michael Mahoney	Section Milwaukee
Stephen Raper	National Member-at-Large
Diane Secor	Section San Francisco Bay Area
Charles Turner	National Member-at-Large

These names are now placed before you. It is recommended that they be referred to a committee of the convention, and that the committee be instructed to give careful consideration to each of them before returning to the floor of the convention to place seven in nomination for a vote. That committee should also be instructed that its responsibility is to nominate the seven members it believes are best qualified for seats on the NEC.

In that connection, the committee should be informed that it is not restricted to consideration of those whose names have been submitted. The call issued by the National Office was to provide the convention with the widest possible latitude in reaching its decision. It was not meant to bind or restrict the convention in any way.

Similarly, the convention should be reminded that it is not bound or restricted by the nominations offered by the committee to which the names placed before the convention should be referred. To repeat, the responsibility of the committee is to return to the floor of the convention prepared to place in nomination the names of the seven members it considers best qualified to occupy seats on the NEC. However, it is the convention that elects, and it is the responsibility of the convention to elect the seven members who, in its judgment, are most qualified to serve on the NEC for the 1999–2001 term of office.

2. National Officers

Besides electing a National Executive Committee of seven members, the Party's Constitution charges the National Convention with responsibility for electing members to fill the three national offices for which it provides. The three offices are those of Financial Secretary, Editor of the Party's official journal and National Secretary. The offices of Financial Secretary and Editor are vacant. The term of the present National Secretary expires with this convention.

In this connection, the 41st National Convention in 1993 elected a National Secretary, but reported it was "unable to find a member who is willing and able to serve as Editor of *The People*," and that it was "unable to find a member who is willing and able to serve as Financial Secretary." However, apart from its having referred this matter to a committee, the convention neglected to report through the minutes of its proceedings what concrete steps it took to find members to fill the offices or what problems it met with before it abandoned the search.

Similarly, the 42nd National Convention in 1995 elected a National Secretary, but did not elect members to fill the other national offices. Unlike the 41st National Convention, however, the 42nd National Convention did not report that it could not find qualified members to fill those offices, or that it had even attempted to conduct such a search.

The 43rd National Convention in 1997 also elected a National Secretary. However, while the proceedings of that convention record that no names were placed in nomination for the offices of Financial Secretary or Editor, they also omit any mention of what specific steps the convention took to locate qualified members to fill those offices before reaching the conclusion that none could be found.

I do not mean to suggest that those National Conventions failed to search for qualified members, or that the offices could have been filled had more effort been put into those searches. What I am saying, however, is that those conventions failed to inform the membership of how their searches were conducted and how they reached their conclusions that qualified members could not be found to fill two important

national offices. This is a fact that can be easily verified by referring to the minutes of the proceedings of those conventions. It was an error that should not be repeated by this convention. The membership has a right to know what National Conventions do to meet their expectations in this regard as much as any other.

At the same time, what point is there in delegating a responsibility such as this to the National Convention when National Conventions apparently cannot discharge their obligations and satisfy those expectations?

In that connection, I remind the convention that it has the authority and the responsibility to determine the form of organization, i.e., to amend the Constitution by adding new provisions when the Party's experience shows a need for them, or by removing provisions that have outlived their usefulness or have become obstructions in the Party's path.

For example, when it became apparent that the constitutional provisions that determined the structure and method for electing a National Executive Committee were no longer viable, the 40th National Convention in 1991 adopted amendments to replace the outworn provisions and to establish the executive structure now in place. Two years later, the 41st National Convention removed certain of those amendments from the Constitution whose only purpose was to facilitate the transition from the old to the new, which by then had been completed.

The old provisions were removed and new ones were adopted because to ignore the impossibility of continuing with the old by failing to adopt something new would put the Party's ability to elect its NEC in jeopardy. The Party could not run that risk and responded to the threat before it resulted in a disastrous collapse of the Party's executive structure.

Since 1993, however, the Party has run a similar risk by failing to come to grips with the apparent inability of National Conventions to find and elect competent members to fill the offices of Financial Secretary and Editor. Both offices have been vacant for three consecutive terms. The Party cannot allow these vacancies to continue into a fourth consecutive term without taking some action to address the situation.

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I am not suggesting that the action needed to come to grips with this particular problem is to amend the Constitution. That approach helped solve the problem of an outworn executive structure, but can do nothing to improve the qualifications or affect the readiness of members who might be considered as potential Financial Secretaries of the Party or potential Editors for its official journal. The most that this approach to the problem might accomplish is to shift the burden of responsibility away from the National Convention and toward the sections, the NEC or the Party as a whole. However, the debate through which the Party must pass to come to grips with this problem must start somewhere, and if these few words serve only to open a discussion that does not end until some workable solution to the problem can be found, they will have served their purpose.

On motion, this section of the National Secretary's report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Party Finances

The Party's books and records for the 1998 calendar year have been audited by certified public accountant R. Leonard Stickler, and a financial statement is being prepared for the membership.

Time and other pressures do not permit me to prepare a detailed account of the Party's finances for the convention. However, from the monthly reports prepared by the Party's bookkeeper, Comrade Genevieve Gunderson, I have prepared the following summary.

Income for the 1998 calendar year was about \$92,470.00. The sources of income and the corresponding figures for 1997, as taken from my report to the 1998 NEC Session, were as follows:

	1998	1997
Funds	\$57,897	\$80,995
Sales	15,989	16,820
Interest Posted on Deposits	17,185	13,138
Miscellaneous	1,399	4,602

44TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Totals \$92,470 \$115,555

The operating expense for 1998 was \$154,960.00, and the corresponding figures for 1997, also taken from my report to the 1998 NEC Session, were as follows:

	1998	1997
Regular Expenses	\$ 44,288	\$65,202
Payroll	59,908	69,649
Miscellaneous	50,764	62,218
Totals	\$154,960	\$197,069

Accordingly, the deficit for 1998 was \$62,490.00. The corresponding figure for 1997, as reported to the NEC, was \$81,514.

You will recall that the deficit for 1997 was eliminated by four bequests that totaled about \$216,000. “Those four bequests,” as I informed the NEC last May, “turned an [estimated] \$80,859 deficit into a surplus of \$135,453.”

In this connection, it should be noted that the National Office did not send copies of the Party booklet *Steps You Can Take*, etc., to the membership and others, directed by the 1998 NEC Session, initially because it was deemed necessary to review the contents of the booklet and to make whatever changes or additions proved necessary, but ultimately because there has not been time to prepare the booklet for re-printing in the quantity needed or to prepare the letter or appeal that should be circulated with it.

Whether for that or some other reason, no bequests were received last year—at least not in the ordinary sense of the word. In June, however, the National Office received a letter from National Member-at-Large Glenn Schelin, which read, in part, as follows:

Dear Comrades at the Nat'l Office,

Enclosed please find my check in the amount of \$5,000. It is my “bequest” and is submitted in honor of and in deep appreciation of the staff at headquarters and for [your] ably handling [the] Nat'l Secy and Editor jobs! To do this with a continuous shortage of help and funds is certainly worthy of praise!

* * * * *

My submission of the enclosed check does not mean my final donation. I will continue to contribute as generously as

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possible to all fund raisers and hopefully some in between.

Comrade Schelin's letter and "bequest" were timely in more ways than one. I wrote a letter from which the following passages are taken.

Dear Comrade Schelin:

Thank you very much for your letter... and your "bequest." Your financial generosity toward the Party, and your generosity of commendation of the headquarters staff, are both deeply appreciated.

* * * * *

The quotation marks you place around the word "bequest" tell me that you are... planning to stick around for a very long time to come. That's good, because you and all the other loyal and dedicated members of the SLP are needed to see this thing through to a successful conclusion.

Other members (and some sympathizers, too) made similar generous gestures and offered similar words of encouragement for the staff during the year, and efforts were made to respond to them all. Those good intentions did not always work out, but every dime and every word of encouragement received by the National Office was noticed and appreciated.

Nonetheless, a \$62,000 deficit despite a \$42,000 reduction in expenses is clearly a source for concern that this convention should not fail to address. Although these figures may not be precisely the same as those in the audited report that the membership will receive, they come close enough.

While no one needs to be reminded that a decline in the Party's income is not a good thing, a decline in expenses is not always a good thing, either—particularly when it reflects a decline in the Party's activities. Had the National Office printed all the pamphlets now on hold, for example, the operating expense for 1998 would have increased and the deficit would have increased in proportion. To survive, the Party must publish, among other things, and to publish it must have funds to offset the expense.

However, if the decline in contributions to funds, and from other important sources of income, force the National Office to take measures in a struggle to stay one step ahead of that decline—which it obviously has not succeeded in do-

ing despite the reduction in expenses noted—it will eventually lose the race, with consequences that no delegate in this hall and no concerned member in the field wants to contemplate. Nonetheless, they must be contemplated, and steps must be taken to prevent those possible consequences from becoming a reality.

On motion, this section of the National Secretary's report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary began reading the "Editorial Matters" section of his report. During the reading, typographical errors in the report necessitated that a recess be called to allow the report to be corrected.

On motion, the convention adjourned at 1:45 p.m. to reconvene at 3:10 p.m.

AFTERNOON SESSION, FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1999

The convention was called to order at 3:21 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The Sergeant at Arms reported four members present.

C. Camacho for the Credentials Committee reported the following:

This committee would like to report that Delegate Edna Barnes has arrived and presented her credentials. We recommend that she be seated.

Fraternally submitted,
CHRISTIAN CAMACHO, Chair
LUIS FIGUEROA SID FINK
Credentials Committee

On motion, the committee's report was accepted.

Report of the National Secretary

The National Secretary resumed reading the "Editorial Matters" section of his report.

Editorial Matters

1. Contents and Contributions

Twelve monthly issues of *The People* were printed in 1998, including 11 eight-page issues and a 12-page issue in February to mark the 150th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto* and the 100th anniversary of *What Means This Strike?* *The People* also took notice of the 100th anniversary of the Spanish-American War in April.

During the year, *The People* focused its attention primarily on the economy. Ten of the lead articles on page one dealt with some aspect of that subject. Two were devoted to the Middle East crisis early in the year. Seven leads were written by Comrade Nathan Karp and one by Comrade Ken Boettcher. Comrade Boettcher also wrote eight of the 16 editorials printed, while Comrade Karp wrote four. The double editorial on Daniel De Leon printed in the December issue was a reprint of an article that Comrade Karp wrote some years ago.

Despite problems and distractions from other directions, an earnest effort was made to keep reprints and filler to a minimum. Eleven De Leon editorials were reprinted, and I believe the article on the Spanish-American War from May 1898 that appeared in the April issue also was his. The "50 Years Ago" column was printed in 10 issues and "The Industrial Democracy of Socialism," i.e., the chart, appeared in three. Beyond that, nine articles from back issues were reprinted last year, and five of those appeared in the February issue.

During the year, *The People* received 192 articles from 15 writers. One hundred forty-six of those articles were printed and 46 were not. Of those printed, 62 were contributions from the field and 84 were produced by the staff.

Five of the seven members who attended the Writers' Conference in September 1994 submitted 74 of the 97 manuscripts received from the field. Forty-nine of those were printed and 25 were not. Seven other members submitted a total of 23 manuscripts, of which 13 were printed and 10 were not.

Thirty-three letters were printed in 10 “Letters to *The People*” columns during the year. Six of those were printed with answers or editorial comments, and answers to 16 other letters from readers were printed in four “Letter Box” columns. Two additional letters were printed with answers apart from the letters’ column. One was in reply to a professor of anthropology who wrote in response to *The People’s* critical review of an article he had written for *Scientific American*. The other was in reply to a reader who asked why the SLP had “no chapters in the deep South...”

During the year, one member who attended the 1994 Writers’ Conference and contributed regularly resigned from the Party. A second member who attended the conference and committed himself to making regular contributions submitted one article for the January issue that was not used, and he failed to submit anything further during the year.

Last July, in response to a letter I received from NEC member Coretz expressing concern over the possible loss of articles from the member who subsequently resigned from the Party and the second member who stopped contributing, I wrote:

Whatever happens, the problem serves to underscore what I said in my report to the NEC about the present arrangement for publishing *The People* starting to fray at the edges...

As it is, printable contributions from the field have declined from an average of eight per issue during the first half of 1997 to less than six per issue during the first half of 1998. Consequently, the average number of articles printed in each issue has declined from nearly 16 during the first half of 1997 to less than 13 during the first half of the current year. Furthermore, the share that falls to the “staff” has grown from less than 50 percent during the first half of last year to nearly 57 percent during the first half of this year. Making up for...27 percent of all field contributions and nearly 12 percent of all articles printed in 1998—will not be easy, if it comes to that. Worse, the members and supporters of the SLP contributed more than \$25,000 to “*The People’s* Circulation Fund,” which only adds to the pressure we are under.

Those figures were about right, but the anticipated effect was not. Of the 76 articles by staff and field contributors

printed in the first six issues, 45 were written by the staff and 31 came from the field. During the second half of the year, 70 articles written for *The People* were printed, of which 39 were by staff members, 30 by members contributing from the field and one by a sympathizer. About 42 percent of all articles written for *The People* and printed in 1998 were contributed from the field and 58 percent of those printed were written by the staff. However, the contributions of the former member who resigned were hardly missed as the total of field contributions printed during the second half of 1998 was exactly the same as during the first half of the year.

Nonetheless, the decline in number among those who are committed to submit articles for every issue of *The People* is a source for concern. Of the seven members who attended the Writers' Conference five years ago, three continue to submit one article or more for every issue. Comrades Barbara Graymont, Diane Secor and Bernard Bortnick accounted for 38 of the 62 field contributions printed in 1998. Articles from Comrades Louis Lipcon, Michael James, Dan Lutz, Jim McHugh, Brian Blanchard of Australia, and Party sympathizer John Gale, also were printed.

2. Controversy and Cooperation

Although some members who pledged themselves to support *The People* at the 1994 Writers' Conference have fallen by the wayside, several others have stepped in to take their places. Because they were not at the conference they have no first-hand knowledge of what was discussed and agreed on as a *modus operandi* by those who did attend.

One of the problems everyone who attended the conference knew would arise is that of providing the type of critical support and encouragement that an Editor might provide for a regular, on-site editorial staff. There is no possible way to make up for that when writers are scattered all over the country. Accordingly, it has been necessary to make time to write more letters offering that type of support. Some of those letters are also written to show members how they can make things easier for the headquarters staff.

At the risk of taking some precious time away from the

convention, it might serve a useful purpose to draw on a few of these letters so the membership—and perhaps some potential new writers—will have a better idea of how we have managed to keep *The People* in print since November 1994.

For example, there was one letter I quoted from in my report to the NEC last May to record the accomplishments of members who send articles from the field. A portion of that letter not quoted in my report to the NEC explained some of the problems that some articles from the field posed for the staff. It was written under date of October 31, 1997, in part, as follows:

Even with your support, however, there have been some difficult moments that might have been avoided if some contributors had taken just a small amount of additional time with each of their articles.

Perhaps the most difficult and time-consuming of all problems during the year has been the failure of some contributors to underscore or highlight what they quote from newspaper clippings and other source materials.

Recently, for example, a writer submitted an article based on a 12-page special supplement to a newspaper from which several facts and direct quotations were taken. However, the writer failed to underscore the facts and statements used, which made it necessary for us to set everything else aside long enough to dig all of that information out of what amounted to a full newspaper.

There have also been instances in which a batch of unmarked clippings have been received, and occasionally clippings come in that are not dated or do not identify the publication they were taken from.

The opposite problem also occurs. There have been occasions when clippings are received that are so completely marked up that it becomes necessary to read them to isolate the facts and quotes cited by the writer.

The result in both instances is that Comrade Donna Bills can spend hours duplicating the research done by the writer. Not infrequently quotations turn out to be inaccurate, or are mistakenly attributed to the wrong person when more than one person is quoted in an article. Sometimes, when the error is not noticed, a writer will construct a line of argument based on a false premise. When that happens the result can be disastrous because the article must either be rewritten or discarded.

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Incidentally, some writers go out of their way to be helpful in this regard, and their efforts to do so are appreciated. These writers are not only meticulous about underscoring or highlighting what they quote, they also number the quotations in the margins of the clippings they send and write the corresponding number in the margins of their article, or in the text immediately following the cited passages. This not only makes it easier to confirm the accuracy of a cited statement or fact, it adds to the time that can be spent on editing, which always enhances the chances an article has of being used.

A less frequent problem relates to the use of citations from books. Sometimes a writer will indicate that a quotation is taken from page such-and-such of a book by so-and-so, but fail to send a photocopy of the passages cited. Most often the book is not available at the National Office, and if the quotation is to be confirmed someone either has to take a trip to the library or a bookstore, or we have to cross our fingers and hope that the writer got it right.

A similar problem occasionally crops up when some work by Marx, Engels, Morgan, etc., is cited. There are so many editions, so many anthologies and so many translations of these and other socialist writings floating around that a simple page citation from the edition you have in your personal library may not correspond to the copies available at the National Office.

Another problem centers on the monthly deadline, which is the second Wednesday of every month. Almost everyone who contributes to *The People* has taken to submitting their articles at the last minute. In recent months, some articles have not been received until after the deadline. Worse, at least one article printed in the November issue was not received until the Monday following the Wednesday deadline. What that means in practical terms is that almost all the work that goes into an issue must be done during the last week before publication. When missed deadlines are combined with some of the other problems cited above, *The People* suffers. **Meeting the deadline is absolutely essential**, and I urge everyone to plan their work so I will have the time needed to give everything you write all the attention it deserves.

In a similar letter written when an emergency arose last February, I emphasized what was said in the October letter and took advantage of the chance to add some others. That letter was written under date of February 25, 1998, and read, in part, as follows:

Accordingly, it becomes doubly important that every member who contributes to *The People* make an earnest effort to meet or beat their deadlines and to follow the guidelines and suggestions outlined in the letter of October 31, 1997, when preparing their manuscripts.

Unfortunately, some writers continue to press their luck where deadlines are concerned, and others have not followed the guidelines and suggestions mentioned as I had hoped. These two problems, and another I will mention momentarily, almost proved disastrous when it came time to work on the March issue.

Concerning the guidelines and suggestions made in the letter of October 31: One of the most time-consuming problems we have to contend with is matching quotations in articles to their sources in the news clippings writers send with their manuscripts. Accordingly, I must earnestly beseech all of you to be meticulous, not only about underscoring or highlighting what you quote, **but also about numbering the quotations in the margins of the clippings you send and by writing the corresponding number in the margins of your articles or in the text immediately following the cited passages.**

This particular problem is magnified in direct relation to how late an article is received, and sometimes a judgment on using an article must be made solely on the amount of work it might involve. Remember, aside from Comrade Gunderson who functions in the business office, only Comrade Donna Bills and I are here every day all day long, and our responsibilities are not limited to the editorial needs of *The People*.

Another problem is the lack of focus some articles seem to have. Some articles that start on one subject tend to wander off into other areas, which destroys their continuity and prevents the writer from reaching a logical destination. Articles that lose the editor are bound to lose the reader.

The best way to avoid this particular problem is to construct articles along standard newspaper lines. Every newspaper article is supposed to be divided into two distinct parts—the **lead in** and the **body**. This pattern applies to all articles, whether they are meant to be analytical, editorial or reportorial. What separates the news report from the analytical article and the editorial is not the construction, but the treatment given to these two major components of the article.

The lead in (or lead) is that part of the article that identifies the *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* of the story. It is not necessary to include all of these elements in the lead to

every article, and it is not always necessary to confine the lead to a single sentence or a single paragraph. The lead acts as a kind of outline to the whole article, and the elements included will depend on the scope of the story or the number of details the story will include. There are *who* leads, *what* leads, *where* leads, etc., and leads that combine two, three or four of the elements mentioned. Regardless of how many or how few of these elements are included, however, **the lead should act as an outline and a fence to keep the article within bounds.**

The body of the article should elaborate on the lead. If the groundwork for a fact, an assertion or a conclusion is not included in or suggested by the lead it should not be arbitrarily injected into the body of the article.

The best articles are usually those that are simple and direct. They also are the articles that take less work to edit, and almost invariably they are the ones readers respond to most often when writing letters to the editor, and in other ways. Recently, for example, I received a request from Greenhaven Press to reprint the article "What Causes Poverty?" from the January issue. The article, as I was informed, will be included "in Greenhaven's forthcoming anthology *Poverty*.... The book will be a collection of pro and con essays (we call them 'view-points') on the subject and will be used in high school and college classrooms and by students researching papers or preparing debates...." Greenhaven has reprinted from *The People* in the past, and articles are fully credited to their source. This particular 200-page book will be printed in a 7,000-copy edition when it goes to press in October.

Another problem I have encountered with some articles is the injection of points of view that either contradict Party positions or seek to stake out positions on matters that are not germane to our purposes. Among the former are statements regarding such things as taxes, governmental budgets and deficits. Among the latter are questions about the physical sciences. These areas are not off-limits, but they cannot be dealt with in ways that contradict or fail to clarify Party positions, or that take sides on questions that have nothing to do with the class struggle. It is one thing to point out a contradiction or a difference of opinion within ruling-class circles that capitalism cannot resolve; it is another to take sides in such disputes as if *The People* was an adviser to, rather than a critic of, capitalism.

Unfortunately, not everyone takes criticism very well. In

my report to the NEC last May, I referred to one such incident. It involved a member who apparently felt that I had rejected too many of his articles. Apparently he felt he had a legitimate grievance against the “editor,” but despite his many years’ membership in the SLP he just as apparently didn’t know how to go about resolving grievances related to *The People*. Although Article IX, Section 3, of the Party’s Constitution provides that, “Between Conventions, the NEC shall have control of the contents of all Party organs, and shall act on all grievances connected with the same,” this member decided to bypass the “editor” and the NEC to take his complaint to one member of the NEC. As I wrote that NEC member when this came to light:

This is the second occasion in recent weeks where members in the field have bypassed the National Office to bring their complaints to the attention of a member of the NEC. If after more than 50 years’ membership in the SLP [this] Comrade...still does not understand how conduct of this type can poison the Party atmosphere I have to wonder what hope there is for others with less experience.

Had this member brought his complaint to me instead of trying to isolate and enlist the support of one NEC member he might have taken greater care in what he said—and he might not have gotten what follows as a reply:

Dear Comrade...:

Comrade A was kind enough to send me a copy of the letter you wrote to him on March 4, and of all the enclosures you sent with it. He also sent me a copy of what he wrote to you in reply, on March 13.

I do not know what you hoped to gain by sending your complaints to Comrade A. However, referring to the six manuscripts you enclosed with your letter, you said you were “sure that you [A] will agree with me [you] that Bills has no valid reason for not using them.” (Your underscoring.)

You were wrong about what Comrade A’s reaction would be. He gave you a number of reasons why he would not have printed those articles if he happened to be in my shoes. The reasons he gave, however, were not the same reasons that decided me. I will return to this in a moment.

I do not know how you came by the impression that the penultimate paragraph from my letter of February 25 was aimed

at you to the exclusion of the other writers who received that letter, or how you gained the impression that I look for “excuses” not to use your articles. The letter simply pointed out a number of problems I have had to grapple with when working on articles from virtually everyone who contributes to *The People*. Some obviously present me with more problems than others, but I don’t think there is a single writer who has not been disappointed more than once when an article they submitted failed to appear in *The People*, or appeared in such form as to be unrecognizable to the original writer.

Furthermore, I do not look for “excuses” not to print articles. If anything, I am prone to look for excuses to print articles even when I have doubts about them. That is particularly true as deadlines come close and I am still confronted with the problem of writing or finding articles suited for editorials and the lead. If you had the slightest appreciation or practical knowledge of what is involved and the pressures the staff works under, you would understand this.

Fortunately, however, you are the only writer who seems incapable of grasping the situation, or who has forgotten why I cannot possibly take time to explain the editorial decisions that must be made. If I were to do that *The People* would have gone under immediately after it resumed publication in November 1994, following the Writers’ Conference that was held in September of that year.

I cannot possibly take time here to explain why I could not use any of the six articles you copied and sent to Comrade A. For what it’s worth, however, here are some of the considerations that went into my decision not to print one of them.

The article I have in mind is the one you wrote on the...apartment house fire, which you submitted for the January issue. Despite the raft of news clippings you enclosed with the manuscript, your article was based entirely on one you clipped from the November 15, 1997, issue of the [local newspaper]. The manuscript and the mass of news clippings were received on December 1, two weeks after the [news] article was printed and 10 days before the writers’ deadline for the January issue. After your article was scanned into a computer and the initial minor corrections were made, it turned out to contain 516 words. Of those 516 words, 177, or 34 percent of the total, were quoted directly from the [news] article of November 15. Of the remaining 339 words, 104, or 20 percent of the total, were devoted to introducing the quoted matter. In short, more than half of the article—281 of its 516 words—was taken up by

quotation and by introducing the person or organization quoted by the [newspaper]. Many of your articles follow the same pattern.

Masses of unused extraneous matter are an imposition on the staff, particularly when writers have ample time in which to coordinate relevant source materials with what they have written. However, this alone obviously would not disqualify an article from being printed in *The People*, particularly under the prevailing stressful conditions when the need for usable copy can often lead to desperate measures being taken. A heavy reliance on quotation does not necessarily disqualify an article, either, provided the quotations are of such force, or are presented in a way that allows them to make the writer's point with a minimum of commentary. However, nothing like that could be applied where your article on the fatal...apartment building fire was concerned. Indeed, the point you hoped to prove was wrong to start with, and no amount of quotation could cure the defect.

You took the position that the failure of the...State Legislature to pass a law requiring landlords to install sprinklers "bears out what Marx said many years ago, i.e., the political state is nothing more than the general executive committee of the capitalist class."

That, of course, is not precisely what Marx said. What he said was that, "The *executive* of the modern State is but a committee for managing the *common affairs* of the *whole bourgeoisie*." (My emphasis.)

Marx did not use words lightly. It would take us too far afield to discuss what Marx meant when he singled out the "executive of the modern State." However, even if we were to strip the first three words out of Marx's statement so that it read, "The modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie," what you said about the...State Legislature would still be wrong. It would be wrong because the "whole bourgeoisie" includes more than landlords who don't want to spend money on sprinklers. It also includes, among others, the manufacturers of sprinklers and smoke alarms, those who sell sprinklers and smoke alarms, those who install sprinklers and smoke alarms, and the insurance companies who insure the apartment building owners who refuse to have sprinklers and smoke alarms installed in their buildings, etc. Certainly the Marxian dictum embraces these capitalist interests as much as it embraces those of apartment building owners, and certainly the special interests of these other

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capitalists would have been better served had the state legislature enacted a law requiring landlords to install sprinklers in their buildings.

In short, the state does not exist to advance special interests within the ruling class, but to “manage the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie,” regardless of how specific capitalist interests might be affected. That duty goes beyond the narrow economic interests of any one segment of the ruling class, or even the immediate economic interests of the “whole bourgeoisie.” It embraces the capitalist order of things.

From this it might have been more accurate if you had argued that what the decision of the...State Legislature illustrated was its being oblivious to the primary responsibilities of the political state when it upheld the special economic interests of landlords at the risk of doing a disservice to the social and political interests of capitalism as a whole. That kind of thing happens often, particularly in the legislative and judicial branches of the modern capitalist state where special interests, aided by lawyers and lobbyists, constantly attempt to assert themselves without regard to capitalism as a whole.

In my estimation, it was this contradiction between the role of the state, as you defined it, and the performance of the...State Legislature that was the basis for an article on the fatal...fire. The article you wrote was flawed at conception, and the flaw was fatal. That was not a simple editing problem. The article might have been saved if I had taken the time to rewrite it. Indeed, there have been times when I have rewritten portions of your articles, or added significantly to their length.

Now, then, you might argue that this interpretation of what Marx meant is not correct, or that my interpretation of what Marx meant is only an “excuse” for not using that particular article of yours. Someone must make editorial decisions, however, and much to my regret that someone happens to be me. I do not make those decisions lightly, and it most certainly would be easier on me if every article that I received could go into *The People* with no more trouble than that of catching a few misspellings, etc.

* * * * *

When you say that you are “absolutely certain that nobody has ever complained to Bills that my [your] previous articles were ‘not germane to our purposes’, or that they had ‘nothing to do with the class struggle,’” you are only half correct. Not one that has been printed has been criticized *on that account*.

However, several that I have approved were criticized by members of the headquarters staff before they were printed, and upon reflection I have occasionally—but not always—bowed to that criticism and withheld the article.

However, it is also true that at least one of your articles drew fire from readers who were able to offer informed criticism of what you had written. I am referring specifically to an article you wrote some time ago about a certain type of brakes used on freight trains. You asserted that one type of brake was superior to another, and that the use of the inferior brake was largely responsible for a number of freight train wrecks that gave you the opportunity to write on that subject. *The People* received several letters (one or two of them from railroad workers) who took issue with your assertions. I sent you a copy of at least one of those letters in the expectation that you would write something that would either substantiate the position you (and through you, *The People*) had taken, to concede the error in a graceful way, or to strike some middle ground. However, you did nothing. You ignored the problem and thereby embarrassed *The People*. I don't know if the men who wrote those critical letters still read *The People*, but it would not surprise me if they dropped it on that account.

In your letter to Comrade A you make the following assertion:

“There are other topics [besides the class struggle] which we should feel free to write about besides low wages, long hours, and lousy working conditions. Examples of other important topics are the gross misuse of natural resources, the wrongful use of a large number of chemicals, and the enormous waste of materials and manpower [sic] in maintaining a huge military machine, to name a few of them. These other topics are certainly closely enough related to the class struggle to justify our writing about them.

* * * * *

“If we come across news items involving taxes, budgets, deficits, or physical sciences which can be shown to reveal the basic rotten character of capitalists and/or politicians, we should be free to write articles involving these four topics.”

The suggestion is that there was something in my letter of February 25 to discourage writers from tackling subjects other than those that bear directly on “low wages, long hours, and lousy working conditions,” or that I drew some hard line of distinction between the class struggle proper and “the gross misuse of natural resources, the wrongful use of a large number of

chemicals, and the enormous waste of materials and manpower [sic] in maintaining a huge military machine,” etc.

What I said, however, was that, “These [other] areas *are not* off-limits”—just the opposite of what you suggest—“but they cannot be dealt with in ways that contradict or fail to clarify Party positions, or that take sides on questions that have nothing to do with the class struggle...” (Emphasis added.)

True, I did not identify specific “questions that have nothing to do with the class struggle,” but I have offered you some guidance on how wide an area I believe the class struggle covers. You may have forgotten, but this is what I wrote on that subject in the letter of October 2, 1996:

“...The class struggle is everywhere, and it permeates everything. It manifests itself in ways that may seem far removed from its focal point—the division of labor’s product. That division is only the foundation from which many other signs of its presence branch out. Its presence can be detected in everything, from advertising, to sit-com TV shows, to magazines devoted to subject areas that seem remote from the basic question. The effort to frame people’s outlook on the world—to condition workers to think and respond to ruling-class ideas and objectives in ways that have nothing to do with their own interests—touches every aspect of our lives. We are awash in a sea of bourgeois propaganda, and we—the people who write for *The People*—have the job of cutting through it all and tying it back to basics....”

Toward the end of your letter you tell Comrade A that, “Bills should be grateful to me because I have some knowledge of chemistry and technology, and am able to write articles involving the physical sciences.”

Frankly, Comrade..., about the only thing that would make me “grateful” is to be relieved of the responsibility of being the ersatz editor of *The People*. I make no claim to being qualified for the job. It has fallen to me by default. As long as the responsibility is mine, however, I will do my best to see to it that *The People* prints the best articles that the writing members can offer. That’s all I can do.

You go on to say that, “While we who have been writing articles for the PEOPLE to enable it to be published would like to continue our efforts, nobody would expect me to continue to submit articles if I have reason to believe that most of them will not be used.”

What you don’t understand, I suppose, is that threats of that type can be made in reverse.

“While we who have been writing, editing and rewriting articles... would like to continue our efforts, who would expect us to continue if most of what we receive is unusable?”

The fact is that every member of the SLP is expected to stand by his or her post, no matter how many wounds—real or imagined—they may suffer. That goes for me as much as it goes for you.

It just so happens that while I was writing this letter another writer who has suffered at least as many disappointments as you faxed the following to the National Office:

“I noted the guidelines for TP writers in your letter of Feb. 23 [sic]. If there is any other particular way that I can improve my writing or make it more useful to you, please let me know, if you have time.”

Perhaps you will understand when I say that I can find more to be “grateful” for in that brief letter than in your pages of unspecified complaints.

Fortunately for the SLP, *The People* and the headquarters staff, this particular incident is the only one of its sort to arise since 1994, and hopefully it will be the last. However, when members who disagree with something done in connection with *The People*, or anything else in the Party, the thing to do is look it up in the Constitution, and if you can't find what you're looking for, write to the National Office and ask how to go about resolving the problem in a way that can settle things without doing the Party harm.

Last March, a persistent writer whose articles have been rejected much more often than they have been printed, took a much different approach than the one just cited. She had no accusations to make or axes to grind. She simply wanted to improve her writing so that all the effort she puts into it would not go to waste. I replied to her request for guidance as best I could under date of April 2, 1998, substantially as follows:

Dear Comrade...:

Thank you for your letter fax of March 24.

I find it difficult to respond to your request for guidance on how to improve your writing because so much depends on the individual. As a general thing, however, accuracy, brevity and simplicity are a triad for good writing. Stay within the field formed by those three posts and your writing will improve by

100 percent.

The main problem I have with most articles you submit is that they are too ambitious. You obviously read a lot and work hard to pull together media reports that appear to be related. That is good. However, I think you would do better if you tried to narrow the scope and sharpen the focus when deciding precisely what it is you want to say on any given subject.

With your last article, for example, I think you would have done better to stick to just one of the themes you tried to work into it. If you concentrated on China's investment in Iraqi oil fields, and excluded everything else, you would have written a brief yet informative article on an aspect of the Iraqi situation that is not widely appreciated, i.e., why China opposed the U.S.'s war threats. As an emerging industrial power, China needs oil, and it has invested heavily in Iraqi oil production to secure an important source of it for its growing industries, etc.

I don't recall how much of the reference material you faxed with the article dealt specifically with that aspect of the question. However, it need not have been much to lay a solid foundation for an article of one and one-half or two pages. Articles of that length are ideal, partly because *The People* is so small and infrequent.

Another thing to strive for is simplicity of expression. Short sentences and short paragraphs are essential in newspaper work, and they enhance all writing. Not every sentence must be a simple sentence, of course, but even compound sentences in newspapers should never—or rarely—exceed 20 or 25 words. Even that may be stretching it. You should also strive to stay away from parenthetical asides within sentences. Articles laden with long and involved sentences and paragraphs often betray a writer's haste. That is not always the case. Some ideas are more complex than others. Most often, however, it does reflect haste, and readers may also view it as a sign of the writer's carelessness and indifference.

It may also help if you tried to finish a complete draft of your articles far enough in advance to set them aside for 24 hours before giving them a final reading. When you pick them up to read again after a day or so, try to forget that you are the writer. Try to put yourself in the place of the person who will see your article in *The People*. Does your article stick to the subject? Does it give the reader a straight line to follow from start to finish, or does it create obstacles for the reader to get around?

Incidentally, still one of the best writers' aids around is

Strunk and White's tiny book, *The Elements of Style*. It's in such widespread use that you may already have a copy in your personal library, but if not you should buy one. It's an inexpensive little paperback of less than 100 pages, and it is as close to being indispensable as anything of the kind could be.

With best wishes, etc.

Sometimes writers get so involved in their subject and have so much to say that they tend to forget how small *The People* is and that they have to leave a little room for others. Last December, for example, I received a letter from one of *The People's* steadiest contributors who had a question.

Dear Comrade Bills:

Judging from the cuts made in my article on Pinochet in the December issue of *The People*, apparently you found you had more material than you could use. On the other hand, the article entitled "What's the Difference," although interesting, seems to be filler. Hence, I am puzzled.

In comparing the parts cut from the article on Pinochet and the original, I found that most of the historical summary was dropped. I think T.P. readers would have found that of some interest.

Can you enlighten me on the reasons for having edited that article as you did? Incidentally, this does not include those parts that you summarized in fewer words, which I believe were just as effective as some of the lengthier statements.

I could not respond to the question immediately because I was called out of town at about that time. However, when I was finally able to write an answer under date of January 27, it was substantially as follows:

Dear Comrade...:

Please pardon this belated reply to your letter of December 13....

You wrote to ask about my decision to cut out the historical section of your article on Pinochet. You speculated it may have been because I "had more material than you [I] could use," but found it puzzling since I had decided to print "What's the Difference?" You felt that particular article was filler that, "although interesting," may have been printed at the expense of something else "readers would have found...of some interest," i.e., the historical section from your own article.

Those are debatable points, and I debated them, though

separately; that is to say, my decision to leave out portions of your article was not conditioned by my decision to print "What's the Difference?" That decision was based on the need to do something about the December issue doubling as the annual De Leon issue, and my inability in the circumstances to put together something fresh.

However, my primary reason for cutting the historical sections from your article was my feeling that it would make for a better article—one that was less diffuse, more to the point, and that would place the emphasis where it belonged, which was on its current news value and at least some of the implications of Pinochet's detention. A second consideration was that the event that prompted the story was unfinished, and is still unfinished: it is still a developing story.

There were other considerations, though it is difficult now to say which of them carried serious weight in my mind at the time. Its length (more than six pages, when typed to editorial measure) was certainly one of them. That became important for two reasons having nothing to do with the article itself. One was the other lengthy article I had to consider, which was conceived and written specifically to provide readers with some historical background to another subject of current interest. That was [the] article on impeachment, which came to more than seven pages when typed to editorial measure. Printed as submitted, those two articles alone...would have consumed more than one-third of the entire issue.

Incidentally, there could be no question of holding either article for a later issue: not yours, primarily because of its current news value; and not [the other], because there is never any way to anticipate how many more articles will be submitted, how much work they might require, or even if they can be used. (Indeed, two articles submitted for that issue, and representing more than four pages of typed copy, had to be rejected.)

Another consideration was that I had no time to check the accuracy of the historical information in both articles. (One mistake in yours that leapt out at me was where you wrote that Allende was elected and deposed in 1973. He was elected in 1970.)

I hope this helps to explain my decision, and that if you don't agree with it you will at least understand that I thought about that decision seriously before making it.

Regarding your postscript question: I have no personal plans to write about the Pinochet matter, and to date neither Comrade Boettcher nor Comrade Karp have expressed an in-

terest in the subject. However, I do think the story should be followed. Many things might be done with it, not the least being how disingenuous it seems for a Spanish court to reach across the water to snag a Chilean fascist because some of his victims were Spaniards, while Spain itself must be lousy with fascists from the Franco era—fascists stained up to their necks in working-class Spanish blood. One indication that at least a few of El Caudillo's pals are still on the loose is that the current president of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samarach, once was Franco's Minister of Athletics, or some such thing. I saw this one-time leader of the Spanish version of Hitler's Youth on a network "magazine" show just the other day...and I listened gape-mouthed and astonished when he brazenly blurted out that he was "proud" of his past.

With best wishes, etc.

In response to this I received the following brief, but welcomed note: "I received your correspondence on Pinochet and I agree with everything you stated. That was excellent judgment."

One problem that has not come up very often, but has the potential to undo work and lead to misunderstandings is when two writers coincidentally choose the same topic for the same issue of the paper. Some time ago I received a complaint from a writer who accused a member of the staff of stealing what she had written and had it printed under his own byline. She had no foundation for such an allegation, and it was necessary to write to mollify her as best I could. However, she is no longer a concern of the SLP and has moved on to declare herself an anarchist.

Last March, I received two articles from two other writers who happened to pick precisely the same news story to write about, but with much different results. Having already received the first article on that particular subject, I wrote the following to the author of the second:

Yesterday, I received two articles for the May issue. One was from you and the other was from Comrade B. Both articles were on precisely the same subject, and though you used two news articles where Comrade B used just one, both of you used the same article from [the same newspaper]....

I don't know what to do about this. I don't think I can print both, even though the approach is somewhat different in each.

Perhaps I can combine the two in some way. That is something I have to think about.

The irony, of course, is that you are the only member who attended the 1994 Writers' Conference who makes a point of calling before you start on an article. I don't remember if you did so in this particular case, though you have rarely failed to do so in the past. Even if you had, I would not have known that Comrade B would jump on the same subject.

Still, Comrade B lives in [that state] and has written on [that city] and [that state's] welfare and workfare several times over the past year. You might say that she has staked out the territory by "working the claim," though she has not registered a formal claim with the "land office."

On the whole, we have been very fortunate when it comes to writers stepping on each others' toes and inadvertently crushing my foot underneath in the process. To some extent the fault for the present problem lies with me because I have not reminded members to stay at home, so to speak. At the same time, as indicated, there hasn't been much occasion to send out such reminders.

As luck would have it—bad luck, I might say—this unusual case of wire-crossing came along at precisely the wrong time. The joke is on me, but you will appreciate it when I say that I'm having trouble working up to a weak smile, much less a hearty laugh. Whether I end up using just one of the two articles or decide to combine them in some way I will be left with a hole to fill that ordinarily would not be there.

Please understand that this is not meant as criticism, unless it is self-criticism aimed specifically at myself, even though the problem has come up so infrequently over the past five years (since Whitney left) that I cannot say it has been a problem in the overall scheme of things. It's just that it picked such an inconvenient time to make one of its rare appearances.

With best wishes, etc.

I have taken time to acquaint the convention with all this because it helps to provide a better appreciation of what's involved in getting *The People* into print every month. It is never a matter of simply dotting a few "i's" and crossing a few "t's," or even of writing articles, composing headlines and piecing the product together. Furthermore, all the correspondence cited, and more besides, had nothing directly to do with putting out a single issue of the paper. It was besides that. And, of course, it had nothing whatever to do with

other Party business needing attention. Much of that other business is attended to, of course, but the conditions the headquarters staff work under have also made it inevitable that some of that business does not get the attention it deserves.

On motion, this section of the National Secretary's report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

In Memoriam

The National Secretary reported a number of members have died whose deaths have not been reported to the membership. The National Secretary expressed regret that time did not allow him an opportunity to write an adequate In Memoriam honoring these comrades. At the National Secretary's request, all rose while the following names were read:

William Braatz, member-at-large, Ariz., September 20, 1996.

Marge Horvath, member-at-large, Ariz., April 30, 1997.

Phillip Cate, member-at-large, N.Y., September 1997.

Casimer Kanczuzewski, member-at-large, Ind., January 14, 1998.

Mary Bodnar, Section Wayne Co., Mich., week of January 11, 1998.

James Kerr, member-at-large, Pa., January 22, 1998.

Carl Johnson, member-at-large, Ohio, notice received February 20, 1998.

Raymond Johnson, member-at-large, Iowa, notice received March 6, 1998.

Harry Hosack, member-at-large, Pa., August 2, 1998.

Arne Rathe, member-at-large, Minn., August 21, 1998.

F. Leslie Dorn, member-at-large, N.Y., November 1998.

Frank Brlas, Section Milwaukee, Wis., December 13, 1998.

Joseph Bondulich, member-at-large, N.Y., 1998.

Vivian Smith, Section Portland, Ore., February 26, 1999.

At 4:17 p.m. a five-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 4:35 p.m.

Introduction of Resolutions

The National Secretary reported that he has a 31-page document that purports to be a resolution; that it has no descriptive title; that certain correspondence at hand suggests that the document has been circulation outside of established Party channels; and that the document was submitted by a national member-at-large who is also a delegate to this convention.

The National Secretary then read the following letter dated April 2 that he had written to the delegate:

Edna V. Barnes

Delegate

[Address]

Dear Comrade Barnes:

It has come to my attention that the document you submitted to the National Office and identified as a resolution for consideration by the 44th National Convention has been circulated outside the Party. This information comes from a trustworthy Party source and is documented. Accordingly, I am obligated to turn this information over to the convention for inquiry.

If you have information that would assist the convention with its inquiry, I would ask that you bring it with you to the convention.

Time being short, I send this letter by overnight express mail to reach you before your scheduled departure for the convention.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

On motion, the procedural aspects of the document were referred to a Special Committee when elected.

A motion was passed to suspend the rules to elect a Special Committee.

On motion, the Special Committee is to consist of three. On motion, C. Camacho, B. Bortnick and L. Figueroa were elected to constitute the committee.

At 4:55 p.m., the convention adjourned until 6 p.m.

EVENING SESSION, FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1999

The convention was called to order at 6:25 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The Sergeant at Arms reported four members present.

Report of Special Committee

C. Camacho reported that the committee required an additional two hours to complete its work.

On motion, the convention recessed until 9 p.m.

SECOND EVENING SESSION, FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1999

The convention was called to order at 9:06 p.m.

On roll call, all present except C. Turner who arrived shortly.

Report of Special Committee

C. Camacho presented the following report:

Your committee has been charged with ascertaining whether or not there has been any breach of Party discipline (referred to on the convention floor as “procedures”) in the manner Comrade Edna Barnes submitted her resolution to the convention.

We have interviewed Comrade Edna Barnes, two other delegates who had information to offer your committee, the National Secretary and one nondelegate member in order to ascertain the facts. We have also reviewed documents and correspondence pertinent to this issue.

The facts are:

1. Comrade Edna Barnes admitted having circulated her resolution outside of Party channels, unbeknownst to the National Executive Committee. This fact only came to light as the result of a comrade who, having obtained the document from a nonmember, sent the material to the National Office.

2. Comrade Edna Barnes stated she had sent her proposed resolution to others outside of normal Party channels and further refused to reveal those she had sent it to. To

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make this “resolution” available to a nonmember of the Party and to several members of the Party further violates the trust and confidence in the already established democratic process of the Party and the convention.

3. Comrade Edna Barnes apparently saw nothing wrong with her violation of customary Party procedures as described in Article I, Section A of Socialist Labor Party Organizational Norms and Procedures (1988) and in accordance with Article VII, Section 10(a) of the Party’s Constitution, i.e., “Delegates may present resolutions on the floor of the convention under the proper order of business as adopted by the Convention.”

This committee finds that in circulating that document, ostensibly intended as a resolution, Comrade Edna Barnes has committed a serious breach in Party discipline and violated the trust of the membership that elected her as a delegate to the convention. She has in effect subverted the exclusive prerogatives of the convention to deliberate and act on matters brought before it.

It is therefore the recommendation of this committee that Comrade Barnes be unseated as a delegate to this convention.

Fraternally submitted,
CHRISTIAN CAMACHO, Chair
BERNARD BORTNICK LUIS FIGUEROA
Special Committee

On motion, the report was adopted by roll call vote as follows: B. Cozzini—yes; H. Coretz—yes; P. Kapitz—yes; R. Burns—yes; S. Fink—yes; L. Figueroa—yes; M. Mahoney—yes; E. Barnes—abstained; J. Barnes—yes; B. Bortnick—yes; C. Camacho—yes; C. Turner—no.

A five-minute recess was declared at 9:38 p.m. Reconvened at 9:42 p.m.

On motion, the convention adjourned until 9 a.m., Saturday, April 10.

MORNING SESSION, SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1999

The convention was called to order at 9:06 a.m.

On roll call, all present.

The Chair reported one visitor present.

On motion, the minutes of Friday's sessions were approved as read.

Discussion of the National Secretary's Report

A motion was adopted to take up the sections of the National Secretary's report seriatim. On motion, the convention went into informal consideration.

Discussion on the section "National Headquarters" began at 9:25 a.m.

At 10:25 a.m. a motion was passed to recess for 10 minutes. Reconvened at 10:38 a.m.

Discussion on this section of the report ended at 10:53 a.m.

Discussion then began on the section "State of Organization" and ended at 11:28 a.m.

At 11:29 a.m. a motion was passed to recess for 10 minutes. Reconvened at 11:41 a.m.

Discussion then began on the section "General Activities" and ended at 12:32 p.m.

A five minute recess was declared. Upon reconvening at 12:41 p.m., discussion began on the section "Party Press and Literature." Discussion ended at 1 p.m.

Discussion then began on the section "NEC and National Officers" and ended at 1:21 p.m.

At 1:23 p.m. a motion was passed to recess for one hour.

AFTERNOON SESSION, SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1999

The convention was called to order at 2:30 p.m.

On roll call, all present except P. Kapitz who arrived shortly.

The Sergeant at Arms reported three members present.

Discussion of the National Secretary's Report

Discussion began on the section "Party Finances" at 2:34 p.m. and ended at 2:50 p.m.

Discussion then began on the section "Editorial Matters" and ended at 3:03 p.m.

On motion, the convention rose out of informal discussion.

Determination of Committees

A motion was adopted to elect two committees as follows: Committee on Headquarters and Finances and Committee on General Activities and Organization.

Referring Matters to Committees

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "National Headquarters" was referred to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "General Activities" was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "NEC and National Officers" was referred to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "Party Press and Literature" was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "Party Finances" was referred to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "Editorial Matters" was referred to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "State of Organization" was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

Election of Committees

On motion, the Committee on Headquarters and Finances is to consist of five members.

On motion, the Committee on General Activities and Organization is to consist of six members.

Committee on Headquarters and Finances: On motion, B. Bortnick, M. Mahoney, J. Barnes, P. Kapitz and S. Fink were elected to constitute the committee.

Committee on General Activities and Organization: On motion, B. Cozzini, C. Camacho, L. Figueroa, H. Coretz, C. Turner and R. Burns were elected to constitute the committee.

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At 3:35 p.m., a motion was made and seconded to adjourn until 9 a.m., Sunday, April 11. An amendment was passed to reconvene at 1 p.m. The motion as amended was adopted.

AFTERNOON SESSION, SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1999

The convention was called to order at 1:10 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The Sergeant at Arms reported three members present.

On motion, the minutes of Saturday's sessions were approved as read.

Reports of Committees

Mileage Committee

C. Camacho presented the following report:

Your committee reports that the delegates listed below have reported that their mileage in attending the convention is as follows:

<i>Sections</i>	<i>Delegates</i>	
S.F. Bay Area (1)	Bruce Cozzini	\$ 0
Cook Co. (1)	Henry Coretz	0
Akron (1)	Peter Kapitz	0
Cleveland (1)	Robert Burns	0
Portland (1)	Sid Fink	\$ 47.80
Philadelphia (1)	Luis Figueroa	0
Milwaukee (1)	Michael Mahoney	0
Nat'l. Mbrs.-at-Lge. (5)	Edna V. Barnes	372.50
	James L. Barnes	357.00
	Bernard Bortnick	0
	Christian Camacho	353.00
National Secretary	Charles Turner	140.00
	Robert Bills	0

In keeping with this report, your committee recommends that the delegates be paid the amounts due them, the total being: \$1,270.30.

Fraternally submitted,
CHRISTIAN CAMACHO, Chair
MICHAEL MAHONEY
Mileage Committee

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A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. A substitute motion was adopted to refer the report back to committee.

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick reported progress and estimated that the committee should be able to submit a partial report at 7 p.m.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

B. Cozzini reported progress.

At 1:34 p.m., the convention adjourned until 7 p.m.

EVENING SESSION, SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1999

The convention was called to order at 7:12 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The Sergeant at Arms reported six members present.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick reported progress.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

B. Cozzini reported progress.

At 7:16 p.m., the convention adjourned until 9 p.m.

SECOND EVENING SESSION, SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1999

The convention was called to order at 9:12 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick presented the following report:

Re National Executive Committee

The committee was presented with a list of 10 eligible members willing to serve on the NEC. A further inquiry was made to delegates at the 44th National Convention, which resulted in obtaining the names of three additional candi-

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dates. This allowed the committee to select seven that it is prepared to place in nomination for the 1999–2001 term of office.

Fraternally submitted,
BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
JAMES BARNES SID FINK
PETER KAPITZ MICHAEL MAHONEY
Committee on Headquarters and Finances

On motion, the report was approved.

The Chair called upon the Committee on Headquarters and Finances to make its nominations for the National Executive Committee. B. Bortnick placed the following names in nomination: D. Bills, B. Bortnick, C. Camacho, B. Cozzini, L. Figueroa, M. Mahoney and D. Secor.

The floor was opened for further nominations.

On motion, D. Bills, B. Bortnick, C. Camacho, B. Cozzini, L. Figueroa, M. Mahoney and D. Secor were elected by acclamation to constitute the NEC for the 1999–2001 term of office.

Mileage Committee

C. Camacho presented the following report:

Your committee reports that the delegates listed below have reported that their mileage in attending the convention is as follows:

<i>Sections</i>	<i>Delegates</i>	
S.F. Bay Area (1)	Bruce Cozzini	\$ 0
Cook Co. (1)	Henry Coretz	0
Akron (1)	Peter Kapitz	0
Cleveland (1)	Robert Burns	\$ 0
Portland (1)	Sid Fink	128.00
Philadelphia (1)	Luis Figueroa	408.00
Milwaukee (1)	Michael Mahoney	0
Nat'l. Mbrs.-at-Lge. (4)	James L. Barnes	357.00
	Bernard Bortnick	0
	Christian Camacho	353.00
	Charles Turner	140.00
National Secretary	Robert Bills	0

In keeping with this report, your committee recommends

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that the delegates be paid the amounts due them, the total being: \$1,386.00.

Fraternally submitted,
CHRISTIAN CAMACHO, Chair
MICHAEL MAHONEY
Mileage Committee

On motion, the report was adopted.

A motion was made and seconded that E. Barnes' mileage expense be paid by the National Office. An amendment was passed that the matter be referred to the National Secretary. The motion as amended was adopted.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

B. Cozzini reported progress.

At 9:30 p.m., the convention adjourned to reconvene at 9 a.m., Monday, April 12.

MORNING SESSION, MONDAY, APRIL 12, 1999

The convention was called to order at 9:08 a.m.

On roll call, all present.

The Sergeant at Arms reported two members present.

On motion, the minutes of Saturday's sessions were adopted as read.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick reported progress.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

B. Cozzini presented the following reports:

General Activities

The People and Leaflet Distribution

While the overall statistics for distribution of leaflets and *The People* decreased between 1997 and 1998, examining the statistics by section at the end of the report show that some sections actually increased distribution in one category or another. This committee encourages all sections to make efforts to increase distributions of leaflets and *The People*. It

suggests that results can be improved by advance planning and obtaining firm commitments from those members who are able to distribute leaflets and papers.

We recommend that section members and members-at-large be encouraged initially to receive a bundle of 10 copies of *The People* to be distributed door-to-door or by another method at their discretion. As this activity becomes routine, members may find it easy to increase the bundle order. Members are urged to pay the cost of the bundles, but if that is not possible we urge the Party to absorb the cost.

If leaflets do not have up-to-date addresses and lack the address of the Party's Web site, sections could make up rubber stamps with the Party's current address and the Web address, since it appears that contacts are being received through exposure to the Web site.

Web Site

This committee takes special note of the commendable work done by the headquarters staff, specifically Comrade Ken Boettcher, in building, enhancing and maintaining the Party's Web page. After interviewing him, this committee has gained a better appreciation of the complexity and the amount of work required to establish and maintain a Party presence on the Internet.

This committee agrees with that portion of the National Secretary's report dealing with the Internet in which he expresses the importance of enhancing the SLP's visibility on the Web. The successful efforts at securing for the Party the rights over a number of URL (Universal Resource Locator) names go a long way in that direction. It is a positive step in establishing the SLP's presence in this frontier. We recognize, however, that this is but one of many possible ways to broadcast the SLP's Marxist-De Leonist program on the Internet. There are many more possibilities to be explored.

This committee is confident that the N.O. and the NEC will take the necessary steps to investigate and implement new options through which the Internet can aid in improving communications within the Party and the dissemination of the Party's program. We encourage other members who are knowledgeable in matters of cyberspace and the Internet to offer assistance to the N.O. in this effort wherever possible.

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Newsstands

Although the report shows that nine newsstands were removed during 1998, they can still be a useful method of reaching people who otherwise would not come in contact with the paper. They are a good way of making *The People* available in places where local restrictions are not problematic and where the membership is able to service them effectively.

Public Meetings

A review of the detailed statistics on public meetings showed that three sections had no public meetings, none had study classes, five had no fundraisers, and only two had public lectures. Public meetings provide personal contact with workers and introduce them to the Party. Sections and even members-at-large can obtain space for public meetings at public libraries in most places at no cost or nominal cost. Even if response is minimal, events provide activity that can be reported in *The People* and offer an opportunity that workers can take advantage of at their convenience.

Literature Tables

We recommend that sections seek opportunities to set up literature tables to allow workers and students to have convenient exposure to SLP literature.

Fraternally submitted,

BRUCE COZZINI, Chair

ROBERT P. BURNS CHRISTIAN CAMACHO

HENRY CORETZ LUIS FIGUEROA

CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

On motion, the report was adopted.

State of Organization

Sections

As specified in the Party's Constitution, the section is the basic unit of the organization. Historically, the SLP has depended upon sections as a source of membership and activity. As the "State of Organization" section of the National Secretary's report indicates, both the number of sections and the number of members associated with sections have declined in recent years. In addition, aging and health prob-

lems have reduced the activity level of many section members.

As a result, as reported in the “General Activities” section of the National Secretary’s report, section activities have declined. Copies of *The People* and leaflets distributed have decreased. Few public meetings have been held, with three sections reporting none in 1998. Two sections were unable to send delegates to the 44th National Convention. No members of Section Wayne County were physically able to attend, and Section New York City did not provide reasons for not nominating a delegate to the convention.

It is imperative that sections work to rebuild their membership and their activity levels. We strongly recommend that sections continue traditional efforts in distribution of leaflets and *The People*, in reaching out to new contacts and seeking to initiate suitable candidates to membership.

We also strongly suggest that sections increase the number of public meetings. In most areas, space in public libraries or other public facilities is commonly available at no cost or nominal cost. Discussion or other public meetings provide an opportunity for individuals to meet the Party and become acquainted with its program. In addition, they provide an added activity level that can energize the membership and that can appear in *The People* as Party activities.

It is likewise imperative that sections take advantage of the assistance of the National Office and remain in close communication with the National Office. If physical problems or illness preclude holding section meetings or sending delegates to the National Convention, the National Office must be informed.

Lastly, in the campaign to rebuild the Party, sections are requested to participate in the forming of the National Recruitment Committee being established through the ~~National Office~~ National Executive Committee as described in the last paragraph of the “National Headquarters” section of the National Secretary’s report.

Members-at-Large

Members-at-large now account for more members than those in sections. We encourage members-at-large to distribute literature, follow up on contacts in their areas and seek

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wherever possible to build sections.

Fraternally submitted,

BRUCE COZZINI, Chair

ROBERT P. BURNS CHRISTIAN CAMACHO

HENRY CORETZ LUIS FIGUEROA

CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to strike the words “National Office” and replace them with “National Executive Committee” in the sixth paragraph. On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Party Press and Literature

This committee has reviewed the National Secretary’s report on “Party Press and Literature” and noted the circulation figures and renewal and new subscription figures. We note ~~for the first time~~ that figures are included for e-mail subscribers along with the regular print subscribers.

We recognize the important effort of the staff in sending complimentary copies to former subscribers and contacts on its list of some 13,000 names to both reactivate old subscribers and cull invalid addresses. Sections and members-at-large will be informed of reactivated subscribers and encouraged to involve them in Party activities.

Since *The People* is the Party’s principal tool for dissemination of its program and principles, it is imperative that its publication and circulation be increased by whatever means possible. To assure this, it is important that the quality and quantity of content and its frequency of publication be maintained. As the National Secretary pointed out, circulation is greatly dependent on frequency of publication and content. Wherever possible qualified members should assist in maintaining the continued publication of *The People* by contributing articles. Members who wish to contribute should take special note of the suggestions included in the “Editorial Matters” section of the National secretary’s report.

The committee commends the efforts of the staff in putting out new leaflets, revising pamphlets and putting De Leon’s works on disk in the face of unrelenting pressures.

44TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Fraternally submitted,
BRUCE COZZINI, Chair
ROBERT P. BURNS CHRISTIAN CAMACHO
HENRY CORETZ LUIS FIGUEROA
CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to strike the words “for the first time” in the first paragraph. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

At 9:40 a.m., the convention adjourned to reconvene at 1 p.m.

AFTERNOON SESSION, MONDAY, APRIL 12, 1999

The convention was called to order at 1:18 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The Sergeant at Arms reported two members present.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick presented the following reports:

National Headquarters

We have reviewed the National Secretary’s report focused on staffing deficiencies and problems. We have discussed these with the National Secretary and members of his staff, with particular attention to immediate relief and possible solutions.

Areas of discussion centered on the work of the business office, that of mailing, the operations of the National Secretary’s office, the work of the editorial department and that of disposition of archives. These were all graphically described in his report.

The most effective way to unburden ~~the deficiencies in~~ the an overburdened National Office is obviously to add additional members. This might be called a “solution.” But this has been the subject of repeated appeals and discussions over the past several conventions with little, if any, positive response. Not only are qualified members apparently not

available, but the funds to support them seem equally as scarce. It seems unlikely that we can find the income to support more staff. We have, therefore, wondered about the availability of members willing to work for nominal wages or retired members who could give their time on an even part-time basis. Again, volunteers seem to be lacking. This need for a qualified part-time or full-time staff members remains, and we therefore continue our appeal.

In view of this deficiency we turned our attention to possibilities of immediate relief. This centers around tasks performed by the staff that might be dispensed with or supplemented by outside hired help. There are few options, because the tasks now being done have apparently been whittled down to the bare essentials. The only thing we could identify was possible assistance with the financial operations by an accountant. In the editorial area we have in the past used the services of outside news services. These have often been found to be lacking in substance and politically deficient.

We discussed the possibility of delegating certain National Office tasks to NEC members via e-mail. Whether this is a fruitful area of investigation is contingent upon the National Office assessment of the burden and worth such a project might pose.

The National Secretary also brought to our attention the impending renewal of our lease on the premises of the National Headquarters. This is coming up in June of 1999, and it portends an increase in rent. The amount of anticipated increase is unknown at this time.

The current location and size of the National Headquarters is desirable for our present circumstances, and the Party is loath to have to move with the additional burden that would impose physically and financially on the staff.

For the coming period it seems evident that we need to hold to our present course of National Headquarters operations, despite all the concerns and apprehensions we might harbor.

The National Executive Committee must evaluate the feasibility of our continuing and maintaining our operational pattern during the coming period.

Meanwhile, we pay tribute to the National Headquarters staff, their dedication, their selflessness and the inspiration

their past efforts exemplifies. Their commitment is a challenge to all Socialist Labor Party members to match in equivalent deeds.

Fraternally submitted,
BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
JAMES BARNES SID FINK
PETER KAPITZ MICHAEL MAHONEY
Committee on Headquarters and Finances

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment was passed to strike the word “a” and change the word “member” to “members” in the third paragraph.

An amendment was passed to strike the words “the deficiencies in the” and substitute them with “an overburdened” in the third paragraph.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Editorial Matters

The committee has reviewed this section of the National Secretary’s report and has conferred with the National Secretary and members of his staff in order to obtain any additional information. We have taken note of statistical data that the number of ~~contributors~~ contributions from the field has faltered from an average high of eight articles per issue to six per issue.

In this regard we call upon the NEC to consider whether another Writers’ Conference to rebuild support, evaluate our past efforts and “brain storm” the whole issue of contributions should be convened. This should take place within the year if possible.

Your committee has also taken note of the correspondence between the editorial office and various members. These letters in themselves are very instructive in that they convey the real day-to-day circumstances and considerations that surround the development of suitable material for publication in *The People*. They form a kind of text for “do’s and don’ts” for contributors. Together with past correspondence to field contributors they are a body of operational guidelines, albeit not comprehensive, that might precede another Writers’ Conference.

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We would also like to note that contributors to *The People* should not wear their egos in a place where they may be easily damaged. Contributions to *The People* should be made in the same self-critical spirit that prevails among the staff. We all have some good and some bad ideas, some good and some bad judgments. We should be grateful that we have wise, disciplined and critical editorial intervention that often make the shambles that we contribute into pretty good-looking articles.

Fraternally submitted,
BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
JAMES BARNES SID FINK
PETER KAPITZ MICHAEL MAHONEY
Committee on Headquarters and Finances

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment was passed to substitute the word “contributors” with “contributions” in the first paragraph.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Party Finances

~~No organization can continue to exist with deficit spending from month to month, much less survive.~~ The National Secretary’s report on Party Finances was carefully studied by this committee. Both the National Secretary and Comrade Gunderson were consulted, and a review of the 1999 monthly financial report was done.

It is clear from a single fact that a one-time reduction of \$42,000 in expenses and a 1998 yearly deficit of over \$62,000 would indicate operating in the “red” of over \$100,000 yearly. Bequests have allowed the Party to continue operating throughout the years.

The committee recognizes that these bequests remain the main source of funding and all resources at our disposal should be directed to obtaining these gifts. Each member should seriously investigate their own financial situation with regard to remembering the Party ~~in their~~ with bequests.

Sympathizers should be approached with letters of requests and/or suggestions for making funds available in their wills. The committee encourages the completion of the book-

let *Steps You Can Take...* with the intent of getting them into the hands of members and supporters as soon as an appropriate mailing can be made.

At present, important fundraising events have been the collections at each National Convention and alternate years, NEC banquets. Fundraisers by sections produce income levels reflected by the few fundraisers held, the limited size of the sections and naturally smaller attendance figures. The committee recognizes sections' efforts on fundraisers, it thanks them for those efforts and offers encouragement to continue along those lines.

The Party has also initiated additional fundraisers of various types. Again, this brings in amounts of revenue that would not have been available, but the committee is aware that members and supporters cannot be approached for funding unless the Party can show concrete accomplishments with funds already collected.

The committee recognizes the efforts of the National Office staff for their continued efforts in fundraising and thanks them on behalf of the Party.

Fraternally submitted,
BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
JAMES BARNES SID FINK
PETER KAPITZ MICHAEL MAHONEY
Committee on Headquarters and Finances

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment was passed to strike the first sentence in the first paragraph.

An amendment was passed to substitute the words "in their" with the word "with" in the last sentence of the third paragraph.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

B. Cozzini presented the following report:

Party Press and Literature

This committee has reviewed the National Secretary's report on "Party Press and Literature" and noted the circula-

tion and new subscription figures. We note that figures are included for e-mail subscribers along with the regular print subscribers.

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The committee commends the efforts of the staff in putting out new leaflets, revising pamphlets and putting De Leon's works on disk in the face of unrelenting pressures.

Fraternally submitted,

BRUCE COZZINI, Chair

ROBERT P. BURNS CHRISTIAN CAMACHO

HENRY CORETZ LUIS FIGUEROA

CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

On motion, the report was adopted.

New Business

B. Bortnick of the Committee on Headquarters and Finances rose to place the name of Robert Bills in nomination for National Secretary. The Chair called for further nominations. There being none, Robert Bills was elected by acclamation.

The National Secretary requested a suspension of the

rules and the election of a special committee to consider a draft for a National Platform offered by the National Office.

On motion, the rules were suspended.

A motion was adopted to constitute a Special Committee on Platform consisting of three members.

On motion, B. Bortnick, M. Mahoney and B. Cozzini were elected to constitute the committee.

At 2:15 p.m., the convention recessed to reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

SECOND AFTERNOON SESSION, MONDAY, APRIL 12, 1999

The convention was called to order at 3:40 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

Report of the Special Committee on Platform

B. Bortnick read the following proposed National Platform:

The 44th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party of the United States, assembled in Santa Clara, California, on the 12th day of April 1999, reaffirms its previous national platforms and further declares:

Few sentient people, if any, will deny that the world these days appears to be in a constant state of upheaval. That is reflected in the widespread anarchy, turmoil and conflict not only in the highly developed industrial nations, but also in the developing nations throughout the world.

The fact that such conditions prevail generally throughout the world, and have prevailed for a long time, logically suggests the presence of a dominant common social factor. That common social factor, the Socialist Labor Party has repeatedly demonstrated, is the capitalist system that does not and cannot work in the interests of the majority. It is a social system in which society is divided into two classes—a capitalist class and a working class. The capitalist class consists of a tiny minority—the wealthy few who own and control the instruments of production and distribution. The working class consists of the vast majority who own no productive

property and must, therefore, seek to work for the class that owns and controls the means of life in order to survive.

It is a relationship that forms the basis for an economic tyranny under which the workers as a class are exploited of the major portion of the social wealth that they produce.

However, the beneficiaries and defenders of this economic tyranny never tire of declaring that it is the “best of all possible systems”; and they repeatedly hail U.S. capitalism as the “best” of the “best.” Yet, today, after decades of new deals, fair deals, wars on poverty, civil rights legislation, government regulations, deregulations and a host of other reform efforts, capitalist America presents an obscene social picture. Millions, who need and want jobs, are still unemployed despite the official claims that unemployment is at its lowest rate in years. Millions more are underemployed, many not earning enough to maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their families despite the fact that they are working. The despicable evil of racism is on the upsurge; so, too, is contemptible discrimination against minorities generally. The nation’s educational system is a mess and getting worse. The health system, despite heated debate for years, still fails to meet the nation’s needs. The country’s infrastructure continues to crumble. Widespread pollution of our environment continues. Crime and corruption are pervasive at every level of this capitalist system. Slums and abject poverty abound and many homeless men and women—even children—roam the streets.

That description is by no means the full picture of horrors and miseries that modern-day capitalism is imposing on society. Over 100 years ago, when the Socialist Labor Party was organized, there were no jet planes, no computers, no nuclear power plants, no ~~manmade~~ satellites in ~~space~~ and space stations, no thermonuclear weapons. Nor was there great concern regarding pollution of the land, air and water on which all species—the human species included—depend on for life. But there were widespread poverty, racial prejudice, discriminations against minorities, spreading urban chaos, brazen violations of democratic rights, the material and economic conflicts that contain the seeds of war, and a host of other economic and social problems. And most, in fact all, of those problems still plague this capitalist society and

beset humanity.

These long-standing problems and the failure of numerous reform efforts to solve them or even alleviate them in any meaningful degree have imposed decades of misery and suffering on millions of workers and their families. Those deplorable conditions still continue today despite the claims of capitalism's apologists and soothsayers that the nation's "incredible 'eight year' expansion" is bringing prosperity and a sense of security to all levels of U.S. society. That capitalist propaganda—and propaganda is what it is—not only says much about capitalist integrity and honesty, it also reflects a considerable degree of callous indifference for the working-class victims of this ruthless "expansion."

Against this insane capitalist system, the Socialist Labor Party raises its voice in emphatic protest and unqualified condemnation. It declares that if our society is to be rid of the host of economic, political and social ills that for so long have plagued it, the outmoded capitalist system of private ownership of the socially needed means of life and production for the profit of a few must be replaced by a new social order—one organized on the sane basis of social ownership and democratic management of all the instruments of social production and distribution and the social services, with production carried on to satisfy human needs and wants—in short, socialism.

That is precisely the mission embodied in the Socialist Labor Party's Socialist Industrial Union program—a program calling for both political and economic organization and action. That program also is based upon the SLP's recognition and unqualified acceptance of the fact that the revolutionary change to socialism must be the classconscious act of the workers themselves!

Accordingly, the SLP calls upon the workers to rally under its banner for the purpose of advocating this revolutionary change, building classconsciousness among workers and projecting a program of organization that the workers could implement toward this end. That program also calls for the organization of revolutionary socialist unions. These are essential to mobilize the economic power of the workers not only to resist the ever increasing encroachments of the capitalists more effectively, but ultimately to provide the essen-

tial power to enforce the revolutionary demand. Capable of assuming control and continuing to administer and operate the essential industries and social services, they can exercise the power and provide the decisive leverage to “swing” the revolution. Moreover, they have the structure that provides the necessary foundation and structural framework for socialist society. It is the workers who will fill out the new societal framework and make the people’s ownership, control and administration of the new social structure a reality.

We also call upon all others who realize the critical nature of our times, and who may be increasingly aware that a basic change in our society is needed, to place themselves squarely on working-class principles and join us in this effort to put an end to the existing class conflict by placing the land and the instruments of social production in the hands of the people as a collective body in a cooperative Socialist Industrial Commonwealth in which everyone will enjoy the free exercise and full benefit of his/her faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization.

An amendment, made and seconded, to insert the word “political” between the words “revolutionary” and “demand” in the third sentence of the second to last paragraph was not concurred in.

An amendment was passed to delete the words “man-made” and “in space” and insert the words “and space stations” after the word “satellites” in the second sentence of the sixth paragraph on page two.

On motion, the statement as amended was adopted as the National Platform.

The convention returned to its regular agenda.

New Business

On motion, the National Office was authorized to edit the minutes of these proceedings.

On motion, the minutes of Monday’s sessions were approved as read.

On motion, the minutes as a whole were approved.

On motion, the 44th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party adjourned *sine die* at 4:10 p.m.

44TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Fraternally submitted,

JAMES L. BARNES

Recording Secretary

DONNA BILLS

Assistant to the Recording
Secretary