

Thirty-Ninth  
**National Convention**  
Socialist Labor Party

**April 29–May 3, 1989**

Minutes, Reports, Resolutions, Etc.



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*PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
39TH NATIONAL CONVENTION  
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY*

April 29 – May 3, 1989

Days Inn Hotel  
Santa Clara, Calif.

**MORNING SESSION, SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 1989**

National Secretary Robert Bills called the 39th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party to order at 9:12 a.m.

*Temporary Organization*

J. Liebau was elected temporary chairperson.

A. Kleist was elected temporary recording secretary.

K. Boettcher was appointed temporary sergeant at arms.

*Election of Credentials Committee (3)*

K. Heck, J. Frank and E. Barnes were elected to constitute the committee.

A recess was declared at 9:18 a.m. to allow the committee to prepare its report. Reconvened at 9:40 a.m.

E. Barnes rendered the following partial report for the Credentials Committee:

Your committee reports the following regular delegates have presented their credentials and we recommend they be seated:

Section Los Angeles (1) Alan Bradshaw; Section Sacramento (1) Daniel Deneff; Section San Francisco Bay Area (2) Nathan Karp and Richard Whitney; Section St. Petersburg (1) John Morris; Section Cook County (1) George Milonas; Section Wayne Co. (1) William Walbridge; Section Minneapolis (1) Karl Heck; Section Akron (1) Peter Kapitz; Section Cleveland (1) John O'Neill; Section Portland (1) Sid Fink; Section Allegheny Co. (1) Edna Barnes; Section Philadelphia (1) John Liebau; Section Seattle (1) Charles Turner; Section Milwaukee (1) Angeline Kleist; National Members-at-Large (7) William Braatz, Christian Camacho, Joseph Frank, Joseph Hollon Sr., Gordon Long, Ross Schelin, Jennie Seekford.

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Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] EDNA BARNES  
JOSEPH J. FRANK, KARL H. HECK  
Credentials Committee

On motion, the preceding portion of the report was adopted and the delegates seated.

E. Barnes further reported that the regularly elected delegate from Section Denver could not be present because of illness and recommended that the alternate delegate, Frank Bell, who is present, be seated.

On motion, F. Bell was seated.

E. Barnes further reported that Joseph C. Borden, elected as a delegate by the national members-at-large, could not be present because of illness, and that the alternate delegate, Joe Thomas, was not present; that both the regularly elected delegate and alternate delegate from Section Eastern Massachusetts could not be present because of illnesses, and that Section New York City had failed to elect a delegate.

On motion, the Credentials Committee's report as a whole was adopted.

### *Election of Agenda Committee (3)*

N. Karp, E. Barnes, S. Fink and R. Whitney were nominated for the Agenda Committee. E. Barnes declined. A motion was made, seconded and passed that these three constitute the committee.

A recess was declared at 10:02 a.m. to allow the committee to prepare its report. Reconvened at 10:20 a.m.

N. Karp submitted the following report for the Agenda Committee:

### **Saturday Morning Session, April 29**

1. Permanent Organization
  - a) Election of Chairperson for the Day
  - b) Election of Vice Chairperson for the Day
  - c) Election of Recording Secretary
    - Appt. of Asst. to Recording Secretary
  - d) Appt. of Sergeant at Arms for the Day
  - 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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### **Saturday Afternoon Session, April 29**

1. Roll Call
2. Report of Sergeant at Arms
3. Report of the National Secretary (completion)
4. Introduction of Matters Referred by the NEC
5. Introduction of Resolutions:
  - 1st Priority: Resolutions endorsed by sections
  - 2nd Priority: Resolutions from delegates
  - 3rd Priority: Resolutions from nat'l. members at-large (through N.O.)
  - 4th Priority: Resolutions defeated at section level
6. Discussion of Sections of National Secretary's Report
7. Adjournment at 4 p.m. to Sunday Morning Session

### **Sunday Morning Session, April 30**

1. Call to Order
2. Election of Chairperson for the Day
3. Election of Vice Chairperson for the Day
4. Election of Sergeant at Arms for the Day
5. Roll Call
6. Report of Sergeant at Arms
7. Reading of Minutes of Previous Day
8. Discussion of National Secretary's Report (if necessary)
9. Unfinished Business (if necessary)
10. New Business (including resolutions from delegates)
11. Determination of Committees
12. Referring Matters to Committees
13. Election of Committees
14. 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. Election of Sergeant at Arms
5. Roll Call
6. Report of Sergeant at Arms
7. Reading of Minutes of Previous Day's Sessions (Morning Session Only)
8. Unfinished Business (as needed)
9. Reports of Committees

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10. New Business (*Last Day*—only matters that can be given immediate attention)
11. *Last Day*—Reading of Minutes
12. Adjournment

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] NATHAN KARP  
SID FINK, RICHARD WHITNEY  
Agenda Committee

On motion, the committee's report was adopted as read.

*Permanent Organization*

- J. Liebau was elected chairperson for the day.
- K. Heck was elected vice chairperson for the day.
- A. Kleist was elected permanent recording secretary.
- D. Bills was elected assistant to the recording secretary.
- K. Boettcher was elected sergeant at arms for the day.

*Election of Mileage Committee*

Financial Secretary G. Gunderson and Delegate N. Karp were elected to constitute the Mileage Committee.

*Determination of Attendance Policy*

It was moved and seconded that today's proceedings be held in executive session and that the sergeant at arms be instructed to admit no one who is not a member of the SLP.

An amendment was made and seconded to allow known sympathizers and spouses of members to attend. The amendment was not concurred in.

An amendment to permit spouses of members to attend was passed. The motion as amended was adopted.

The sergeant at arms reported 10 members and two spouses of members in attendance.

*Report of National Secretary*

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

INTRODUCTION

As we convene this, the 39th National Convention of the Socialist

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Labor Party, we have mixed emotions. On the one hand, there is the concern that I am sure all of us share about the problems that confront our Party and how we can successfully overcome them. On the other hand, we have reason to approach this convention with a deep sense of satisfaction—justifiably proud of our Party and its enviable record of nearly a century of organizational integrity and dedication to working-class principles. In that connection, we can justifiably repeat the following words from the then National Secretary's report to the NEC in session in 1970, the occasion of the Party's 80th anniversary:

“They have been...hectic years,” he wrote, “during which our Party has steadfastly championed the cause of working-class emancipation, and staunchly upheld the scientific Socialist principles and De Leonist program through which alone that goal can be reached. And it has done so in the face of an apathetic, at times even hostile, working class whose interests it, and it alone, has served these many years...Never did it lose sight of its revolutionary goal; never did it compromise its revolutionary principles; never did it surrender its revolutionary integrity.”

Today, the Socialist Labor Party remains the voice of Marxian socialism in America—still the only voice uncompromisingly demanding the unconditional surrender of capitalism and a complete socialist reconstruction of society.

Unfortunately, the circumstances prevailing at national headquarters prevented the preparation, as part of this report, of a detailed picture of the poverty, misery, conflict, anarchy, confusion, violence, crime and corruption that prevail in capitalist America today.

To hear the defenders of capitalism tell it, things are just fine. They cite the lowest official unemployment figures in years; the steady flow of profits; the lack of social protest on the college campuses; etc.

Moreover, during the past several months they have been pointing with unconcealed glee to the serious problems and internal conflicts confronting the Soviet Union and elatedly declaring for the umpteenth time that Marxism and all its alleged offshoots are dead. “Capitalism,” crowed *Commentary* magazine recently, is “the wave of the future.” Which prompted one writer to pointedly observe: “If capitalism is truly the wave of the future then the future is bleak indeed for millions of urban slum-dwellers and landless agricultural workers around the globe.” (*Zeta* magazine, April 1989)

That hardly says it all, however. The reality is that a host of serious problems generated by the capitalist system that have long plagued the

nation remain unsolved. In fact, not only have they progressively worsened, they have increased in number. A brief look at the capitalist scoreboard confirms this.

After decades of new deals, fair deals, wars on poverty, civil rights legislation, government regulation, deregulation and a host of other reforms, real and imaginary, capitalist America presents an obscene picture. Millions are unemployed; millions more are working only part time; workers' standard of living continues to erode; the despicable social evil of racism is on the upsurge; the educational system, already at a low state, continues to deteriorate; the same is true of the nation's health system; the nation's infrastructure is on the verge of collapse; environmental problems threatening dire consequences are widespread and getting worse; the use of drugs is rampant and crime and corruption are pervasive at all levels of society.

This by no means completes the list. It serves, however, to emphasize that the capitalist brood of horrors and misery are still very much with us.

Unemployment, for example, is, and has been a chronic capitalist problem.

In 1937 Harry Hopkins, who, among other things, served as Relief Administrator and Secretary of Commerce in the several "New Deal" administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt, stated:

"It may be theoretically possible that unemployment some day may no longer have a place in our economic picture. But that day won't happen in your lifetime or mine. That might seem a pretty broad statement and to paint a rather blue picture, but it's true just the same and there is no use quarreling with the facts."

Hopkins had good reason for his views on the subject. He had been one of those directly involved in the most extensive and elaborate social reform program in history through which the Roosevelt administrations tried to solve the massive unemployment problem of the thirties. That reform program failed to solve the problem, as President Roosevelt tacitly admitted in his State of the Union message to Congress on January 4, 1940, after almost eight years of the New Deal, when he stated:

"We cannot report...that all the problems are solved. The fact of unemployment of millions of men and women remains a symptom of a number of difficulties in our economic system not yet adjusted....We have not yet found a way to employ the surplus of our labor which the efficiency of industrial processes has created...."

That may have been the understatement of Roosevelt's presidential career, since at the time he made it there still were between eight and nine million unemployed. The Roosevelt administrations' reform efforts never did solve the unemployment problem. It was "solved" by World War II. As the Scripps-Howard staff writer Charles Lucey wrote almost a decade-and-a-half later:

"...government statistics going back to 1929, the first year for which solid jobless figures are available show that only in war-time—with millions of men in the armed forces and the rest producing for war—has unemployment been licked. Figures for two periods—just before World War II and just before the Korean War—help to spell out the story...."

In short, unemployment has been and remains a chronic capitalist problem. It was not totally "licked" even during those wars. However, it has not been, and is not now, a problem that the capitalist class finds completely unwelcome. For in "reasonable" numbers the unemployed constitute what Karl Marx described in *Capital* as "that monstrosity, an industrial reserve army, kept in misery in order to be always at the disposal of capital...."

Capitalist spokespersons, of course, generally put it in more euphemistic terms. For example, in 1950, President Harry S. Truman, commenting on the rise in unemployment prior to the Korean War, stated: "A certain amount of unemployment, say, three to five million is supportable. It is a good thing that job-seeking should go on at all times; this is healthy for the economic body."

That line of capitalist thinking has not changed much. For example during the last presidential campaign Michael Dukakis made "good jobs at good wages" for everybody a major campaign theme. Yet, shortly before the Democratic nominating convention, Dukakis's principal economic adviser was warning that it was important that the unemployment rate remain closer to six percent than to four percent in order to control inflation.

And while George Bush was promising to create "30 million jobs in eight years," his economic adviser Martin Feldstein was on record as having repeatedly warned that anything less than a seven percent unemployment rate would endanger the nation's economic stability.

As Frederick C. Thayer of the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs recently summed it up under the heading "A Bipartisan Fear of Full Employment":



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“There is widespread bipartisan agreement that a 5 to 6 percent unemployment rate acts as a ‘natural’ and desirable check on wage and price inflation....Thus when people find work these days, the media announce new fears of inflation. When jobs are lost...the headlines cheer stock market rallies and a decline in inflation fears.”

There is another point to be made before we leave this subject—namely, the doubtful validity of the official unemployment figures released monthly by the BLS. William Serrin, former labor reporter for *The New York Times* dealt with this point in the Jan. 24, 1989 issue of *The Nation*.

“The monthly percentages of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS),” he wrote, “are of little help in measuring the true unemployment and marginal employment that characterize so much of the U.S. economy. Indeed, the statistics actually mask unemployment and the related stress they were established to gauge. By conservative estimates, some 16.5 million people in the United States are unemployed and want to work, or work part time but want full-time jobs. That is an unemployment rate of nearly 14 percent, not 5.4 percent, as the BLS would have us believe—and still other jobless people could be added in.”

The incontrovertible fact is that unemployment is one of the grim realities of capitalism—a chronic problem that has proven time and again to be insoluble within the framework of the capitalist system.

Still another serious problem that illustrates the perverse nature of capitalism, namely, the reckless and irresponsible capitalist practices in their insatiable pursuit of profit that are depleting our natural resources and polluting our natural environment, causing what could prove to be irreversible and calamitous ecological damage.

Just about 50 years ago, a then well-known and widely syndicated columnist, Dorothy Thompson, commented on the ruthless nature of capitalist development. In part, she wrote—

“We are, indeed, the richest country on earth, largely because we inherited the greatest gold mine on earth. But no one can travel from one end of this country to the other, as I have done...without feeling that we need not be very deeply proud of what we have accomplished. We have accomplished a great deal. We have opened up a continent in a truly grandiose fashion. We have industries which are the marvel of the world. We have built the greatest roads since the Romans. But along with an extraordinary development has gone a wholesale plunder. We have built boom cities which

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stand today decaying hideously. Our fine cities are disfigured by dark, unhealthy, crime-breeding slums. We have stripped off the grasses of the plains and the forests of the hills to become the prey of windstorms and of floods.

“By and large we have been a nation of speculators, and the successful speculators call themselves conservatives and the unsuccessful [ones] call themselves liberals. We have more crime per capita than any country in the western world. Our political life lacks both competence and virtue.”

Some 30 years later, 33 leading scientists issued a statement entitled “Blueprint for Survival,” in which they warned:

“If current trends are allowed to persist, the breakdown of society and the irreversible disruption of the life-support system on this planet—possibly by the end of the century, certainly within the lifetimes of our children—are inevitable.” (*Ecologist* magazine, January 1972.)

Inevitably, since the capitalist system has continued in existence, those trends have persisted. In fact, in many instances those trends have been accelerated and additional destructive trends have been set in motion.

In his historic work, *Capital*, Karl Marx trenchantly observed that, “After us the deluge! is the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation....” Much evidence can be marshalled to substantiate the charge Marx leveled against the capitalists and their system. Little, if any of it, would be more convincing or more damning than the wanton manner in which American capitalists have squandered the fabulous and once seemingly inexhaustible natural resources of our nation; and the reckless and irresponsible manner in which they have polluted the air and water upon which the very existence of life depends.

It will get worse. For despite all warnings, despite all the talk, despite all the promises, despite any legislation that might be enacted, the situation will continue to deteriorate as long as the capitalist system continues to exist. That is true with regard to every one of the “capitalist brood of horrors” listed earlier in this report. The unfortunate fact is that when a social system reaches the point—as capitalism has—where it no longer serves the needs of the overwhelming majority then, as the NEC report to the 1936 National Convention put it:

“Disorders of every kind begin to manifest themselves. These disorders multiply with the progressive decay of the system. The

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process of dissolution, of degeneracy, becomes accelerated as past unsolved problems pile up and, through their deadweight pressure, force the system to sink deeper and deeper into the mire.”

We are edging ever closer to the brink of social disaster. And we'll be taken over the brink, unless the workers awaken to the danger, recognize that capitalism is both the cause of the problems and the obstacle to their solution, and take steps to abolish capitalism and establish socialism.

The situation is menacing, but it is far from hopeless. The capitalist system prevails by default. It exists solely because the working class is weak. The working class is weak because it is disorganized; and it is disorganized because it has not yet become cognizant of its class interests. Such classconsciousness would bring the realization that the capitalist system is the primary cause of our grave social ills and that a fundamental socialist reconstruction of society has become an imperative need.

We have voluntarily accepted the obligation that our Party's fundamental principles imply. That obligation is to do everything we can within our capabilities and our means to awaken the workers to their class interests and to assist them to organize politically and industrially as a class to accomplish the necessary social change.

With that in mind, let us review our efforts of the past two years, face up to the problems confronting us, and make plans to utilize to the fullest every resource available to us in the crucial struggle that lies ahead.

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On motion, the National Secretary was congratulated for the comprehensiveness and cogency of his "Introduction."

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

### PARTY FINANCES

It is something of a relief to be able to say that at this moment the Party's financial situation is better than it was when the 1987 National Convention met in Akron. At the time of that convention, the Party's financial reserves were so low that we were confronted with the possibility that they might be totally depleted by the end of that year.

The situation was indeed serious. Among other things, we were soon to be called upon to make a major financial decision; namely, whether or not we should renew the lease on the national headquar-

ters premises or seek other, cheaper premises. Also pending was the question of whether we should proceed with our plans to modernize operations at national headquarters; a special fund for that purpose having been raised by a group of Party members.

The 1987 National Convention devoted a considerable amount of time to consideration of the financial state of the Party and what needed to be done to improve it. The discussions were frank, extensive and objective. And, as the report of the convention's Committee on Finances and National Headquarters noted, those discussions "...had several positive effects, not the least of which was enabling your committee to draw from the varied comments, questions, suggestions, etc., sufficient insight into, and understanding of, the membership's apparent concerns, misconceptions and reactions" to prepare a report and make some recommendations that it hoped would meet those concerns and clear up the misconceptions and "elicit the positive responses so essential if we are to meet and overcome the current threat to the Party."

The committee's report, in fact, embodied the essence of the discussions that had taken place and made a number of concrete suggestions. As you all know that report was adopted by the convention and ordered sent to the membership, with additional related material as soon as possible.

In addition, all the convention delegates made the commitment that upon returning home they would take the steps recommended by the convention to impress upon the members in their areas the seriousness of the Party's financial situation, and elaborate on the steps that could and should be taken to stabilize it. Most of the delegates also pledged to make personal financial arrangements that would help assure the Party's future financial security.

I can report that most of those delegates who made such pledges to the convention have taken steps to make such personal arrangements, though a few failed to follow through. What I cannot report, however, is that most of the delegates made persistent efforts to engage the members in their areas in discussions on the Party's finances or that they succeeded in convincing many members to take any of the steps suggested by the convention.

Consequently, while the national office is thankful and encouraged by the prompt and positive actions of the delegates who followed through on their pledges, it is puzzled and concerned by the fact that many Party members still have failed to respond to the repeated appeals made in this regard.

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At this point, I wish to stress, as I and others before me have stressed, that it is as awkward and unpleasant for me, and our Financial Secretary and the NEC to press this matter as it may be for those members who may feel pressured by our efforts. We would prefer not to have to press the matter. The fact is that in essence we are both implementing the instructions of several national conventions and carrying out the obligations inherent in our responsibilities as elected Party officials. Were we not to press the matter we would be guilty of unforgivable irresponsibility and neglect of duty.

I regret that the national office was not able to prepare a detailed breakdown of the Party's finances in time for inclusion in this report. Nor has the annual financial report to the membership been printed yet. The audit was delayed due to problems encountered by the Party's accountant. However, the books have now been audited and the annual financial statement will be printed and distributed as soon after this convention as possible.

I can here state frankly that the audit confirms that the Party's financial vulnerability is still a problem that we must view with concern. For though the immediate financial situation has eased, the manner in which that improvement came about not only confirms the general analysis of the Party's financial problem that the national office has made repeatedly, but also underscores and emphasizes the extent to which the Party is dependent on bequests and other special financial arrangements that have been repeatedly cited as the most effective way to ensure the SLP's ongoing financial security.

To illustrate: During the two-year period 1987-1988, the Party had a combined income of just over \$275,000. That figure includes *all* income from subscriptions, literature sales, contributions to funds (regular and special), dues, assessments and bank interest. The last item calls for some comment but I shall forego that for now. (Incidentally, it is relevant, in fact pertinent, to note that the 1988 income from *all* the above-listed sources was some \$30,000 less than it had been in 1987.) Operating expenses during the two years came to \$516,000—leaving a two-year deficit of \$241,000.

What bailed the Party out and drove the wolf from our door, for the moment at least, was a series of seven bequests that not only wiped out the two-year deficit of \$241,000, but also replenished somewhat the Party's depleted reserves. Three of those bequests came from nonmembers and accounted for 87 percent of the total amount received from the seven bequests. Another 10 percent came from a bequest by a Party member. The remaining three percent came from the

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relatively small estates of three members and one nonmember.

To this should be added the very generous ongoing contribution of Comrade Gordon Long who, since the 1987 National Convention, has been subsidizing one-half the rent of our national headquarters.

By the time the convention meets the precise amounts of the bequests mentioned above, and related figures, will have been compiled and will be available to the convention. They, of course, will help clarify the financial picture. But even without those precise figures, the implications of information conveyed here should be crystal clear to everyone. I urge everyone here to evaluate that information carefully and consider its clear implications objectively.

One thing is certain. The Party's financial situation is still very much on the current agenda. The present improvement in the Party's reserves compared to what they were at the time of the 1987 National Convention does not amount to a long-term solution. Those reserves can be drained to the critical point in a matter of months unless they are periodically replenished. And so far in 1989, they are not being replenished very much. Since January 1 of this year only \$15,471 has been realized to date from bequests. That covers the deficit for just a little more than one month on average.

To sum up: The experience of the past two years demonstrates again and with great emphasis the extent of the Party's dependence on bequests (or other long-range financial arrangements) to wipe out its ongoing deficits and replenish its reserves. Those facts are irrefutable; and that has long been true and demonstrated. Still there is considerable reluctance among members to acknowledge those facts and, to the extent that they may be able, to act accordingly.

That reluctance is evidenced most recently by the relatively small number of members who have responded positively to the 1987 National Convention's urging. It is evidenced further by the paucity of members who bothered to contact the national office to discuss in confidence whether some special arrangement that would meet their personal circumstances yet result in some benefit to the Party was possible. What can be done to overcome that reluctance ought to receive additional consideration at this convention.

Unless some progress can be made in this area in the near future, the SLP will find it increasingly difficult to carry on its activities and fulfill its obligations to the working class. Surely, that fact alone should be sufficient to place this matter high on the agenda of matters to be dealt with by this convention.

I repeat, while all the facts and experiences relating to the Party's

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finances could not be summarized for inclusion in this report, the information has now been gathered and is available to the convention. It should not be neglected during the course of your deliberations.

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It was moved and seconded to accept this section of the National Secretary's report. An amendment was passed to refer this section to an appropriate committee when elected. The motion as amended was adopted.

At 11:20 a.m., a 10-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 11:31 a.m.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

### NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Every delegate to this convention has received a copy of the general letter of February 17, 1989, "Re: National Headquarters." No changes in the composition of the national headquarters staff have occurred since that letter was written. Accordingly, the headquarters staff currently consists of seven full-time employees. Comrades Ken Boettcher, Paul Lawrence and Richard Whitney make up the editorial staff. The business office, which also embraces New York Labor News and the subscription department, is staffed by your Financial Secretary (Comrade Genevieve Gunderson) and Comrade Diane Secor. The national office staff, which consists of Comrade Donna Bills and your National Secretary, also remains unchanged.

The National Headquarters section of the report to the 1987 National Convention provides a general description of the various duties and responsibilities that fall within the confines of the three main departments into which the headquarters operation is divided. However, as noted in that report, members from each department are frequently called upon to provide assistance to one or both of the others. In some cases, members whose primary responsibilities lie in one department have assumed permanent roles in other departments, and occasional adjustments are made to meet changing circumstances. One of these periodic adjustments affecting all three departments was reported to the membership in the general letter of December 30, 1987, as follows:

"Some of you no doubt are aware that your National Secretary has been doubling up as a make-do Labor News and shipping clerk for the last seven or eight months. That not only explains some of the odd-shaped boxes in which you've been receiving leaflets and

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*The People*, it also explains some of the delays in correspondence and other matters that ordinarily would have received speedier attention.

“Most of those additional tasks have now been assumed by other members of the headquarters staff—Comrades Ken Boettcher, Paul Lawrence and Richard Whitney. It may take a little time for those who have taken on the additional work to adjust their schedules and you may still receive a rather oddly shaped box from time-to-time. But, that’s not the important thing. The important thing is that this arrangement restores a substantial block of time to my schedule, which should enable me to devote more of my attention to my primary responsibilities. In any event, that’s what we’re aiming at.”

This particular arrangement had to be modified again several months later.

Obviously, there are limits to what can be done to fill gaps that exist in one department by creating gaps in other departments that are already understaffed. In addition, there are certain areas of responsibility where no adjustments are possible for the reason that only one member of the staff knows how to perform a particular function. Comrade Boettcher, for example, is the only member of the editorial staff trained to operate the computer that has been installed in that department. The extent to which we will and already have become dependent upon that computer for setting copy and doing the layout of *The People* was described in the general letter of February 27, 1989, “Re: Modernization of National Headquarters.” Eventually, it may be necessary for other members of the headquarters staff to familiarize themselves with the new computer equipment, or with additional equipment to be added in future. For the time being, however, their attention must be focused on their primary responsibilities and whatever additional tasks they have taken on to fill in other gaps.

Under the circumstances that currently prevail at national headquarters, any serious illness or other development affecting any member of the staff could have a devastating effect on our ability to hold things together. This was brought home late in 1987 when Comrade Gunderson was taken ill for the second time in recent years. In that particular instance we were able to deal with the situation only because two members readily came forward to fill the breach. As I informed the NEC under date of December 7, 1987:

“...Comrade Nathan Karp has been standing in for Comrade Gunderson since she was hospitalized last month. I am extremely grateful to Comrade Karp, who spontaneously volunteered his



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services. At the same time, however, it is clear that we cannot depend on this arrangement for a prolonged period.

“Accordingly, after discussing the matter with Comrades Karp and Donna Bills, it was decided to make the attempt to locate a member for a permanent addition to the national office staff—specifically, someone who could provide assistance in both the business and national offices. For obvious reasons, it was deemed advisable to try to locate a National Member-at-Large for the position before looking to the sections.

“After giving the matter some thought, I contacted Comrade Diane Secor of Iowa City, IA. During our first telephone conversation on this matter she expressed interest, but also informed me that she and Comrade Stephen Secor were packed and ready to move within 24 hours to another city where Comrade Stephen Secor had accepted a job. However, she volunteered to discuss the matter with her husband and to inform me of their decision. To make a long story short, she returned my call within a few hours to say that she was prepared to accept my offer.

“The Secors have since arrived in the Bay Area, and Diane started work at the national office this morning...”

Last August, when submitting the final recommendation for “modernizing” national headquarters, I provided the NEC with the following summary of conditions as they then existed:

“To the Members of the NEC

“Dear Comrades:

### “RE: NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

“In a separate letter under today’s date I am submitting for your consideration a proposal for the modernization of national headquarters. However, I believe there are other matters directly related to the overall headquarters operation which should be fresh in your mind when you take that matter up—matters which may not only color your judgment with regard to modernization as such, but which bear on the general viability of the headquarters operation.

“The minutes of your July meeting reflect one fact having a direct bearing on this larger question, which is that Comrade Lawrence will be leaving Party employment...”

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“When...[this] and other factors not mentioned here are taken into account, the precariousness of the present national headquarters operation comes into sharp focus. To be perfectly candid, I am increasingly concerned that we have come dangerously close to the point where our headquarters in virtually all its operations is hovering on the very brink of disaster.

“It does not take any special insight into the day-to-day demands on the present headquarters staff to realize that no one or two

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members can put out The People on a regular basis; that no one or two members whose state of health is far from certain can be expected to hold up the business end of the operation indefinitely; and that no one or two members in the national office can straddle those gaps and still attend to their own primary responsibilities even for a limited time. Neither does it take any special insight to foresee that no amount of 'modernizing' equipment can replace the human component. As it was expressed in the National Headquarters section of the Report to the 1983 National Convention:

"Some of the routine, but very necessary operations can be simplified with new updated equipment....But these cannot by themselves make possible the planning, development, implementation and overall supervision of the diverse agitational and promotional efforts that should be initiated by the national office and the headquarters staff.'

"While it may be less than comfortable for us to discuss these facts in a candid and open fashion, I believe it is incumbent upon the NEC to set such considerations aside and to examine the problem in just that way.

"When reporting on the headquarters situation to the 1987 National Convention, the point was then made that—

"The current national headquarters staff [of six—now seven] is, I believe, the smallest national headquarters staff in the past 50 years—perhaps the smallest since the years when De Leon entered the Party. Taking all things into account, and particularly the Party's current financial situation, there is little likelihood of our being able to do anything to change that very soon.'

"Leaving the financial situation out of the picture, there have been no developments since the 1987 National Convention to alter my view on our prospects for replacing any member of the present staff from among the Party's current membership, much less augmenting it by the addition of members with the specific skills, talents and background needed to fill key positions. If such members exist they have failed to make themselves known by giving evidence of their capacities or potentials in these areas.

"This letter is not intended to provide an exhaustive or detailed picture of the national headquarters routine, with which most of you are familiar. It is meant to provide a basis for discussing the headquarters situation and how to deal with it. 'Modernization' itself forms no part of that solution. While machinery may facilitate the work of a competent subscription clerk, staff writer, editor, administrator, etc., it cannot substitute for any of these."

In the general letter of February 17, "Re: National Headquarters," it was reported that the headquarters staff had met twice in January to discuss the overall situation. In spite of the opinion expressed to the NEC in August, the conclusion reached as the result of those discus-

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sions was “that the only solution to the problems confronting us now is the addition of new members to the headquarters staff—and soon.” It was also reported that I would start immediately “to contact individual members about the possibility of their joining the national headquarters staff,” and other “members who I believe could assist us by contributing articles for publication in *The People* from the field.”

As of this writing (March 28), it has not been possible to set time aside to contact any members who might be able to join the staff. That will be taken up immediately after this convention. Under date of March 21, however, the following was sent out to 52 members who we believe could provide some much needed assistance to the editorial staff:

“To All SLP Members Concerned

“Dear Comrades:

“In his letter of February 17 (copy enclosed), the National Secretary reported that Comrade Paul Lawrence is expected to leave the editorial staff sometime soon and that virtually the entire burden of putting out *The People* would be falling on the shoulders of Comrade Boettcher and myself.

“The National Secretary also indicated that two things were needed to ensure that *The People* continues to be published on an uninterrupted basis.

“First: Additional staffing will be needed, not only in the editorial department, but for the national headquarters as a whole.

“Second: Where the paper is concerned, members in the field will have to get involved and share more of the responsibility of writing articles for publication.

“This letter concerns the second of these two matters, i.e., *articles from the field*. It is written at the request of the National Secretary, who is immersed in preparations for the upcoming convention.

“Some of you have written articles for *The People* in the past on a regular or semi-regular basis. Several have worked with us here at national headquarters on a permanent or stand-in basis and have first-hand knowledge and experience—not only with the day-to-day operation in ‘normal’ circumstances, but also in crisis situations similar to the one confronting us at the present time. Those of you who have such first-hand knowledge and experience need not be told that Comrade Boettcher and I will have our hands full, or how much support from the field can mean in ‘crunch’ situations. You know what it means, you know what we need, and I can only say that we need it *now!*

“It might be added that with or without Comrade Lawrence’s presence, the editorial staff has been under considerable pressure for a number of years now with almost no outside assistance from

members in the field.

“Frankly, all of us show signs of wearing down under the strain, and at times we have felt abandoned by those we know could provide us with some assistance and support. Those of you who have been on this end know the feeling. The National Secretary—himself a former member of the editorial staff—put it this way when responding to a member who had written to comment on the general letter of February 17:

“I don’t know what part the constant pressure you mention played in Comrade Lawrence’s decision. What I do know, however, is that the pressure under which we work has been described to the membership on numerous occasions, and that we have been left pretty much alone to cope with it as best we can. There are capable members who could have made a substantial contribution toward reducing those pressures by submitting articles from the field on a regular or semi-regular basis, but who, for whatever reason, have not done so. Perhaps a partial answer to this problem would be a steady stream of appeals for help from this end. With a few notable exceptions, however, past efforts of this kind have not produced impressive results.’

“The only thing I would add is that this effort *must* produce ‘impressive results.’

“Several of you who have never written articles for publication in *The People* before, or who haven’t for some time, are receiving this letter because we have reason to believe that you also could be of assistance to us, now when the need is especially great and in the long run when (as we assume they will) something akin to ‘normal’ conditions are restored in the editorial department. The ‘us’ in this instance refers to more than just us in the editorial department or on the headquarters staff. ‘Us’ means the SLP—all of us! While the staff is on the frontline, so to speak, the crisis that confronts the staff confronts the Party as a whole. It is a Party crisis in which we all share, and we must all respond to it to the best of our abilities if the challenge is to be successfully met.

“We are enclosing copy of a writers’ guide prepared many years ago by a former editor of the *Weekly People*, which has been modified only slightly. It is very broad and may be of more value to those of you who have not written for *The People* in the past than for those who have. The only things we would add for now are that you should inform us of anything you plan to submit to avoid possible duplication of effort, and that you not expect too much in the way of critical feedback for the time being as we are working under considerable pressure.

“However, please do not hesitate to write or call if you feel that you need to discuss your writing plans or anything else that relates to the general thrust of this appeal.

“Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

“Fraternally yours,

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“RICHARD WHITNEY  
“for the National Secretary”

Fifteen members had acknowledged receipt of the letter as of April 20, and several have submitted, or promised to submit, articles for the paper. I hope I will be able to report many additional replies by the time this convention has convened.

It should also be noted that several members replied to the letter of February 17 offering to submit articles from the field. Those members have been encouraged to do so, and all were included in the list of members who received the letter of March 21.

The members of the headquarters staff are available to the convention should any committee you elect wish to review the current situation with them. Any suggestions or recommendations the convention can make to assist us in dealing with that situation will be most welcome.

\*

It should be noted that the lease on our present headquarters will expire in May 1990. The landlord has not approached us in this regard as yet, but may be expected to do so within the next several months. At this point, however, we have no knowledge of what his future plans for the building may be, or what he may expect in the way of rent from us as tenants. We will have to cross that bridge when we come to it.

It should also be noted that Comrade Gordon Long continues to underwrite one-half the Party's rent on national headquarters, as he has since August 1987. He does not expect and does not want any special recognition in response to his great generosity in this regard. He saw it as his duty where he had the means and the Party had the need. It is in that spirit that I take note of his contribution here and salute him for it.

\*

A motion to refer the “National Headquarters” section of the National Secretary's report to an appropriate committee when elected, and that recognition of Comrade G. Long's generosity is to be recorded in the minutes was passed.

At 11:55 a.m. the sergeant at arms reported the arrival of Delegate J. Thomas without his credential. The National Secretary verified his election. On motion, Thomas was seated.

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The National Secretary presented the following section of his report:

### STATE OF ORGANIZATION—I

#### **Membership Changes**

There was a net loss of 50 members in the 1987-1988 period on which this section is focused. In 1987, 50 names were removed from the membership list and 22 new names were added. Twenty-nine of those names were deducted from the list of section membership and 21 from the list of members-at-large.

Last year, 30 names were removed and only eight new names were added. Fourteen of those removed were stricken by the sections and 16 were stricken by the NEC.

Twenty-eight transfers were effected during the period under consideration. The NEC received 20 of these while the sections received eight.

Death claimed 29 of those whose names were removed in 1987-1988. The others either dropped out for nonpayment of dues (30), resigned (11), or were expelled (10).

Eight of the expulsions mentioned took place before the 1987 convention and concern us only because they fell within the two-year period being summarized. The ninth was ordered by the 1987 convention itself, which also called upon the section affected to acknowledge "its failure to act promptly in defending the Party's interests" by expelling the individual involved before it became necessary to refer the matter to the convention. The section subsequently acknowledged its error to the NEC, and that appears to have been the end of it.

The 10th and only expulsion in 1988 involved a member-at-large whose conduct precluded any need to submit the NEC's decision for convention review.

As indicated, 30 new names were added to the membership list in 1987-1988. Twenty-four of these new names were added as members-at-large and six were added by sections.

When all these figures are brought together they show that the sections sustained a net loss of 53 and that there was a net "gain" of three members-at-large. Members-at-large constituted nearly 37 percent of the entire membership as of January 1, 1989, compared to only 19 percent just five years ago.

Membership changes recorded so far this year have resulted in a net loss of two. Three deaths have been reported, three have been

dropped for nonpayment of dues, and two have resigned. The NEC has admitted five new members-at-large since the start of the year, and one new addition has been reported by a section.

### **Sections and Members-at-Large**

There has been no change in the number of sections since the last convention was held in July 1987. One section was disbanded earlier that year, and one was officially disbanded by the convention following a vote by the section's membership. Two others were consolidated to form a single "new" section. Otherwise, no new section was organized in either 1987 or 1988. Accordingly, there was a net loss of three sections during the 1987-1988 period.

There are 17 sections in 13 states at the present time. Their memberships range from a low of five, which is the minimum, to a high of 31. It is difficult to point to any one, or two, or three sections solely on the basis of their numerical strength and conclude that they constitute the weakest links in the SLP chain of local organizations. Numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Some smaller sections maintain a level of constant activity that—when viewed on a member-by-member basis—far exceeds that of much larger sections beset by a variety of other problems. However, at least two sections in addition to the one mentioned above have voted on whether or not to disband in recent years. Fortunately, both decided to "hang on" for the time being. How long they can continue without the addition of new membership is anyone's guess.

One section fell below the required minimum of five members sometime ago, and came dangerously close to exhausting the one-year grace period provided by the Party's Constitution before it would have to be disbanded. However, a member-at-large residing in the same state was recently transferred to bring it up to strength and entitle it to elect a delegate to this convention.

As may be surmised from figures given earlier, section membership now constitutes 63 percent of the total membership. However, the sections are still the Party's basic units of organization on whose success or failure in attracting and retaining new membership the Party's fate depends. It was in recognition of the fact that "the problems relating to saving and rebuilding our sections should be receiving our full attention" that the Party's Constitution was amended to make the section the basis on which representation at national conventions is determined.

SLP convention delegates, of course, do not "represent" sections or

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members-at-large in the same sense that congressional Representatives and Senators ostensibly represent their district or state constituencies. As may be inferred from Section 6, Article VII, of the Party's Constitution, SLP convention delegates represent the Party as a whole. What they bring and place at the convention's disposal is the knowledge and experience they have derived from local conditions.

What follows is a series of brief summaries of membership changes that have taken place in each of the sections and among the members-at-large during the 1987-1988 period:

*Alabama:* One new member-at-large was recently admitted by the NEC.

*Alaska:* There has been no change in this state since the 1987 convention. One isolated member-at-large still lives in Fairbanks.

*Arizona:* There were eight members-at-large scattered across this large western state two years ago. One, who submitted a letter of resignation the NEC refused to accept, was eventually dropped for non-payment of dues. Five of the remaining seven are above retirement age, but that does not prevent several of them from being at least moderately active.

*California:* There are 64 members in this state, compared to 65 at the time of the last convention. Fifty-five members are attached to three sections and nine are members-at-large.

Section Los Angeles started 1987 with 24 members. No new members were added before the end of 1988. One died and two were dropped for nonpayment of dues. Two deaths and two transfers out have been reported since the start of 1989, leaving the section with a membership of 17 at the present time. According to the section's year-end membership report, 15 of 21 members then listed were retired and seven were out-of-town members.

Section Sacramento, the smallest of the three sections, had six members to start 1987. One was dropped later that year, one new member was admitted last year, and a second addition was made as the result of a transfer. Four of the seven members were listed as being retired on the section's year-end membership report.

Section San Francisco Bay Area is still the largest of all SLP sections. There were 30 members as of January 1, 1987. Since then, one new member has been admitted, two members-at-large have trans-



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ferred in, one member has transferred out and one has been dropped. The section has a membership of 31 at present, 16 of whom are retired or "semi-retired." It should be noted that seven of the section's members also constitute the national headquarters staff. Two from that group are national officers and four are members of the NEC. Most of the seven are also actively involved with the section.

*Colorado:* The situation that existed in this state two years ago was summed up as follows in the 1987 convention report:

"The fact that this state is represented at this convention indicates that there has been some improvement since 1984. Section Denver, which had only three members on January 1, 1984, now has six members....While there is still much room for improvement, and while our ranks are still very thin in the state, we can take some consolation from the progress that has been made...."

Since then, however, things have not improved. One of the six members the section had at the start of 1987 dropped out of sight, and was later dropped for nonpayment of dues. A second moved out of the country and has not been heard from since. The section was brought up to strength by the transfer of a member-at-large who resides in the state, but many miles south of the Denver area. The transfer was effected so the section would be eligible to elect a delegate to this convention, which it has done. Three of the five members now attached to the section are retired. One of the two who is not retired is the member whose transfer made it possible for the section to be represented here.

*Connecticut:* Two members-at-large lived in this state two years ago, but one has since died. The one remaining member is above retirement age. In fact, he is one of only two SLP members whose membership is known to date from the 1920s.

*Florida:* Section St. Petersburg is the only section in this state. It began 1987 with 17 members. Two members died that year and one died last year. One recent addition this year places the section's current membership at 15. Nine members-at-large lived in Florida at the time of our last convention. Eight members-at-large live there at the present time, so that the state membership now stands at 23. The section had not submitted its year-end membership report by the time this was written. Based on the preceding year's report, however, all

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but two or three of the section's members are above retirement age.

*Illinois:* Section Cook Co., centered in Chicago, began 1987 with 13 members and ended 1988 with 11. During that period, one was dropped for nonpayment of dues and one resigned. Seven of the section's members are retired and eight are listed as being out-of-town members. The state membership adds up to 12, which includes one member-at-large. The state membership stood at 17 at the time of our last convention.

*Indiana:* There are no sections in this state. Seven widely scattered members-at-large maintain residence, which represents a net loss of one since the 1987 convention.

*Iowa:* Six members-at-large were reported for this state in 1987. One was dropped for nonpayment of dues later that year, and one resigned last year. Two were transferred to Section San Francisco Bay Area, and one has moved out of state so that one member-at-large now lives in Iowa.

*Kentucky:* The one member we had here died last year.

*Maine:* One member-at-large, who was admitted in 1986, dropped out in 1987 prior to the convention. He was merely a statistic.

*Maryland and the District of Columbia:* There were eight members-at-large in Maryland and the District of Columbia at the time of the 1987 convention, six of whom remain. One died and one was dropped for nonpayment of dues.

*Massachusetts:* Section Eastern Massachusetts lost one member last year, who was the tragic victim of a freak accident. One resigned this year, so that the section's current membership stands at five. One of the five appears to have taken up permanent residence in a distant state. Another actually lives in New Hampshire, though he is not listed as an out-of-town member and regularly attends section meetings. Three of the remaining five are listed as retired on the section's year-end membership report, but a fourth is also well over retirement age. This is one of the two sections that has voted on whether or not to disband. Last October, the organizer informed me that the members had "discussed whether we could hold section meetings. Two were in

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favor of becoming members-at-large, three for holding on.” Several section members have serious health problems. Referring to the fact that one member had been hospitalized and might have to undergo major surgery, the organizer added:

“That is awful for us. We will meet with four if all attend, three if [Comrade A] cannot drive here. He lives in Seabrook, N.H., and has an unreliable car...”

I responded to the organizer’s letter, in part, as follows:

“The problems confronting the section are clearly very serious ones for which there are no easy solutions. For the moment, however, I earnestly appeal to the members not to consider any proposal for disbanding and to make every possible effort to continue, at least until after the 1989 National Convention.

“Many of the Party’s 17 sections are faced with a variety of serious problems, problems which the next National Convention must address. What that means precisely I cannot say at this moment; but I am absolutely certain that some important decisions affecting our future organization will have to be made. The cards have to be reshuffled, so to speak, so that our way of doing things is brought into line with the actual condition and capacity of the Party’s membership.

“Your determination to hold the line is understood and deeply appreciated.”

One member-at-large lives in Massachusetts. He also has health problems that prevent him from traveling, which explains why he has not been assigned to the section.

*Michigan:* Twenty-eight members lived in this state at the time of our last convention, six of whom were members-at-large. Section Wayne Co., the only section, began 1987 with a membership of 21. Since then, five have died, four were added from the consolidation with former Section Pontiac, and one has been reassigned as a member-at-large. Ten of those listed on the section’s year-end membership report are identified as being retired. Six members-at-large round out the current state membership.

*Minnesota:* One member of Section Minneapolis recently moved out of state and has been transferred to become a member-at-large. The current membership is seven, four of whom are retired and two of whom are listed as out-of-town members. Five members-at-large

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bring the statewide membership to 12.

*Missouri:* Three of the four members-at-large listed here two years ago remain on the membership list. The fourth was dropped for non-payment of dues shortly after the 1987 convention.

*Nevada:* The one member-at-large who lived here in 1987 still does, so that there has been no change.

*New Jersey:* The one section that existed in this state at the start of 1987 was formally disbanded by the 1987 convention. Nine members-at-large live in New Jersey at the present time.

*New York:* There were two sections in this state to start 1987, but one was disbanded prior to that year's convention. Section New York City, with five members, has shown renewed vigor in recent months. However, it is the only section that failed to elect a delegate to this convention, and no year-end membership report had been received when this was written. The section had seven members to start 1987. One has since died and another has been dropped for nonpayment of dues. Thirteen members-at-large are scattered over the state from Buffalo to Long Island.

*North Carolina:* No numerical changes have taken place here. Three members-at-large live in the state.

*Ohio:* There are two sections in this state, as there were in 1987.

Section Akron's membership has remained unchanged at nine. Eight are retired and three are listed as out-of-town members.

Section Cleveland admitted one new member in 1987, but one was expelled by that year's convention. The membership is seven. However, no year-end membership report has been received to date.

Four members-at-large currently reside in the state.

*Oklahoma:* Two new members-at-large live in this state.

*Oregon:* Section Portland started 1987 with 13 members and ended 1988 with 11. One member died and one moved out of state. Six members are retired and four are attached as out-of-town members. In addition, there are four members-at-large.

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*Pennsylvania:* There are two sections in this state, having a combined membership of 15.

Section Allegheny Co. had seven members at the beginning of 1987. One died that December. There have been no other changes since then. However, the section is rarely heard from and had failed to submit its year-end membership report in time to cull information for convention purposes.

(Since this was written, the national office has heard from the section for the first time in many months. The following, which is taken from a letter from the organizer, sheds considerable light on the state of the section:

“Enclosed are the Monthly Activity Reports from March thru December, 1988 for Section Allegheny County. You will note there were six months [March, April, June, July, August and November] when meetings were not held.

“The *exact* reasons elude me at the moment but they include health, transportation, family plans and a hot, dry summer that required all of our energy just to cope with living. Part of it can be blamed on my inability to find time to set up meetings that everyone can attend or at least a quorum. I would gladly let someone else take over as Organizer but can find no one willing to do so.

“The members, including myself are, for want of a better word, ‘burned-out.’ We all feel as strongly as ever about the failure of capitalism and the need for socialism. We’re just not as sure as we were about how we can effect the change from the one to the other.

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“Our activity reports show no outside activity for this past year but [Comrade A] and his grandson distributed copies of *The People* at the University of Pittsburgh on two occasions—the Labor Day and Youth Issues.”)

Section Philadelphia had 11 members at the start of 1987, but only nine to end 1988. It is the only section to admit two members during the entire two-year period. However, one member died, three were dropped for nonpayment of dues and one resigned. Four of the nine members who remain are retired and two are out-of-town members.

Three members-at-large live in the state.

*Rhode Island:* One new member-at-large has been admitted since the start of 1989.

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*South Carolina:* Two members-at-large have moved into this state since the 1987 convention.

*Tennessee:* One member-at-large lives in Chattanooga.

*Texas:* Nine members-at-large live in this state, one more than two years ago. Four of them live in or near the Dallas-Ft. Worth area. The efforts one member has made to bring the other three together to form an SLP Group have not succeeded to date. That's a misfortune since all are believed to be in good health and, with a little effort, it should be possible to form a section there.

*Virginia:* There were three members-at-large in this state as of January 1, 1989, the same as in 1987.

*Washington:* Section Seattle had 14 members to start 1987. One new member was added during the year. Four names have been removed from the section's membership list, however, as the result of two deaths and two resignations. Eight of the remaining 11 members are above retirement age, and four are listed on the year-end membership report as living out of town. Some of the section's problems may be surmised from parts of a letter received from the former organizer, who lives 100 miles from Seattle:

"It is with a great deal of regret that I must inform you I will not be driving to Seattle for section meetings after three or four months. [Comrade A] has not been able to attend the last meetings and has informed me he will not be going to Seattle anymore. This did not surprise me as he has not been well for sometime and the trips have been very hard on him. This, along with the death of [Comrade B] and the resignation of the [Cs], leaves only [Comrade D] and I to make the trip. Since the trip is extremely hard on [Comrade D], she makes the trip only on special occasions. That leaves me to drive by myself and I don't feel up to driving that far alone.

"A number of our members were absent from our January meeting because of illnesses, and because some of those members will no doubt agree to accept nomination as officers of our section, we delayed the election of officers till next meeting. I will continue to drive to Seattle, as I said, for three or four months to help get things lined up and to participate in any special events, such as our May Day dinner, which we already discussed at our last meeting."

Several inferences about the state of the section can be drawn from the preceding extract, some of which could easily be applied to a num-

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ber of sections located elsewhere.

No members-at-large live in the state.

*Wisconsin:* Section Milwaukee has 12 members, and one member-at-large lives in the state. The section had 15 members to start 1987. It was in the preceding year, 1986, that this section decided not to disband. Since then, one member has died, one was dropped for non-payment of dues and one has resigned. Eight of the section's members are above retirement age and seven are out-of-town members. Though things obviously have not improved for the section, it is still with us.

\*

A chart summarizing all membership changes recorded in 1987-1988 appears on the next page.

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MEMBERSHIP CHANGES (1987–1988)

Sections	Admit	Died	Drop	Resign	Expel	Transfers			Net
						In	Out		
1. Los Angeles	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	-3	
2. Sacramento	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	+1	
3. S.F. Bay Area	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	+1	
4. Denver	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	-2	
5. St. Petersburg	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	-3	
6. Cook Co.	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	-2	
7. Eastern Mass.	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-1	
Pontiac	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	-7	
8. Wayne Co.	0	5	0	0	0	4	1	-2	
9. Minneapolis	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	-1	
Camden Co.	0	1	0	0	8	0	7	-16	
10. New York City	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	-2	
Oneida Co.	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	-5	
11. Akron	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
12. Cleveland	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
13. Portland	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	-2	
14. Allegheny Co.	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-1	
15. Philadelphia	2	1	3	1	0	1	0	-2	
16. Seattle	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	-3	
17. Milwaukee	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	-3	
Subtotals	6	18	11	5	9	8	24	-53	
18. Mbrs.-at-Large	24	11	19	6	1	20	4	+3	
TOTALS	30	29	30	11	10	28	28	-50	



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A motion to refer the “State of Organization—I” section of the National Secretary’s report to an appropriate committee when elected was passed.

At 12:25 p.m. a motion was passed to recess until 2 p.m.

### **SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION, APRIL 29, 1989**

The session was called to order at 2:03 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported 12 members and one spouse of a member present.

On motion, the report of the sergeant at arms was accepted.

The National Secretary presented the following section of his report:

#### STATE OF ORGANIZATION—II

The 1987 National Convention adopted a report on State of Organization in which it drew “the conclusion that the Socialist Labor Party is capable of ‘turning itself around’ and rebuilding—providing that the problems of..., low morale in some sections, and certain concrete problems of Party building are overcome.”

The committee that drafted the report based its conclusions, in part, on certain information contained in the State of Organization section of my report to the convention. Specifically, it cited the fact that the Party had made significant progress in attracting new membership during the three-year period of 1983-1986 when compared to the preceding period of 1980-1982. More important, however, its conclusions were based on interviews the committee had with delegates from various sections. It was largely as a result of what those interviews produced in terms of information about the conditions that then existed in those sections that the committee made a number of suggestions and recommendations about what the sections would have to do in order to revitalize and rebuild themselves.

There was nothing complex or mysterious about the committee’s suggestions and recommendations. They all pertained to such traditional areas of SLP activity as leaflet distribution, study classes and discussion groups, public lectures and fund-raising social affairs. And the committee made it clear that it was convinced that it was within the capacity of the sections generally to improve their efforts in those traditional areas of SLP activity. In addition, the committee expressed the belief that if the sections did improve on their efforts it would lead

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to positive results in terms of new membership and the strengthening of the Party's local "units of organization." As the committee summed it up:

"The present state of organization of the Socialist Labor Party is a mix of good news and bad news. The bad news is that we are still losing members overall, and we retain serious problems that contribute to this and could deal us further serious blows. But the good news is that there are substantial signs that we are beginning to turn things around, and that we pretty well know how to rectify the problems we face so that we can begin to grow into the kind of Party we all want to see.

"Your committee is confident that if the Party acts on the recommendations and suggestions contained in this report, the 'state of organization' report at our next convention will contain more good news than bad."

In all candor, it cannot be said that this report contains "more good news than bad" where the state of organization is concerned. As indicated, the SLP lost more membership than was added during the two-year period of 1987-1988, and no section can be said to be in substantially better condition than it was two years ago. The extent to which this can be traced back to the sections' performance in implementing the suggestions and recommendations approved by the 1987 convention, or to other causes, is something this convention will have to determine. Statistically, as shown under the heading of General Activities, there can be no doubt that the sections did not increase their distribution of leaflets, did not increase the number and frequency of discussion group and study class sessions held, and did not add to the number of fund-raising affairs held. What accounts for this failure, and what can be done to ensure that it will not recur where it need not and should not have occurred is, again, something this convention must contend with. In general, however, I believe a strong case can still be made that the SLP has the capacity to succeed in confronting its problems and "turning itself around." Our assets as an organization still outweigh our liabilities, and I know of no better way I could sum them up than by repeating what I stated in my report to the 1987 convention:

"Comrades, it seems to me that the problem we are confronted with is of a practical and strategic nature. It is a question of what to do with what we have. Our Party is based on a sound principle. We have a sound program, despite the fact that we have recognized the need to elaborate on that program, to 'explore' it, in a sense, and

draw out in more precise terms how it relates to and is applicable in the present circumstances. And, we have our official journal, *The People*. If we cannot act as forcefully and on as wide a scale as formerly, we can *speak* through our official organ as forcefully, as clearly and on nearly as wide a scale as ever.”

What we have, in addition, is a core of dedicated SLP men and women who are willing and capable of doing what needs to be done in order to revitalize and rebuild our Party. In all honesty, I do not know if that dedicated and determined core consists of a majority or a minority of the membership. But, that core is enough if it will bend itself to the task. As De Leon expressed it, in words that are familiar to all of us:

“...In all revolutionary movements, as in the storming of fortresses, the thing depends upon the head of the column—upon that minority that is so intense in its convictions, so soundly based on its principles, so determined in its action, that it carries the masses with it, storms the breastworks and captures the fort. Such a head of the column must be our Socialist organization to the whole column of the American proletariat.”

The “head of the [SLP] column” is the local section. The sections are the necessary and only training ground where new members can be integrated into the organizational life of the Party, and without which the Party simply cannot survive.

In the final analysis, whatever success the Party has generally in attracting new membership in the next few years will count for less than the success the sections must have in adding new members and assimilating them into their ranks. As I explained to the organizer of one section recently:

“I am increasingly concerned by the rapid rate at which the proportion of national members-at-large is growing in relation to the membership [as a whole]. One result is that many newer members have no experience with a section and working within an organized subdivision of the Party. Another is that this [inexperienced and isolated] part of the membership is bound to have a greater presence and impact on National Conventions. It’s not a healthy combination, but I know the solution *is not* to revert to the old method of assigning every member in a state with a section to that section. That only adds to the sections’ strength on paper, does nothing to strengthen them in fact, and nothing to integrate the assigned members into the organizational life of the Party. It’s a dilemma when our biggest problem is to build or rebuild the sections as

much—even more—than it is to simply add names to the membership roll.”

For decades, of course, the sections led the way in admitting new membership. Between 1941 and 1983, a period of 43 years, they were responsible for nearly 93 percent of the 1,144 applications received, processed and accepted by the Party as a whole. (This figure does not include transfers from federations.) During the five years of 1979-1983, the sections continued their lead by admitting 61 of 77 new members added. Since 1984, however, the sections have accounted for only 36 of 112 additions to the membership, or about 32 percent of the total.

A number of plausible-sounding suggestions as to why the sections have failed to keep pace in attracting new membership have come to my attention. One is that there are not as many sections as there once were, and that the NEC now casts its “net” over a much wider area. Another is that the sections are in a much better position than the NEC to be cautious and discerning about which prospects for membership are encouraged to submit applications. A third I have heard is that the membership is too old to attract appreciable numbers of younger workers; that age not only restricts the range and level of section activity, but in itself acts to repel younger workers who might otherwise be expected to join. Personally, I fail to see much merit in any of these suppositions or much concrete evidence to support them.

o It is true, of course, that there are fewer sections today than ever before, and that the decline has left the NEC with jurisdiction over a much larger area than in the 1940s, 1950s, or 1960s. But that obviously is a result, not a cause, of sections failing to admit the members needed to keep up their numerical strength and, in too many cases, to keep themselves alive. In any event, the remaining sections are not located in small, out-of-the-way places where the population is limited and the opportunities to reach substantial numbers of workers with our propaganda are restricted. They are centered in large metropolitan areas ranging in population from 1.3 million to 18 million inhabitants—areas having a combined population of 76 million people and embracing 30 percent of the country’s entire population.

o It certainly seems logical that sections are in a better position to become acquainted with and to be more discriminating about who they encourage to apply for membership. And it is a fact that the Party as a whole has encountered serious problems in retaining the new members acquired over the last four or five years. Nearly 53 percent

of the additions made between 1984 and 1988 have since dropped out or resigned, compared to only 35 percent of those admitted between 1980 and 1983 who quit before they had completed five years of membership. Yet, the *rate* of retention (47 percent) among those admitted by the NEC since 1984 is virtually identical to the rate of retention recorded by the sections. Forty of the 76 members-at-large admitted in 1984-1988 have since been removed from the membership list, while 19 of the 36 added by the sections have been removed. Furthermore, while the rate of loss among members admitted since 1984 has been higher than it was among those added before 1984, the actual number of members who remained members for at least five years also was higher. Only 33 of the 51 members added in 1980-1983 were still members at the end of 1984, while 53 of the 112 added in 1984-1988 were still members after five years. To return to the main point: it may be that sections have better opportunities for “sizing up” prospective members; but, it cannot be said that they have had greater success in retaining them once they have joined.

- As to the so-called “age” factor: Delegates sent here by the sections should be able to provide the convention with concrete information on how it affects the sections’ ability to carry on SLP activity and what, if any, discernible effect it has had on their efforts to attract younger members. What the national office knows for a fact, however, is that the membership is made up of people of all ages, ranging from their early 20s to the three I know of who have passed their 100th birthdays. There are members who are in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s, as well as others in their 70s, 80s and 90s.

- What may be said with absolute certainty is that a majority—between 58 and 59 percent—of all members of SLP *sections* are above retirement age. These days, of course, that can mean anything from the late 50s and early 60s on up the scale. While the national office does not have a record of the actual ages of each and every member, the reality probably is that about half the total membership, including members-at-large, is above retirement age and that half is of working age.

- According to records kept by the national office, over 39 percent of all members of the SLP today were admitted to membership after January 1, 1964. This figure also excludes members transferred from disbanding federations. While this fact alone cannot tell us anything concrete about the age range of members having less than 25 years of membership experience behind them, it is highly probable that a ma-

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jority of those admitted since 1964 are still of working age. Your National Secretary, for example, was admitted in 1966 and is 45 years old.

Pursuing this a bit farther, national office records also indicate that about six percent of all members today were admitted between 1964 and 1969, that 13 percent were admitted between 1970 and 1979, and that about 20 percent of all SLP members today were admitted sometime after January 1, 1980. In fact, over 17 percent of the total membership have been members for five years or less.

The aging process obviously brings its own set of problems which have an effect on the ability of the sections and members to conduct the activities that are essential to attracting new membership to the SLP. That question, and how it can be dealt with in a constructive fashion, has been brought before at least three recent national conventions. For example, the following is taken from the report to the 1984 convention:

“Advancing age itself obviously is not a problem we can overcome. However, unless we are prepared to ‘write off’ a large portion of our present membership this convention will have to come up with constructive and practical programs that most of our veteran members can participate in on a consistent basis. Union work and certain facets of intervention activities are automatically ruled out of consideration for obvious reasons. And, as the above cited letter from the organizer of one of our most important sections indicates, a simple recommendation for an increase in activities will no longer fit the bill.

“While bringing this problem to your attention, I also want to emphasize the fact that much, possibly most, of the activity now conducted is the work of our veteran membership. The problem of getting the younger membership to take a more active interest in the Party’s day-to-day work poses similar difficulties for us. Here, too, repeated calls for such increased participation have not met with a response that is equal to the Party’s needs. A number of suppositions on the reasons for this have been presented to previous conventions and need not be detailed here. The requirement now is for programs that will enable those members—young and old alike—who have the commitment to carry on the Party’s work to do so, while pursuing efforts to get a larger share of the whole membership more actively involved.”

Incidentally, the letter alluded to above came from the organizer of a section that reported a distribution of about 18,000 leaflets in 1983. What he wrote, in part, was that a resolution adopted by the NEC

urging an increase in leaflet distribution was “excellent, but the effect on Section...is problematical.” As he explained:

“We are without the personnel to augment the actions called for in the resolution. Sickness and old age is the handicap. The distribution of special issues of *The People* and distribution of leaflets are limited to so few, two or three members, who are also afflicted with the above ailments. However, we will do our best with the limits imposed by these handicaps.”

Yet, this same section went on to distribute more than 43,000 leaflets in 1984, increased that figure to nearly 57,000 in 1985, and reported a distribution of close to 105,000 in 1986!

No doubt there were extenuating circumstances that enabled this particular section to go on from such a gloomy assessment of itself to record such dramatic increases in leaflet distribution. But, whatever those extenuating circumstances were they did not include a major influx of new, young members. It was a core of two, three or four members who had the determination and the discipline to buckle down to the task.

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I can't be certain about what all these facts and figures will suggest to this convention. What they suggest to me, however, is that in spite of the disappointments and frustrations we have experienced in recent years we still retain a solid foundation on which to stand and to proceed in building a larger organization with an expanded capacity to conduct our work of education. We have a well-balanced membership in terms of age and experience, which is essential to ensuring the continuity of the Party and integrating new members into the organizational life of our subdivisions. Those subdivisions are strategically located in areas where large numbers of workers are accessible to our agitation, and we are aided by the breakdown of a capitalist social system that demonstrates the accuracy and the relevance of our Marxist-De Leonist principles and the Party's revolutionary program. And we are aided further by the fact that there are large numbers of honest and open-minded working-class men and women who are earnestly in search of precisely what the SLP has to offer them. We could hardly ask for more. The rest is entirely up to us.

The experience of the past four or five years has demonstrated that we do have the capacity to attract new membership from among the many thousands of workingmen and women who are in search of answers to the countless social problems that a decadent capitalist sys-

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tem produces, but cannot solve. We will not and cannot expect to keep all of those who are attracted by our efforts. There have been, and will continue to be, some who will decide that the SLP does not provide satisfactory answers for them. For the most part, however, these honest differences of opinion will lead to nothing more than those people quietly dropping out or resigning to look elsewhere for their answers. Several examples from among the letters of resignation some of these newer members have submitted to the NEC over the past two years will suffice to illustrate the point:

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Member A was admitted in September 1985 and, for a time, seemed to hold some promise. In the end, however, he succumbed to the lure of reformism. As he put it:

“After giving the matter considerable thought, and weighing the positive and negative aspects of such a decision, I have decided to tender my resignation of membership in the SLP, for various cumulative reasons, the foremost being my desire to take a more active part in what is seen as the Socialist Movement, from which I believe the SLP is incorrectly isolated, and also to work in a vein of politics which the SLP would view as ‘reformist’ but which I have come to believe is necessary for interesting the average worker in the concept of socialism. Such activity will also allow me to deal more adequately with my personal frustrations with what is wrong in our society in the here and now, without postponing solutions to a socialist future....To this end I have opted to accept an offer of membership in the Socialist Party USA, through which I hope to stay active in the struggle....

“I would also state that I have no quarrel with the principles or goals of the SLP, and stand ready to assist the Party locally and nationally in whatever way I can.”

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Member B joined in December 1986 and resigned in April 1987, with the following explanation:

“Please accept my resignation as a member-at-large of the SLP. My reason for resigning my membership is that I no longer am in basic agreement with the ideas of Daniel De Leon which the party follows. I am resigning from the party, but will continue the revolutionary struggle in a different vein. I still feel at the time I joined the SLP, it was the best thing I’ve ever done. I feel that my continued membership would no longer be beneficial to either the party or myself. As we all know, there should be no disagreement in a revolutionary party as to what the policies and agenda of the party



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are. Knowing this, I resign my membership in the Socialist Labor Party....

“I wish the party all the future success....”

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Member C was admitted in January 1986 and resigned in May 1987. He gave this explanation:

“Please drop me from membership in the party.

“Nothing personal or anything. I’m just greatly disenchanted with American politics as a whole.....

“With great respect I am,

“Sincerely,

“Member C

“But be sure to keep sending me my *People* that I paid for!”

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Member D was less specific. He was admitted in September 1987 and submitted his resignation only one month later. His explanation was simple, and went like this:

“I am writing to request the NEC of the SLP to accept my resignation as a national member at large.

“I feel I have erred in seeking membership in the SLP, and feel corrective action is therefore demanded.

“Thank you.”

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Member E went to greater lengths to express his reasons for resigning, but not before he paid up his dues. His letter read as follows:

“Enclosed you will find three dollars (\$3.00) in cash to cover my dues for the period January through March, 1988.

“It is with a great deal of regret that I must ask you to accept my resignation as a member of the Socialist Labor Party. I joined the SLP in good faith and without the slightest intent to deceive anyone. Now, after 17 months of membership, a thorough study of the writings of Daniel De Leon and SLP literature, and a great deal of personal introspection, I have realized that there are several areas of wide variance between De Leonism and my own philosophy. The main differences lie in the areas of revolutionary strategies and procedures. I guess what it boils down to is that I am much more of a Leninist-Communist than I realized.

“Please be assured that I hold no animosity or sectarian ill will toward the SLP or any of its members. I have honestly come to realize that there are differences between the programs and strategies of the SLP and my own personal views of these matters and I feel that it would be in the best interests of both the Socialist Labor

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Party and myself if I were permitted to resign at this time. Thank you for your consideration.”

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Before moving on, it should be noted that efforts have been made to salvage some of these newer members. Those efforts, of course, have depended on the reason the member cites when submitting a resignation. One example will suffice to illustrate the point:

Last June, the NEC received the following letter of resignation from Member F:

“I’m making my request of resignation from the Socialist Labor Party because of personal problems I’ve been having. I still want to receive *The People* and still want to be a sympathizer for the Socialist Labor Party. I’ve learned a great deal about the brutality of international capitalism. One of my problems is I hurt my back at work in the winter of 1987 and my place of employment denied me of my workmen’s compensation. I recently seen an attorney and I’m going to try to get workmen’s compensation for my back injury. I’m working at another job now I got in March of this year, but if I continue to keep working I may end up crippled. Like Karl Marx said about the capitalist production in the workplace has a mortification effect on the body and it ruins the mind. If I don’t get compensation I will have to keep on working and my whole back will just get worse and worse and it can end up mortified. I wish more people were concerned about socialism. The world’s governments have their people brainwashed with propaganda. I wish the SLP the best of luck and to remember to always keep our goals in mind of building a socialist world.”

I replied with the following, which, I regret to say, did not have the desired effect:

“Dear Comrade...

“Your letter...has been on my desk for several days, and I must confess it has me baffled.

“I was very sorry to learn about the back injury you suffered on your old job, about your being denied workers’ compensation, and of your anxieties about possible further injury to your back. Yet, I am having a great deal of difficulty making the connection between these serious and genuine problems and your decision to submit a resignation from membership in the SLP.

“Your injury does not affect your political point of view or diminish your value as a member of the SLP. At most, it can limit you physically; but physical activity is only part of Party activity—and sometimes the less important part.

“The SLP needs members who have a first-hand knowledge of the

class struggle as much as it needs members who have an intricate knowledge of socialist principle and theory. We cannot do without any member who understands and acknowledges the correctness of the Party's principles and program. Every loss from among that group diminishes the Party and throws it backwards in a struggle that already confronts it with overwhelming problems.

"From what I know of you, and from what you say in your letter, you are a good and loyal member of the SLP. You should not let anything—much less a concrete grievance against capitalism—come between you and the organization that stands for the abolition of class rule and all that class rule implies.

"For those reasons, Comrade..., I beseech you to withdraw your resignation from membership and to stand by the SLP where you so clearly belong."

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All these letters of resignation tell us a great deal, not only about the individuals who wrote them, but also about the state of our class. Some suggest that the individual was confused, or may have had a better chance to "survive" as an SLP member if he had belonged to a section. Some were not salvageable and probably would not have been worth any effort to save them. Yet, there is not one antagonistic word toward the SLP, its principles, its program, or its membership among the lot of them. There is every reason to believe that the best of them might have been saved had the national office been in a better position to deal with them. In fact, there have been one or two who withdrew letters of resignation when circumstances allowed for such efforts being made. Perhaps similar efforts have been made by sections. If so, however, the national office is not aware of them.

New members are not the only members who drop out or resign. Since 1984, a total of 124 members have been removed for those two reasons. Fifty-nine of them were members who joined between 1984 and 1988. The majority (65) had been admitted prior to 1984, and a sizable share of that number had been members for a considerable number of years.

Some of these long-time members of the Party also submitted letters of resignation in which they offered their reasons for quitting the SLP. The several that follow—and the way they were handled—are as revealing and instructive in their own way as those from the newer members that I have just presented.

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Member G had been a consistently active member of the SLP for 18 years when the organizer of his section was suddenly taken ill. The

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organizer had to relinquish the office temporarily, and the other members rose to the occasion by planning an “emergency meeting.” The purpose of the meeting was to redivide the various duties and responsibilities of the members so that the section would function as smoothly as possible until the organizer was well enough to resume his regular duties. The general expectation was that Member G would be designated as organizer pro tem. But, before that meeting could be held, Member G informed other members that he planned to resign. Shortly thereafter, the section received the following:

“TO: Section...

“FROM: [Member G]...

“I hereby resign from the Socialist Labor Party.

“I am not resigning out of any disagreement with the Party and position, but due to my own failure to fulfill my duties and responsibilities as a party member. When asked to take over the party function as organizer and financial secretary from the ill Com. [Organizer]...; I could not, I simply can not accept responsibility for what I honestly consider a dead section. I can not give excuses, so I can only resign.

“Sincerely, [Member G]...”

When forwarding a copy of this statement to the national office the section simply reported that “the resignation of [Member G]...was accepted at our meeting...” There was no explanation of why it was accepted or what the section found acceptable about it.

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Members H and I had been members for 11 years when the organizer of their section sent the following to the national office:

“[Member H] wrote in stating that he and his wife...were resigning from the SLP. ‘I will always be sympathetic to the Socialist movement...but I feel that I must proceed toward it along my own path without the rules and restrictions of any group, at this time.’

“The members of [the] section...were not surprised at [H’s]...decision, as he seemed to be more involved in writing letters to his Senators and Representatives than with SLP matters. The...resignations were accepted unanimously.”

It seemed incongruous and inexplicable that this sudden decision to quit the SLP did not startle the section. Therefore, I wrote the section and raised several questions, as follows:

“With respect to [Members H and I]...: The section may not have

been taken by surprise, but the national office certainly was. Unless we have overlooked some previous correspondence bearing on their decision, we don't recall anything from the section alerting us to the possibility of their eventual resignations.

"While it may be too late for anything of a practical or positive nature to result with respect to [H and I]...can you tell us more of the background to this decision of theirs? The letters you say they were writing: Were they anti-socialist or reformist in content? If so, was the section aware of it and was it discussed with them? Was their letter-writing activity indicative of a demoralization on their part, a deterioration of principle?

"We need to know what factors lead members to make decisions of this kind just when we are in such great need of keeping every member of strong character and firm conviction to see us through this difficult period. We cannot afford to pass up any opportunity to shore up weak spots when they appear, or to tolerate them to the point where they begin to have a negative effect on others.

"Please try to provide us with some additional background so we can see if there is any lesson to be learned from this—for the national office, at least—wholly unexpected turn of events."

The organizer responded with a letter that shed some additional light on the background to these resignations and the section's handling of them. What he wrote, in part, was this:

"Re [H and I]...: None of us ever saw any of the letters [H] wrote to Senators, Governors, or other government officials. I always picked [him]...up on the way...to Section meetings. It was on these trips...that [Members 1, 2, 3] and I [talked] about his letters. On a few occasions he mentioned writing to some official at a section meeting. Most of the letters [he]...told us about were about cuts that had been made on his family's welfare allotment....On several occasions [he]...told us he may have to resign from the S.L.P. We were never able to get any specific reason...but believe he felt his membership...had something to do with having his welfare allotments cut. This matter was discussed thoroughly at our section meeting and we came to the conclusion there was nothing that could be done to prevent [H and I]...from resigning."

In fact, the section could have prevented these resignations by simply passing a motion to reject the letter from Members H and I, and by informing them that if they wished to drop out there was nothing that could be done to prevent them from doing so. In addition, they should have been informed that the reason they gave for submitting their resignations was not acceptable, which it was not.

But, the real question here is why these members' conduct was tol-

erated for so long and what the section believed was accomplished for the SLP by putting up with it.

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Member J had been a member of the SLP for 18 years. Early last year, it came to my attention that he had attended and taken an active part in the national convention of another political organization, which he later described as “left reformist.”

I wrote the member for an explanation, to which he responded promptly and in considerable detail. After this matter was brought to the attention of the NEC, I wrote the member again to remind him of the following ruling adopted in 1978:

“Ruling 5. SLP members shall not participate in or appear as speakers at rallies, forums, conventions, etc., held by other left organizations which are intended to build their own organizations.”

In response to this, Member J raised some questions about the wording and application of this ruling. He then added the following:

“In order to be absolutely certain that there is no misunderstanding about Ruling 5, does attendance at an event have the same meaning as participation...[?]”

“Please clarify this for me. Am I merely suggesting a distinction without a difference or is it necessary to change the wording of Ruling 5 to reflect Party intent to forbid attendance at such events?”

“As there is no ruling, it would appear, forbidding attendance at functions held by right-wing organizations, would an SLP member be in violation of the spirit of Ruling 5 by attending such a function in order to find out what that group might be doing locally?”

“I once attended a local organization meeting...just to see how much strength and support this religio-fascist outfit had locally...”

Startled and appalled, I responded to this member as follows:

“In answer to your first question: yes, attendance does have the same meaning as participation insofar as the Party’s prohibition is concerned....If you show sufficient interest in the activities of other political organizations to attend their functions you are, in effect, lending them aid and comfort.

“Where the specific ruling regarding ‘left’ organizations is concerned, it was thought necessary to adopt it because of our contact with them in connection with intervention work. No such distinction is necessary where ‘right wing’ groups are concerned since it is, or should be, apparent that we are to have nothing to do with them. No socialist should need a rule in writing where a clear-cut question

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of principle, if not plain gut instinct, is concerned. If idle curiosity proves a stronger force than moral revulsion, I would suggest that some serious 'soul-searching' is in order."

About a month later, the organizer informed the national office that the section had received a letter of resignation from Member J. A copy of that letter was enclosed, and read as follows:

"Dear Comrade...

"Please submit my resignation from the Socialist Labor Party to Section...at the next Section meeting.

"I am taking this step for personal reasons and it has nothing to do with any fundamental disagreement with the party and its program.

"After some serious soul-searching I have come to the conclusion that I cannot comply with the rules of the party in certain instances so I believe the honest thing to do is to simply resign instead of getting involved in some hassle that could lead to expulsion.

"I will never regret my years of association with the SLP as it has been a unique educational experience - not to mention the many fine people with whom I had the opportunity to work.

"Fraternally,..."

A few weeks later, the organizer informed me that "a motion to accept his [J's] resignation was unanimously passed" at a section meeting, and added: "Actually, his resignation did not come as a surprise." With that, the organizer went into the following, detailed explanation:

"In our general discussion preceding action on the resignation Comrade [No. 1]...recalled that years ago when he tended our booth at the...State Fair with [J]...,he expressed that he [J]...thought the SLP's rules in some areas were too restrictive. However, he never made a formal complaint to the section. Comrade [No. 2]...said that when a couple of years ago [J]...came to [town]...to attend a...Civil Liberties Union convention and asked [No. 2]...to accompany him to pass out SLP leaflets there, it was evident from the many greetings accorded [J]...and from snatches of conversations he overheard between conventioners and [J]...that he was a well-known activist within that group.

"The section has known that for the past ten or so years he expended a lot of his time, energy and talent—more so than for the SLP—to the Freedom from Religion Foundation. Our late Comrade [No. 3]...discussed this with him at one time, but he continued in that activity. It appeared his anti-religion letters received more print than SLP letters....

"We are unaware of his involvement in any other organization such as the [one]...at whose convention he participated....But then,

we would not have known of that situation without having been informed of it by the national office.”

The organizer’s letter was concluded on the following note:

“The section recognizes the crucial need to retain Party members when they are so hard to come by. However, it seems that [J]...is unable, or unwilling, to see that to whatever extent he aids reformist groups, he reduces his activity and effectiveness for the SLP. By giving support to them in deeds and words he gives the impression that capitalism can be reformed to become a better system. Apparently, continuation in such outside-of-Party activities means more to him than his Party membership. We felt that an attempt to get a clearer reason for his resignation would be a waste of our time and effort.”

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All too often, the sections’ reactions in instances such as those cited above appear to be motivated by an unusual tolerance of individual shortcomings. Such reactions are in marked contrast to the concern for, the interest in, and the dedication to the Party and its principles (tactical and otherwise) that they have so promptly and frequently demonstrated in other instances. The result is a gradual failure to create a strong and consistently principled environment.

Uncritical toleration of deviations from Party norms can only lead to a deterioration of the deviating member’s relationship with the Party and his/her commitment to its principles. Moreover, it contributes to an environment of demoralization that impacts on the other section members in varying degrees. It is also bound directly or indirectly to have an especially negative effect on new members who are usually admitted with the specific understanding that our Party is a principled and disciplined organization. Such new members are bound to see a glaring contradiction in the toleration of activity and attitudes that fly in the face of the sound revolutionary tactics and objectives that were impressed upon them as being universally adhered to within our Party.

The failure to deal promptly with deviations in an organizational—yet fraternal—manner encourages further deviation, often leading to the loss of the member when his/her actions have reached the point that either brings the individual into open conflict with Party principles or Party discipline or brings the individual to a parting of the way for his/her own reasons.

Accepting resignations based on premises that fly in the face of fact



and/or Party positions, policies and principles amounts to condoning or conceding the false premises. Such resignations should be rejected in no uncertain terms. This does not mean that in cases where the section is convinced that the individual is no longer fit for continued Party membership it should waste its time or energies in an effort to get, as the organizer cited above put it, “a clearer reason” for the resignation. What it does mean, is that it should be made emphatically clear to such individual that the onus for the resignation is on his/her shoulders. If in rejecting the resignation, the section concludes that there is no basis for charges the individual should be informed that the alternative available to him/her is to be dropped for nonpayment of dues.

For example: Member K had been a member for 17 years when he submitted a letter of resignation to the NEC, which read, in part, as follows:

“I hereby submit my resignation to the Socialist Labor Party because of recent developments involving the State....

“As a sole provider for my family of four, I need to protect my status as an employee of the State....With the employment situation the way it is I’m sure you people can understand this.

“Background and current political status checks have already begun on State employees in the auto emissions department. [The] Gov.-elect...is a true reactionary of the Reagan mold....

“...It is this current political status question I am concerned about. However, I will remain a close-sympathizer to the Socialist Cause.”

The NEC gave careful consideration to this matter before deciding that it should not and could not accept the reason this member offered for his decision to quit the SLP. The member was informed of the NEC’s decision, in part, as follows:

“In considering this matter, the NEC certainly empathized and sympathized with the situation you find yourself in. Yet, it is a situation that is not unique. Through the years SLP members—whether employed by the state or in private industry—have been confronted with similar situations. Some have bowed to the threat; others have not. Each had to decide the question for himself or herself. Some who refused to bow to such threats paid the price of loss of job; others, by standing up to them, did not.

“In any event, resigning from the Party in the face of such threats is tantamount to an admission that SLP membership is justification for discharge from employment. For the NEC to accept a resignation on such grounds would amount to the Party agreeing that SLP membership is somehow justification for such discharge.

“The Party does not accept resignations except on valid grounds. To accept your resignation on the grounds you offer would, in ef-

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fect, mean that the NEC acknowledges that membership in our Party is reprehensible. Accordingly, the NEC declined to accept your resignation.

“In the end, of course, only you can decide whether you must end your membership in order to protect your means of earning a living. However, it is not clear how ending your membership would affect a check on your background. Indeed, it is not clear what a ‘background and current political status check’ is from your letter, or why you believe yourself vulnerable to such a check.

“For your information and guidance, however, the alternative to rejection of a resignation for nonvalid grounds is being dropped for nonpayment of dues.”

This member never responded. He was eventually dropped for nonpayment of dues.

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There is one more point related to the general question of “Party-building” that has not been mentioned, but which continues to generate a certain amount of heat and controversy within the Party. I am referring to expulsions, the effect they have on the Party’s efforts to attract and retain membership, and the passionate energy they frequently consume.

Contrary to what some members may believe, the SLP does not, and never did, fit De Leon’s description of the “organization” that “partakes of the nature of the lizard, whose tail destroys what its foreparts build up.”

As indicated, the NEC found it necessary to expel a member-at-large in 1988. That was the only expulsion during the year. Shortly after that expulsion was reported to the sections, the national office received the following from a section organizer:

“Dear Comrade Bills:

“Re: [L]...expelled

“The Section wishes to go on record that it is very disturbed that it somehow became necessary to expel a member from the SLP at anytime, but especially now, in our weakened condition. When these things happen, we cannot help but feel that we are not getting enough information, and, of course, are at a loss to see what can be done to prevent such occurrences in the future.

“We realize there are very valid reasons for members to be expelled or to leave the Party voluntarily, such as basic disagreement with De Leonism. In rereading the minutes of NEC monthly meetings, this does not seem to be the case, rather one in which a member got embroiled in an argument with the N.O. over information

he had asked for from the N.O., however, sharply he may have worded his request, and a letter he wrote Comrade [X]. We note that he wrote, 'If the NEC should decide against the above realities,' he 'would abide by that decision until such time as it is changed and I request that I be informed of the exact rule or provision allegedly violated.' (Re minutes NEC Dec. 17, 1987.)

"It would seem from this quote that the Party had its assurances the man would abide by the decisions of the NEC. What would lead a member to feel he or she was being asked to take a loyalty oath? We feel that given the spirit that enables one to join a Party such as ours where we have to fight every inch of the way, not only the capitalist class, but ignorant, propagandized, members of the working class, the kind of member that expresses resentment, as described in the Feb. 16 NEC meeting report, may be the kind we need many more of.

"This letter is not meant as a criticism of the N.O. or the NEC, or of what they felt had to be their final decision; rather it is a[n] attempt to see if we can get at the heart of what seems to have plagued our Party for many years. Perhaps, we need to rethink our present modus operandi. Some change may have to be made, particularly because of the number of members-at-large that are coming into the Party, that are not subject to counsel from a Section or more experienced Party members. In the meantime, our Section plans to discuss this further and hopefully come up with some recommendations.

"Best wishes,

"Fraternally,  
"Section Organizer"

A great deal could be said about this letter and the attitude it reflects. It is a jumble of contradiction, naive reasoning, garbled facts and unfortunate insinuations. I have included it here partly because it affords the opportunity to address the general question of expulsion, but also because the response it received was never acknowledged. That response was as follows:

"This is in reference to the section's letter...'Re: [L]...expelled.' My primary purpose here is to inform the section that its letter was presented to the NEC...and that its wish 'to go on record' as being 'very disturbed' by the [L]...expulsion, and by expulsions in general, has been attended to.

"I am puzzled by the section's feeling that it did not receive enough information about the [L]...matter. In fact, it received a considerable amount of information, and much more than it would have received had [L]...been a member of a section instead of a national member-at-large.

"Beyond that, the section says it has the impression that the NEC

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expelled [L]...because he argued with the national office, and that it got that impression by reading the NEC ‘minutes.’ I can only say that, somehow, the section got the wrong impression; but, I cannot tell how it got that wrong impression because it failed to cite anything from the ‘minutes’ as a source.

“What the NEC summaries actually record is the national office’s *refusal* to engage in any argument with [L]..., and that he was expelled for a ‘willful and deliberate refusal to comply with binding rulings of the NEC.’ Indeed, that is the only ‘valid reason’ for the NEC to expel.

“The section says that expulsions have ‘plagued the Party for many years,’ and that our ‘modus operandi’ ought to be reviewed with an eye to ‘changes’ being made, ‘particularly because of the number of members-at-large coming into the Party,’ etc.

“Frankly, this is incomprehensible, especially as it relates to the [L]...matter specifically and to members-at-large generally. For one thing, he did not enter the SLP as a national member-at-large. He was admitted by a section and became a member-at-large later. For another, he is the first member-at-large to be expelled in well over *20 years!* With that single exception, every other member expelled in that time has, to borrow the section’s language, been ‘subject to counsel from a section or more experienced Party members.’ Indeed, the majority of those expelled *were* more experienced members!

“Incidentally, it may interest the section to know that in spite of all the attention they grab and emotion they seem to evoke, expulsions have been the least of the Party’s problems when it comes to losing members. Expulsions have accounted for only 10 percent of all membership losses since 1940, and for less than *5 percent* of such losses since 1970. In fact, from 1970 through 1987 only 38 members were expelled, while 306 died, 226 dropped out and 204 quit.

“Fraternally yours,  
“ROBERT BILLS  
“National Secretary”

The SLP will never wholly escape from organizational controversies and disputes that result in expulsions occurring from time to time. However, I cannot keep from wondering what would have been the result for the Party had half the time, effort and energy that was consumed by the 240 expulsions that have taken place since 1941 had been devoted to trying to salvage some of the 981 members who were dropped for nonpayment of dues and 374 members who resigned over that same span of years.

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The SLP is the organizational embodiment of a principle, and we

are its caretakers. As long as we keep sight of that fact and act up to the responsibility it imposes on us we will succeed in our efforts to advance that principle and to build up the organization. But, to the extent that we lose sight of it and fail to act up to it, we will suffer setbacks. As De Leon so ably expressed it:

“The modern revolutionist knows full well that man is not superior to principle, that principle is superior to man, but he does not fly off the handle with the maxim, and thus turn the maxim into absurdity. He firmly couples the maxim with this other that no principle is superior to the movement or organization that puts it and upholds it in the field....He knows that in the revolution demanded by our age, Organization must be the incarnation of Principle. Just the reverse of the reformer, who will ever be seen mocking at science, the revolutionist will not make a distinction between the Organization and the Principle. He will say: ‘The Principle and the Organization are one.’” (*Reform or Revolution*)

It is not possible to place too much emphasis, or to remind ourselves too often, of what De Leon so eloquently stated in these passages. To the extent that we keep it foremost in our thinking and our attitude we will record progress; but, to the extent we lose sight of it we will succeed only in undermining our own efforts.

If we act up to this in the months ahead, I am confident that when we gather to convene the 40th National Convention two years from now, the State of Organization section of the report to that convention will be one in which the “good news” will outweigh the “bad news,” and we will be able to look to the future with renewed confidence in the ultimate success of our cause.

To repeat what I said at the outset: I believe a strong case can be made that the SLP still has the capacity to confront its problems and to “turn itself around.” Our assets as an organization do outweigh the numerous and admittedly serious problems we face. It will take a lot of hard work, a great deal of dedicated effort, and a large measure of moral courage to confront and successfully overcome those problems. But, in the words of Daniel De Leon:

“If you are shaky in the knees, if your in’ards are likely to get beyond control, and your heart subject to palpitations, then by all means step aside. We won’t call you names (unless you cross our fire line, pretending to set up your timidity as worthy of emulation). The Socialist Movement of America will not degenerate into an asylum for intellectual petulance. Its waters are to be cleaved with ‘breasts of controversy.’ It needs men [and women], firm, deter-

mined, unswerving.” (*The People*, March 25, 1900)

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A motion to refer the “State of Organization—II” section of the National Secretary’s report to an appropriate committee when elected was passed.

The National Secretary presented the following section of his report:

## GENERAL ACTIVITIES

### **Leaflet Distribution**

Leaflet distribution declined in 1988 when compared to 1987. The 17 existing sections accounted for the distribution of 123,488 leaflets last year and 149,532 the year before. Members-at-large increased their total distribution from 28,664 in 1987 to 32,586 in 1988.

Six sections distributed more leaflets last year than the year before. Section Los Angeles recorded the best performance in this regard. However, Sections Wayne County and Philadelphia distributed the largest numbers of leaflets in 1988. Their totals were 26,507 and 26,580, respectively. From among the members-at-large, Comrade David Bradia may be singled out as having distributed the largest number of leaflets (10,800) in 1988. That figure accounted for 33 percent of the entire distribution by the membership-at-large. Three sections—Eastern Massachusetts, Allegheny County and Seattle—failed to report any distribution in 1988.

The total distribution for all sections and members-at-large reported in 1985-1986 was 567,860. If we discount the distribution reported by sections disbanded since 1985 that figure may be reduced to 518,305. When this figure is compared to the total reported over the last two years (334,270) the result is a decline of more than 35 percent.

The decline in leaflet distribution may be attributable, in part, to the fact that no new leaflets have been published in quite some time. The editorial staff, of course, is keenly aware of the need for new leaflets on a fairly regular basis, and that there is no shortage of topics. The national office also is conscious of the need. Filling that need, however, presents another problem. That it has not been met is a further reflection of the extreme pressures the editorial staff has been under. Without an adequately-sized staff of experienced and competent writers, without articles coming in from the field on a regular and reliable basis, there is not much more the editorial staff can do than “churn out

copy.” The situation is such that it became impossible even to maintain the card catalogue index of each issue, which is an indispensable aid to editorial office work. Fortunately, a member who uses his personal computer to maintain his own index offered to share it with the editorial department. Helpful though that is, the need for an expanded editorial staff and for a steady flow of articles from SLP writers in the field has not been filled. Until it is, there is little likelihood that many new leaflets will appear.

### ***The People***

The difference in free distribution of *The People* between 1987 and 1988 was marginal. Six sections increased their efforts in this regard last year, as did the members-at-large, while two sections—New York City and Allegheny County—failed to report any distribution. The total distribution reported to the national office in 1988 was 94,618, of which 80,716 were accounted for by sections and 13,902 by members-at-large. The total figure may be compared to 1987, when reports of 95,786 free copies of *The People* being distributed were received by the national office.

In this connection, special note ought to be taken of Comrades Marie & Ray Simmons of Section Akron, Ohio, who accounted for nearly 26 percent of all free copies of *The People* distributed by sections in 1987-1988. Among the members-at-large, Comrade Gordon Long stands out. His distribution of 10,400 copies of *The People* last year accounted for nearly 75 percent of all copies distributed by members-at-large! These three members are to be commended. More important, however, their example should be emulated. If it was, *The People* and the Party would be much better known in the important metropolitan areas where sections are located or should be organized.

As suggested by the preceding figures, the total free distribution of *The People* for the last two years came to 190,404. The total distribution in 1985-1986 came to 249,112, or 245,424 when we discount disbanded sections. Based on the latter figure, free distribution of *The People* declined by more than 22 percent.

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As reported under another heading, members-at-large now make up about 37 percent of the Party's total membership. As suggested by the preceding figures, however, they accounted for only 16 percent of the total distribution in 1988. How to reduce this imbalance is a special problem this convention should address. The delegates sent here

by the members-at-large should be able to make an important contribution in this regard.

### **Newsstands**

Based on reports received by the national office, nine sections operated a total of 145 self-service newsstands to start 1987. In addition, members-at-large in four cities serviced one or more self-service newsstands, as follows: Phoenix, Az. (2); San Diego, Ca. (5); Grand Rapids, Mich. (6); and Rochester, N.Y. (1). A fifth member-at-large in Bend, Ore., set one up during the year. Several other changes occurred before the end of the year that resulted in a net gain of self-service newsstands in operation. The nine sections and five members-at-large ended the year with a total of 165 newsstands on the streets in eight states. By the end of 1988, however, that number had slipped to 149 operated by the same nine sections and members-at-large.

Section San Francisco Bay Area, which had 51 self-service newsstands in operation in several cities to start 1989, still leads the way in this department, followed by Sections Philadelphia (23), Portland (20), Sacramento (18) and Los Angeles (16). A complete list of self-service newsstands in operation in each of the last two years, together with sales and maintenance costs, will be found at the end of this section.

There have been few reports of official interference with self-service newsstand operations in the last two years. However, vandalism appears to have increased and has been a major factor in reducing the number of stands in operation. As Section San Francisco Bay Area reported recently:

“A combination of vandalism by growing numbers of destitute people, and construction in downtown San Francisco has been hurting our newsstand operation. We are gradually shifting more newsstands to the South Bay and Berkeley to compensate, but the number under repair, and the time required to find new people to service stands has hurt us.”

*The People* is carried by 29 commercial newsstands at the present time. Six of these are located in the San Francisco Bay Area, five in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, three in Cleveland and two apiece in Chicago and Portland. The others are located in 12 cities in several states. The charts at the end of this section are based on information reported to the national office by sections and individual members, and do not include all the commercial newsstands mentioned here.

In spite of the problems sections and members-at-large experience,



newsstands—commercial and self-service—are an important outlet for *The People*. Sections and members should do everything possible to increase their efforts in this area. Where self-service newsstands can't be operated because of local ordinances or other obstacles, then commercial outlets become the obvious alternative. But, these also should be sought out in larger numbers regardless of the number of self-service newsstands in operation.

### **Study Classes and Discussion Groups**

Two years ago, under this same heading, it was stated that “SLP study classes and discussion groups have all but vanished as a regular activity of the sections.” From reports received from sections in the last two years, there has been no improvement.

In 1987, three sections reported holding a total of 15 study class sessions. Last year, the total reported was nine—all by Section San Francisco Bay Area. The two-year total of 24 study class sessions may be compared with the 1985-1986 figure of 38 sessions held by four sections.

Study classes, of course, are not something that can be held on an erratic or infrequent basis if they are to serve their intended purpose. The study class offered by Section San Francisco Bay Area was a complete beginner's class. Given the number of sessions reported by the other sections who made some effort in this area, it is doubtful that those classes were ever completed.

Why sections don't hold more study classes, and what can be done to reverse the trend before they vanish entirely, is something this convention should consider. No doubt any number of possible reasons can be suggested to explain their virtual disappearance—from lack of attendance, to lack of appropriate and up-to-date study materials, lack of competent instructors, inadequate publicity, etc., etc. Whether these obstacles are as real and difficult to contend with as the numbers seem to suggest also should receive a share of the convention's attention. If the obstacles can be met and overcome, at least by some of the larger sections, the effect could only be a positive one.

The number of discussion group sessions held by sections in 1987-1988 was exactly equal to the number held in 1985-1986. In 1987, five sections sponsored a total of 34 such sessions. Last year a total of 27 were held, also by five sections, bringing the two-year total to 61. However, 24 of the 34 held in 1987 and 15 of the 27 held in 1988 were sponsored by Section Portland.

In addition, members-at-large in Miami, Fla., and Iowa City, Ia.,

held a combined total of 17 discussion group sessions in 1987-1988. Since then, however, the Iowa members have moved and are now members of a section in another part of the country.

Another area of activity that has declined is that of public lectures and school appearances. Six sections reported a total of 50 section- or school-sponsored lectures in 1985-1986. Six sections reported again in 1988, but the total number of lectures and school appearances was only 19. The members-at-large in Miami and Iowa City added to the total by reporting three public lectures.

If, as is often suggested, the indoor lecture is doomed to follow the outdoor meeting into extinction, there may not be much to gain by mourning over its demise. But, there is a great deal to lose if this also means that the SLP is to be rendered entirely mute on the local level. Without lectures, study classes and discussion groups—or their equivalent—some new medium will have to be developed. The first thing that pops to mind, of course, is the videotape. Yet, whatever potential this may have for spreading the SLP message, it can hardly be expected to provide the same training ground for speakers and instructors that lectures, study classes and discussion groups provide.

New devices like videotape should be added to the SLP arsenal for whatever real potential they have. However, it is a fact that people in appreciable and even large numbers do participate in political events, such as demonstrations, conferences, etc., that require them to leave TV and VCR behind. Why we fail to attract our “fair share” of what are presumably politically motivated people is another question that should be discussed at this convention. If our methods are at fault, then new methods should be decided on. If we are at fault, then we must do better. What we cannot afford, however, is to ignore the problem.

### **Fund-Raisers and Socials**

Another area of concern under the heading of General Activities is the decline in the number of fund-raising social affairs held by sections. Two more such affairs were held in 1988 than in 1987, but the two-year total of 116 was down from 143 in 1985-1986. A total of eight affairs were held by members-at-large in Miami, Iowa City and Duluth, Minn., which boosted the overall figure to 124.

Sections Los Angeles and Wayne Co. continue to lead the way in this area of activity, with 21 and 20 fund-raising affairs, respectively. Sections San Francisco Bay Area (16), Akron (16) and Cleveland (12) were next in line, followed by Sections Philadelphia (8), Sacramento

(6), St. Petersburg (6), Portland (4), Seattle (4), and Minneapolis with three. The Duluth members did as well as some sections with six affairs being sponsored in 1987-1988. Six sections failed to hold any fund-raisers during the entire two-year period.

### Contacts

The national office received a total of 442 inquiries from all sources in 1987 and 578 inquiries in 1988. These figures include 288 in the form of leaflet coupons and 101 from coupons and pamphlet ads clipped from *The People* for the two-year period. They also include 160 inquiries from students and teachers, 139 of which were received during the 1988 presidential election campaign year.

The influx of student/teacher inquiries in 1988 tends to distort the picture in some respects. If they are discounted, the total number of inquiries received during 1987-1988 was 860. By disregarding this particular source of inquiries, the number received in 1987 was 421 and the number in 1988 was 439.

Working with these figures, we find that more than 33 percent of all inquiries were received as a direct result of leaflet distribution. A total of 288 such inquiries were received during the 1987-1988 period. Not surprisingly, this figure was substantially less than the number received in 1985-1986. As indicated, leaflet distribution declined by 35 percent in 1987-1988 when compared to the preceding two years. The decline in leaflet contacts came to 31 percent.

Contacts received from all sources in 1987-1988 resulted in the addition of 269 new subscriptions for *The People*. Students and teachers who wrote in for information for class projects did not contribute toward that total. Accordingly, about 31 percent of the 860 other contacts received took out subscriptions to *The People*. Leaflet coupon returns resulted in the addition of 153 of those 269 new subscriptions added. From that we have determined that 53 percent of all those who send for information after receiving a leaflet take out a subscription to *The People* at the same time.

In this connection, it may also be noted that 203 of the 288 leaflet returns received by the national office in 1987-1988 resulted from distribution by the 17 sections, and that 111 of the 153 new subscriptions received off leaflet coupons also came from those areas. In other words, while 53 percent of all leaflet returns include a subscription, 73 percent of those from section areas resulted in subscriptions.

All contact names, of course, are promptly forwarded to the sections and to active members-at-large for follow-up. In addition, these

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names are also added to the national mailing list, as are the names of all expired subscribers to *The People*. Periodic mailings, such as the three that brought a return of 282 subscriptions last year, help to keep the list current.

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LEAFLET DISTRIBUTION (1987–1988)

<b>Sections</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>Total</b>
Los Angeles, Calif.	14,030	20,439	34,469
Sacramento, Calif.	18,280	19,765	38,045
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	8,160	6,646	14,806
Denver, Colo.	3,876	2,870	6,746
St. Petersburg, Fla.	6,950	1,065	8,015
Cook Co., Ill.	12,250	7,600	19,850
Eastern Mass.	220	0	220
Wayne Co., Mich.	39,053	26,507	65,560
Minneapolis, Minn.	1,350	3,000	4,350
New York City	0	1,100	1,100
Akron, Ohio	0	3,905	3,905
Cleveland, Ohio	920	2,700	3,620
Portland, Ore.	1,120	741	1,861
Allegheny Co., Pa.	0	0	0
Philadelphia, Pa.	41,775	26,580	68,355
Seattle, Wash.	250	0	250
Milwaukee, Wis.	1,298	570	1,868
Members-At-Large	28,664	32,586	61,250
<b>Totals</b>	<b>178,196</b>	<b>156,074</b>	<b>334,270</b>

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DISTRIBUTION OF "THE PEOPLE" (1987-1988)

<b>Sections</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Los Angeles, Calif.	1,817	2,481	4,298
Sacramento, Calif.	3,875	3,805	7,680
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	17,080	10,352	27,432
Denver, Colo.	820	744	1,564
St. Petersburg, Fla.	1,266	3,182	4,448
Cook Co., Ill.	16,544	12,327	28,871
Eastern Mass.	2,910	1,500	4,410
Wayne Co.	11,590	7,356	18,946
Minneapolis, Minn.	2,910	4,820	7,730
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, Ohio	19,950	23,564	43,514
Cleveland, Ohio	400	2,925	3,325
Portland, Ore.	2,205	2,323	4,528
Allegheny Co., Pa.	0	0	0
Philadelphia, Pa.	2,623	2,327	4,950
Seattle, Wash.	2,160	2,100	4,260
Milwaukee, Wis.	712	910	1,622
Members-At-Large	8,924	13,902	22,826
<b>Totals</b>	<b>95,786</b>	<b>94,618</b>	<b>190,404</b>

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NEWSSTANDS (1987)

Location	Commercial Jan.-Dec.		Self-Serve Jan-Dec.		Sales	Costs	Net
1. Phoenix	0	0	2	2	0	26.00	26.00-
2. Los Angeles	0	0	16	16	184.68	383.81	199.13-
3. Sacramento	0	0	16	16	187.00	128.00	59.00+
4. San Diego	0	0	5	4	95.00	78.00	17.00+
5. S.F. Bay Area	9	11	60	61	1,175.90	1,120.14	55.76+
6. St. Petersburg	0	0	3	4	64.00	53.24	10.76+
7. Grand Rapids	0	0	6	6	71.66*	55.37*	16.29+*
8. Wayne Co.	1	1	5	5	106.49	140.40	33.91-
9. Minneapolis	1	1	1	3	7.04	93.60	86.56-
10. New York City	1	1	0	0	**	41.60	**
11. Rochester	0	0	1	1	2.66	45.24	42.58-
12. Bend, OR	0	0	0	1	**	15.20	**
13. Portland	1	2	20	20	218.00	190.35	27.65+
14. Philadelphia	0	0	24	26	324.63	1,420.64	1,096.01-
TOTALS	13	16	159	165	\$2,437.06	\$3,791.59	\$1,297.73-

\*July-December only

\*\*Not available

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NEWSSTANDS (1988)

Location	Commercial Jan.–Dec.		Self-Serve Jan–Dec.		Sales	Costs	Net
1. Phoenix	0	0	2	2	0	26.00	26.00-
2. Los Angeles	0	0	16	16	204.74	825.37	620.63-
3. Sacramento	0	0	18	18	131.00	128.00	3.00+
4. San Diego	0	0	4	3	95.40	78.00	17.40+
5. S.F. Bay Area	11	7	61	51	1,062.37	1,341.48	279.11-
6. St. Petersburg	0	0	4	4	98.30	60.00	38.30+
7. Grand Rapids	0	0	5	5	40.41*	52.00*	11.59-*
8. Wayne Co.	1	1	5	3	76.35	140.40	64.05-
9. Minneapolis	1	1	3	3	5.04	93.60	88.56-
10. New York City	1	1	0	0	**	41.60	**
11. Rochester	0	0	1	1	3.50	62.14	58.64-
12. Bend, OR	0	0	1	0	1.75	20.80	19.05-
13. Portland	2	2	20	20	216.00	203.33	12.67+
14. Philadelphia	0	0	26	23	357.89	327.98	29.91+
TOTALS	16	12	166	149	\$2,292.75	\$3,400.70	\$1,066.35-

\* July-December only

\*\* Not available



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STUDY CLASS SESSIONS (1987 - 1988)

<b>Sections</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Los Angeles, CA	0	0	0
Sacramento, CA	0	0	0
S.F. Bay Area, CA	8	9	17
Denver, CO	0	0	0
St. Petersburg, FL	0	0	0
Cook Co., IL	1	0	1
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., MI	0	0	0
Minneapolis, MN	0	0	0
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, OH	0	0	0
Cleveland, OH	0	0	0
Portland, OR	0	0	0
Allegheny Co., PA	0	0	0
Philadelphia, PA	6	0	6
Seattle, WA	0	0	0
Milwaukee, WI	0	0	0
<hr/>			
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>

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DISCUSSION GROUP SESSIONS (1987 - 1988)

<b>Sections</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Los Angeles, CA	0	0	0
Sacramento, CA	0	0	0
S.F. Bay Area, CA	0	0	0
Denver, CO	4	0	4
St. Petersburg, FL	0	1	1
Cook Co., IL	2	2	4
Eastern Mass.	1	0	1
Wayne Co. MI	0	0	0
Minneapolis, MN	0	0	0
New York City	0	3	3
Akron, OH	0	0	0
Cleveland, OH	3	0	3
Portland, OR	24	15	39
Allegheny Co., PA	0	0	0
Philadelphia, PA	0	6	6
Seattle, WA	0	0	0
Milwaukee, WI	0	0	0
<hr/>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>61</b>
<u>Members-At-Large</u>			
Miami, FL	7	6	13
Iowa City, IA	4	0	4
<hr/>			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>78</b>

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PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LECTURES (1987 - 1988)

<b>Sections</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Los Angeles, CA	0	0	0
Sacramento, CA	1	3	4
S.F. Bay Area, CA	1	4	5
Denver, CO	0	0	0
St. Petersburg, FL	3	1	4
Cook Co., IL	2	2	4
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., MI	0	0	0
Minneapolis, MN	0	0	0
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, OH	0	0	0
Cleveland, OH	0	0	0
Portland, OR	0	0	0
Allegheny Co., PA	0	0	0
Philadelphia, PA	1	0	1
Seattle, WA	1	0	1
Milwaukee, WI	0	0	0
<hr/>			
Total	9	10	19
Members-at-Large			
Miami, FL	0	1	1
Iowa City, IA	2	0	2
<hr/>			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>

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FUND-RAISERS AND SOCIALS (1987 - 1988)

<b>Sections</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Los Angeles, CA	11	10	21
Sacramento, CA	3	3	6
S.F. Bay Area, CA	8	8	16
Denver, CO	0	0	0
St. Petersburg, FL	1	5	6
Cook Co., IL	0	0	0
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., MI	10	10	20
Minneapolis, MN	2	1	3
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, OH	6	10	16
Cleveland, OH	7	5	12
Portland, OR	2	2	4
Allegheny Co., PA	0	0	0
Philadelphia, PA	4	4	8
Seattle, WA	3	1	4
Milwaukee, WI	0	0	0
<hr/>			
Total	57	59	116
Members-at-Large			
Miami, FL	0	1	1
Iowa City, IA	1	0	1
Duluth, MN	3	3	6
<hr/>			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>124</b>

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CONTACTS

<u>Sources</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Leaflets	146	142	288
Miscellaneous	146	144	290
Ads in <i>The People</i>	43	58	101
Ads in Other Publications	21	43	64
Requests for Campaign Literature	2	31	33
Students/Teachers	21	139	160
Sign-up Sheets (From SLP Literature Tables)	52	13	65
Radio/TV	10	0	10
Local Fliers	1	1	2
<u>Nat'l Office Mailings</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>1,020</b>

SUBSCRIPTIONS FROM CONTACTS

	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Four-month	93	109	202
One-year	31	29	60
Two-year	0	1	1
Three-year	1	3	4
<u>Bundle subs</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>269</b>

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A motion to refer the “General Activities” section of the National Secretary’s report to an appropriate committee when elected was passed.

At 3:30 p.m. a motion was made and seconded to recess for five minutes. The motion failed.

The National Secretary presented the following section of his report:

### PARTY PRESS AND LITERATURE

#### *The People*

*The People*, of course, is our most effective propaganda tool. Its importance as a source of new membership was demonstrated at our last convention, where it was reported “that 25 of the 95 new members admitted to the SLP since January 1, 1984, made their first contact with the Party when they responded to one of our ads [in other publications] and subscribed...” Though fewer new members were admitted in 1987-1988 than 1984-1986, the proportion of those whose initial interest can be traced to *The People* increased from 26 percent in the earlier period to 27 percent in the latter one. That figure can be adjusted upward to 32 percent if the additions made since January 1, 1989, are included.

The decline in the number of membership applications received in 1987-1988 is almost certainly linked to the fact that the subscription list also declined, from more than 3,700 in April 1985 to less than 2,600 in June 1988. In spite of that decline, *The People* received a sufficient number of renewals in 1987 and 1988 for the national office to send out a total of 797 letters to renewing subscribers offering to send information on how to join the SLP.

The national office received 86 responses to that letter in 1987-1988, and 35 additional requests that could not be traced back to subscription renewals. Many of those additional requests, however, were in response to a similar offer that appeared in *The People* on a regular basis until a few months ago.

A total of 121 “membership information packets,” which include a membership application form, were mailed out in 1987-1988. Forty of those were mailed to areas that fall within the jurisdiction of sections. The net result was that the NEC received applications from nine readers. Eight of those applications were accepted and those who submitted them were added to the list of members-at-large. As indicated, those eight accounted for about 27 percent of all new members admit-

ted in 1987-1988.

Since last June, as will be seen, the subscription list has been increased by more than 19 percent and, as of this writing, more than half as many new members have been admitted during the first quarter of 1989 as were admitted in all of 1988.

As shown elsewhere in this report, only 20 percent of all new members admitted in 1987-1988 were added to the list of section membership, while 80 percent of those additions were made by the NEC. Based on figures extrapolated from the "zone analysis" of a recent issue (February 25, 1989), it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this imbalance can be traced to the distribution of the readership throughout the country. On the basis of that one issue, it appears that 38 percent of subscription copies are mailed to readers who reside within the greater metropolitan areas in which the 17 sections are centered, while 62 percent are mailed to readers that fall within the broader jurisdiction of the NEC.

I can think of no better way to illustrate the fact that we must not only find ways to increase the subscription list of *The People*, but of increasing the readership within those areas where our sections are located. If that can be done in appreciable numbers, there is every reason to believe that the sections could increase the rate at which they are admitting new members and make gains that would result in a net increase in membership for the Party as a whole.

Accordingly, the delegates sent to this convention by the sections should devote a share of their time and effort here to formulating concrete and practical steps their sections can implement to increase the readership of *The People* in their respective areas. And following this convention, they should take an active part to insure that these measures are, in fact, implemented at the local level.

Similarly, delegates sent here by the members-at-large should contribute by providing the convention with information on the special problems that confront that increasingly important segment of the membership, and how to involve them in efforts to increase the readership in their own localities. If *The People* is the principal factor at work in adding to the list of members-at-large, it is also the key to adding sufficient numbers of them to organize new sections where none exist at the present time.

At present, *The People* is mailed to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and at least 22 other countries around the world. The paid circulation for each of the last two years, as reported to the U.S. Postal Service every October, was as follows:

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	Subscription Copies	Bundle Copies	Circulation
1987	3,069	7,309	10,378
1988	2,751	6,473	9,224
1989	2,989	6,611	9,600

The 1989 figures shown are averages that have accumulated during the first half of the current reporting period, from October 1988 through March 1989. The paid circulation of the most recent issue for which figures were available (March 25) totaled 7,457 copies, of which 3,138 were mailed to subscribers and 4,319 were mailed or shipped in bundles to readers and distributors here and abroad. A finer breakdown of the two issues published in March 1989 combined provides a clearer picture of how each issue was distributed:

Domestic Subscriptions	3,011
Foreign Subscriptions	103
Domestic Bundles	3,902
<u>Foreign Bundles</u>	<u>431</u>
Total	7,447

To complete the picture, it should be noted that 359 libraries in the U.S. are included among the domestic subscriptions and 13 libraries are included among the subscriptions mailed to other countries. Two additional libraries account for two bundles totaling 17 copies, suggesting that these may be distributed to branches. It should also be noted that subscription renewal rates have averaged 49-50 percent over the last two years.

Most of you are aware of the fact that the national office expended more than \$27,000 between 1982 and 1986 to promote *The People* by means of paid advertisements in other publications, and that the effort resulted in a net increase of nearly 26 percent in the number of U.S. subscribers between March 1983 and December 1984. Nothing was spent to promote *The People* by that means in 1987 prior to the national convention. By October 1987, however, it was decided that we could ill-afford not to promote *The People* in this way, regardless of other circumstances, and classified advertisements were placed with *The Nation* and, in December, *The Progressive*. A total of 103 ad placements were purchased, which have resulted in 139 new subscriptions being received. Classified ads placed with *Utne Reader* starting in January 1988, *The Guardian* in May 1988, *In These Times* in June



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1988, and *The Atlantic*, *Harper's* and *Mother Jones* in July 1988, have led to the addition of 221 more subscriptions since those ads began to appear. Since October 1, 1987, an additional 134 subscriptions, which cannot be identified with any specific publication, but which can be traced to advertising in general, have been received.

This effort to enlarge the subscription list is a modest one compared to the advertising campaign of 1982-1986. To date, our efforts in this area have entailed an expense of \$3,437.80, with which a total of 208 ad placements have been purchased. But, the results have been excellent and expenditures will be increased.

Three mailings to former subscribers and national office contacts in June, September and December of 1988 also resulted in additions to the subscription list. The first of these mailings went to 10,155 individuals and resulted in 159 subscriptions being received. The second went to 8,803 individuals who either failed to respond to the first mailing, or whose addresses had changed, and resulted in an additional 114 subscriptions being received. A third mailing to 522 individuals produced nine subscriptions. The total cost for these three mailings came to \$6,273.60, which included the printing of letters, envelopes, postage and return postage on a total of 19,480 subscription offer packets mailed. It should be noted that \$358 in contributions were sent in with some of these subscriptions, which helped reduce the net cost of those mailings by about seven percent.

All told, the three mailings and the classified ads mentioned accounted for 776 new subscriptions as of March 10, 1989. Since last July, the subscription department has processed 1,260 subscriptions, which may be compared to a total of 881 received between July 1987 and June 1988. The new subscriptions received as the result of mailings and advertising account for nearly 62 percent of all subscriptions received since July 1988.

While subscriptions have increased in recent months, bundle orders continue to decline. From the figures given above, it can be seen that bundles accounted for barely 58 percent of the total circulation in March 1989, compared to 70 percent of the total circulation in 1987 and 1988.

Last February, bundles mailed and shipped to distributors in the U.S. fell to about 3,360 copies. The number of subscription copies sent to U.S. readers that month was about 2,990. The paid circulation for the month, including all copies mailed or shipped here and abroad, averaged 6,884 for each of the two issues published. That was the lowest figure for any month since October 1957, which also happened

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to be the last month of record when the paid circulation slipped below the 7,000 mark!

Based on one recent issue, SLP sections and members-at-large account for about 84 percent of all copies shipped in domestic bundles. However, only 62 members actually receive bundles. Twenty-four of those are members-at-large. The following shows the number of members of each section who received bundles of the March 11 issue, and the total number of copies shipped in those bundles:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Bundles Shipped</b>	<b>Copies</b>
Los Angeles	5	192
Sacramento	1	135
San Francisco Bay Area	9	600
Denver	1	6
St. Petersburg	2	76
Cook Co.	3	45
Eastern Massachusetts	0	0
Wayne Co.	1	150
Minneapolis	2	130
New York City	0	0
Akron	2	1,005
Cleveland	2	20
Portland	2	155
Allegheny Co.	1	5
Philadelphia	4	215
Seattle	2	150
Milwaukee	1	25
Members-at-Large	24	382
<b>Totals</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>3,291</b>

The national office has made no real effort to build up bundle shipments among members, or the readership of *The People* in general. However, we hope to do at least one mailing with that purpose in mind later in the year, to be followed up on a regular basis by inserting a special coupon with each subscription renewal notice.

### **New York Labor News**

No entirely new leaflets or standard pamphlets were published in 1987 or 1988. However, we were finally able to publish a new edition of Daniel De Leon's *Two Pages From Roman History* as a regular pa-

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perback book, and to resume publication of *Socialist Studies* with one new title.

In addition, a lengthy and well-documented article on developments leading up to the organization of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance was chosen to pilot what we hoped would be a new line of literature that would draw on the files of the *Workmen's Advocate*, *The People*, *Daily People* and *Weekly People* for material of historical and theoretical value. A limited edition of 750 copies was published in 1988. Though it can't be said that the response was overwhelming, and while no new titles have been added, we have not abandoned the original concept. However, any future selections most likely will be issued as *Socialist Studies*.

Four leaflets were reprinted in quantities of 50,000 each in 1987, all before the 1987 convention. Several standard leaflets were reprinted last year in various quantities. A revised and completely reset version of the brochure, "Socialist Labor Party: Position & Program," also was printed in 1988. The titles and quantities printed in 1987-1988 were as follows:

<b>Titles</b>	<b>Quantities</b>
What Can Workers Do About Unemployment? (1988)	100,000
Capitalism and Apartheid (1987)	50,000
How To Build a Real Union (1988)	50,000
Politicians Promise and Things Get Worse! WHY? (1987)	50,000
SOCIALISM versus SOVIET DESPOTISM (1987)	50,000
What Can Workers Do About Central America? (1988)	50,000
Why America Needs Industrial Democracy (1988)	50,000
You've heard the <i>lies</i> about SOCIALISM...now get the <i>facts</i> (1987)	50,000
Socialist Labor Party: Position & Program (1988)	25,000
What Is Socialism? (1988)	25,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>500,000</b>

The long-awaited new edition of De Leon's *Two Pages From Roman History* was finally published last year. Certain mechanical problems arose with the cover, which detracted from the new edition's appearance; but these are now understood and will be avoided in future. A new introduction puts this classic work into modern perspective. As indicated, the edition was published as a perfect-bound, stan-

hard-sized paperback book, which may enhance our ability to place it with bookstores. A mailing list has been purchased with that end in mind. But circumstances have kept us from following through with that idea as yet.

A 3,000-copy edition of the 44th *Socialist Studies* issued since this line of literature was introduced in 1981 also was published in 1988. The new title ("Patriotism and Socialism") has the distinction of being the first selected from among the thousands of important articles written by Daniel De Leon and added to the literature since 1940. The NEC has authorized the publication of a second De Leon title ("Which Is Right?") that we hope to have printed later this year.

Incidentally, the NEC has also approved revised versions of two leaflets that should be ready for the printer within a relatively short span of time.

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This brings me to a matter that may help to illustrate one of the primary problems we have as a result of the present situation at national headquarters.

In December 1987, the national office issued a second recall on the pamphlet, *Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers' Power*. We did not expect, and did not receive, many copies in response to that appeal, and our supplies are now completely exhausted. The problem this presents for us was summed up in the general letter of December 30, 1987, as follows:

"The fact that we are reaching the end of our supplies of this particular pamphlet poses a special problem for us. It is the only 'up-to-date' major piece of literature we have devoted expressly to the Party's program. I say 'up-to-date' advisedly, however, since the pamphlet in its original form is nearly 50 years old, and since it hasn't been revised to speak of since 1957!

"When I brought this problem to the NEC's attention recently, I also intimated that it might not be fruitful to think in terms of subjecting the pamphlet to further revision: in effect, that after 30 years it was time to deal with the subject afresh. The NEC took that suggestion under advisement, and tabled the matter.

"I don't believe the Party has tried to get along without a major piece of literature on the subject of industrial unionism since 1920 when *Industrial Unionism: Selected Editorials* first appeared. The De Leon editorials were supplemented 15 years later with Olive M. Johnson's pamphlet, which had a similar title. Five years later, in 1940, the first version of the present pamphlet was issued and, as noted, it underwent major revision in 1957.

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“It may be possible to limp along with nothing but the original De Leon pamphlet for a time, and we do have other pamphlets that deal with the subject to some extent. The two that come readily to mind are *Unionism: Fraudulent or Genuine?*—also 30 years old—and *Capitalism and Unemployment....*”

The NEC subsequently elected a special committee to review the pamphlet to determine if it could or should be revised again, or if it should be retired and replaced. That committee submitted a report last June, from which the following has been extracted:

“In reviewing the Party’s pamphlet on socialist industrial unionism, your committee considered three options for producing a current pamphlet on the subject: 1) a new pamphlet; 2) a lengthy introduction to the present pamphlet, producing something along the lines of *The Supreme Court*; and 3) revising the existing pamphlet, *Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers’ Power*.

“We recommend the third option as the simplest and most viable option for producing a quality piece of SLP literature in our current circumstances. *SIU:WP* is fundamentally sound, but its outdated examples and quotes need some updating....In addition, positions that the Party has clarified since the last revision of this pamphlet must be considered. But even with all these considerations the job of revising the pamphlet isn’t too extensive.”

Before any action was taken on this rather optimistic assessment of the situation, I wrote to the NEC to suggest “that there are SLP members not members of the NEC whose background and insight would be valuable in this matter, and whose views and opinions should be taken into account before any decision is reached.”

Voting by mail, a majority of NEC members concurred in the recommendation, and the members I had in mind were contacted. As I informed them:

“Last March, the NEC elected its special committee to consider what ought to be done with regard to the SIU pamphlet, which by then was completely out of stock. The committee submitted its report in the latter part of June, copies of which were promptly submitted to all NEC members.

“The NEC voted (5 to 1) in favor of the recommendation that you be requested to critically review the pamphlet and submit a statement summarizing your own views and opinions on the matter for NEC consideration. The seventh NEC member when submitting his late ballot voted with the majority.

“While hesitating to draw any firm conclusion connecting the vote to the NEC members’ views on the special committee’s report,

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I think it fair to infer that the NEC has doubts about what would best serve the Party's interests in this connection."

Two of the members contacted in this way agreed to review the pamphlet in writing, and both submitted statements that were promptly made available to the NEC. Comrade Stephen Emery offered the following assessment:

"A careful review of *Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers' Power* has led me to conclude that it is a seriously outdated pamphlet and would remain so even if the revisions recommended by the Special Committee were effected.

"Since the pamphlet's revision in 1957 there have been enormous changes in the American economy due to a widening introduction of automation, robotics, computerization and other high tech systems, which between them have gravely reduced the nation's work force. Further reductions have been caused by the export of substantial chunks of former domestic production to countries where prevailing wages are considerably lower than in the U.S.

"Both the processes touched on above continue to eliminate more and more workers from this country's economy and must be expected to go on doing so. It is, therefore, these crucial aspects of the current and future economic situation that should shape an up-to-date presentation of the SIU program to America's suffering working class.

"And that same presentation should, of course, go on to explain why it is only via the SIU program that real and lasting peace can be won and a start made toward repairing the many kinds of grievous damage capitalism has visited on the earth, its atmosphere and seas—and to solving the host of acute social problems dying capitalism is generating."

In submitting his view of the problem, Comrade Bernard Bortnick offered the following observations:

"First, I am in agreement...that the pamphlet should be rewritten rather than amended, although the basic outline of the pamphlet seems solid. It may be the best approach...that the original pamphlet be left standing as representative of a particular point in time and not modified while a totally new statement is prepared. I agree with this approach since rewriting would require a complete redo of the pamphlet anyhow.

"...(1) The brief description of the pamphlet on the inside cover emphasizes repudiation of the 'physical forcists.' Although the issue remains a critical one I wonder if it deserves the intense focus that it has been given in the pamphlet today? In the sixties and seventies our seeming blanket repudiation carried with it a negative

connotation and the issue of physical force in a revolutionary situation has to be more explicitly developed within the context of the Industrial Union as the functioning agent of the revolutionary class.

“(2) In developing the idea of Industrial Unionism we need to establish the historical development and context of De Leon’s formulation. We need to link De Leonism with Marx and Engels’ thought; the hiatus that existed between the death of the two great leaders and De Leon, and we need to separate the Russians of the period or link them up as would be required. There is a development there that has been articulated verbally in the Party that should be set down in writing that places the SIU program as the logical and final formulation of Marxism. I feel this is just as important if not more so than linking or showing parallels in the development of the American political state with Industrial Unionism. It’s important to contrast the mode of representation between the political and industrial and I don’t think that an exposition tracing the historical development of De Leonism need preclude this discussion, but again I wonder about focus or emphasis.

“(3) A new pamphlet on the subject of the SIU could well include reference to recent Party conventions where consideration was given to the inadequacy of SLP formulations of the operation of an SIU, and inadequacies or questions regarding modes of representation of sections of the population not necessarily included in the SIU. I feel such references, properly developed could provide depth and legitimacy to the SIU formulation, even though such questions need not be answered. The important thing is that these could be questions legitimately to be answered by a functioning SIU.

“(4) The pamphlet is not a handbook of practical steps to be taken advising workers on how to establish an Industrial Union. Nevertheless this is what many in the past have impatiently sought. The SIU pamphlet is still a theoretical statement that does not dwell much on the prospects for success or failure although it offers the conditions that must be prevalent for success and the conditions that will arise with failure. In this respect, emphasis must be placed on first steps. Since capitalist rule is founded on the fragmentation of the workers as a class it is this which must first be overcome. Classconsciousness, unity and solidarity are the cornerstones of socialist unionism. The discussion in the current pamphlet in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 dwells upon this issue, although sometimes obliquely, and as has been noted by the committee, the examples are outdated.”

The third member I approached in this regard was Comrade Nathan Karp. Though other demands on his time prevented him from preparing a written review, I was able to discuss the matter with him on a number of occasions. Those discussions, among other things, touched on an important facet of the question not yet mentioned. As I

summed it up to Comrade Emery when acknowledging receipt of his statement:

“As to Comrade Karp, I’m not sure about him submitting a written review of the pamphlet or the special committee’s report. However, on the basis of one or two discussions, I can say he shares the same general opinion that the pamphlet is badly outdated. Where you placed stress on changes in the American economy, he placed his on developments in the unions—developments he has not been able to keep abreast of in recent years.”

In his reply, Comrade Emery commented on this, and added a few more observations that may be added here with profit, as follows:

“I note that Comrade Karp shares the opinion that the SIU pamphlet is badly outdated. His personal emphasis on developments in the unions is well placed because from them may possibly emerge an initial nucleus of Socialist Industrial Unionism. However, we know that such a hoped-for nucleus will get nowhere unless it can attract and organize swelling numbers of other workers: workers who are not members of the existing unions; workers whom the capitalist economy has temporarily or permanently exiled; young job-seekers whose search almost never succeeds.

“All those workers together offer us the possibility of acquiring a sizable body of readers whom the well-determined contents of an updated SIU pamphlet could help win over to our revolutionary program.

“Like Comrade Karp, I am not abreast of developments in the unions.

“Almost the only information I have concerning them has reached me via *The People*. I’m better informed of changes in the economy because I regularly read...reports of the advances being made by the proliferating branches of present-day science, among which those being made by high tech figure very importantly, of course.”

Last January, the NEC elected another “special committee to assemble materials [from *The People*] for possible inclusion in an SLP pamphlet devoted to the subject of socialist industrial unionism.” However, that special committee is made up of two NEC members who also happen to be members of the editorial staff who are under considerable pressure just to get *The People* out. Not surprisingly, progress is about all they have been able to report to the NEC down to the present time.

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A motion to refer the “Party Press and Literature” section of the National Secretary’s report to an appropriate committee when elected was passed.

At 4:05 p.m., a motion was adopted to adjourn the convention until 9 a.m., Sunday, April 30.

### SUNDAY MORNING SESSION, APRIL 30, 1989

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

N. Karp was elected chairperson for the day.

J. Liebau was elected vice chairperson for the day.

On roll call, all present.

K. Boettcher was appointed sergeant at arms for the day. He reported that two members and one nonmember were present.

On motion, the minutes of Saturday’s session were adopted as read.

The National Secretary presented the following section of his report:

#### WORKS OF DANIEL DE LEON

In a brief statement to the 1987 National Convention, I reported that the national office had resumed efforts to extract the writings and other works of Daniel De Leon from *The People* with a view to their eventual publication in book form.

It was reported that the work had been “resumed” because, as a matter of record, it is known that a similar effort had been made between 1919 and 1930. That effort was the work of Henry Kuhn, who had been National Secretary of the SLP from 1891 to 1906, as well as a coworker and friend of De Leon throughout the latter’s career.

In 1919, Kuhn was elected by the NEC to identify and extract De Leon’s works from *The People* and the *Daily People*, and to prepare them for publication in book form. The purpose and scope of this undertaking was explained in a statement adopted by the NEC at its regular annual session in May of that year. What the NEC said in that statement, in part, was this:

“TO ALL COMRADES AND ADMIRERS OF THE WORK OF DANIEL DE LEON:—

“The greatest figure as a writer, philosopher and builder of tactics and policy of the Labor Movement during the last decade of the 19th and the first of the 20th century is beyond all doubt that of Daniel De Leon. Though reviled, slandered, misunderstood, misinterpreted during his lifetime, the great and revolutionary and

world-shaking events of the last few years have caused the work of De Leon's genius to become recognized far beyond the confines of this nation....

"...And yet it is but a very insignificant part of De Leon's work that is today accessible to the public. It is only the few who have had the privilege of being readers of *The People* during the 25 years of De Leon's editorship who have any idea of the intellectual treasures now locked up in the volumes of the *Daily* and *Weekly People*. Between 3,000 and 4,000 of some 6,000 [editorials] are of inestimable value to the movement...Besides these there have appeared in *The People* any number of special articles, statements, reports to [International Socialist] Congresses and the like which serve to throw a light upon the history and development of the international movement.

"To read, extract and prepare for the press, besides the actual printing, binding, etc., involves at least a year's work for a special man. Comrade Henry Kuhn is now engaged in the work of preparing this matter for the press. It will take several thousand dollars to carry the work to a successful issue, and this work should not be delayed.

"We therefore ask all admirers of the works of Daniel De Leon to contribute liberally to this undertaking."

It would, of course, require much more than "a year's work" to extract the writings of De Leon from about 480 weekly issues of *The People* published between April 1891 and June 1900, and from about 5,000 issues of the *Daily People* published between July 1, 1900, and February 22, 1914. However, by the time the NEC held its annual session in 1920, Kuhn could report substantial progress to the National Secretary, Arnold Petersen. In a letter he wrote on April 20, 1920, Kuhn reported, in part, as follows:

"1. The total number of editorial and other articles from De Leon's pen chosen and listed (i.e., indexed) is 3,651. This part of the work was finished some time in October last year and then the work of extracting (copying) began. In accordance with the plan of dividing the available material into different topics, I chose as the first of these the topic of Industrial Unionism, which, as you know, has been completed and the 'copy' therefor is in your possession....

"2. In the choice of topics I have largely been guided by their controversial character, that is to say, of material which, aside from its unquestioned educational value, would furnish our movement with weapons for attack and defense upon 'burning questions' that are as burning today as they were when these articles were written.

"Having gone over ALL the material contained in the files of the *Daily People*, I am deeply impressed with the immense value to the movement of bringing these articles to light again and of making

them available to the Socialist movement of the world.”

The index of editorials and articles Kuhn referred to on that occasion has survived, as has the manuscript on industrial unionism. The index consists of 140 typewritten pages, and each entry is accompanied by a brief synopsis of the article’s contents.

The manuscript on industrial unionism was located a few years ago when Comrade Nathan Karp was sorting through old files for material to add to the extensive SLP collection at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The manuscript consists of 150 editorials and, together with *The Burning Question of Trades Unionism* and *Socialist Reconstruction of Society*, it was meant to be published as the first two volumes of a multi-volumed *Collected Works of Daniel De Leon*. Kuhn confirmed this several months before the 1920 NEC Session in his introduction to *Industrial Unionism: Selected Editorials*. As he put it:

“...The articles contained herein...have all been culled from the files of the *Daily People*, the official organ of which De Leon was the chief editor until the day of its suspension early in 1914. From these files—a veritable mine of priceless information upon the subject of the American labor movement—the Socialist Labor Party is now engaged in preparing a series of volumes dealing with the various topics taken up by De Leon during his incumbency, the first of which is the topic of Industrial Unionism...”

By the time of the 1921 NEC Session, Kuhn had nearly completed the fourth topic into which he had divided the articles he had indexed and then proceeded to type out. When one remembers that there were no computers, optical scanning devices, or even electric typewriters in those days, the effort Kuhn poured into this undertaking comes into focus. In reporting on his progress for the 1921 NEC Session, Kuhn wrote:

“In point of size, each of the topics so far finished contains about the same volume of matter, running up to between 500 to 600 typewritten pages, except the topic listed above under (3) [Social Democratic alias Socialist Party], which runs up to 668 pages....

“The topic now in hand, viz., ‘Wealth Concentration,’ etc., promises to be of about the same size as the rest, the number of typewritten pages so far finished being 318 and, more than likely, the remaining volumes of the *Daily People*, from 1910 to the beginning of 1914, will yield enough matter to bring that topic in point of bulk up to the others. In fact, I am striving, as much as possible, to keep each topic within about the same compass and have found that,

thus far, the material available made it nearly possible.”

In the years that followed, more and more of Kuhn’s time was taken up by other concerns. However, he reported the completion of six topics prior to the 1924 National Convention, with a seventh underway. That report, which appears in the published proceedings of the 1924 convention, also contains the following intriguing statement:

“Roughly speaking, it may be said that about or very nearly one-half of the work of extraction has been completed, also covering about one-half of the topics to be expected.”

Kuhn continued to submit reports on his progress until his death in 1930. On April 20, 1926, for example, he wrote a letter to the National Secretary in which, among other things, he summarized what he had done in response to a request by the NEC Subcommittee.

“1. Since the last session of the N.E.C. no time could be devoted to the copying of the editorials proper,” he wrote, “but the Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan dialogues, the extraction of which was asked for by the N.E.C. Sub-Committee, has been taken up and finished a few days ago. These dialogues began with January, 1894, and continued until February, 1914, a period of over twenty years, up to the time De Leon was compelled to let go of the helm. Every week in these twenty years, with but few exceptions, had such a dialogue covering a variety of subjects but most of them dealing with some point in economics. There were reprints now and then and these had to be watched to prevent repetition. It becomes now a matter of re-reading them for classification and to prepare them for publication. When I extracted them I made carbon copies for the editorial department, the latter now being in possession of all there is.”

Kuhn’s report on his having extracted the US&BJ columns is interesting because of the light it sheds on how the Party planned to proceed in preparing De Leon’s works for publication. Earlier reports, as indicated, suggested that a collection of editorials on industrial unionism had been selected for the first volume of the *Collected Works*. The collections on other subjects were slated to follow. Evidently, there was a change of heart at some point preceding the NEC Session in May 1926. That this change of heart was acted on is clear from the Preface to *Socialist Economics in Dialogue*, a collection of 67 “Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan” dialogues, which was published in 1935. The Preface to this volume, written by Arnold Petersen and Olive M.

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Johnson (Kuhn having died in the meantime, on July 5, 1930), makes no mention of the earlier plan or why it was abandoned:

“In presenting this, the first in what will become the Collected Works of Daniel De Leon,” they wrote, “the Socialist Labor Party begins the discharge of a duty which naturally rests upon it as the sole custodian of what has been designated as De Leonism....It is hoped that in relatively quick succession the rest of De Leon’s works may be published, the total of which will probably run from twelve to fifteen volumes....”

Though the plan of procedure had changed, there can be no doubt that the Party was committed to publishing the volumes Henry Kuhn had compiled over a period of 10 years or more. What became of that commitment, and what happened to the manuscripts assembled after such arduous labors had been exerted on them, is something of a mystery.

In a lengthy article on Henry Kuhn’s career published in the *Weekly People* of July 19, 1930, it was reported that, since 1919, “His main position [at national headquarters] was that of editor of De Leon’s editorials, which he read, copied and compiled into a number of volumes that are now ready for publication....” But, with the exception of *Socialist Economics in Dialogue*, not one of those volumes ever appeared.

Between 1931 and 1939 a series of references to De Leon’s works and why they were not published appeared in the annual NEC reports. Here are several examples:

1. From the report to the 1931 NEC Session—

“De Leon’s volume containing ‘Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan’ articles is...in preparation and it is hoped that we shall be able to finish it this year. December 14, 1932, will be the eightieth anniversary of the birth of Daniel De Leon. It would be a fitting tribute to De Leon if by that time we could also have the volumes of ‘Industrial Unionism’ ready. At any rate we will work toward that end and, if funds permit it, we shall have at least ‘Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan’ and the two volumes on ‘Industrial Unionism’ ready before De Leon’s birthday in 1932. Of course a great deal will depend upon the financial situation and the response to our efforts during the 1932 campaign....”

2. From the report to the 1933 NEC Session—

“...The volume of the ‘Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan’ dialogues,...is practically completed as far as composition goes and

copies should be available within a month or two after the NEC Session. This volume will constitute the first published volume of De Leon's works and we hope that we may soon be able to follow it up with the two-volume set of 'Industrial Unionism,' which also is in contemplation."

3. From the report to the 1934 NEC Session:

"We have in preparation a number of books and pamphlets, the completion of which has been delayed for a number of reasons. The composition on the Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan Dialogues is completed and its early publication may now confidently be looked for....

"...We are also at work on the Industrial Union volume of the De Leon editorials. If circumstances permit, we expect to have that published before the year is over."

4. From the Report to the 1935 NEC Session:

"A number of pamphlets and books are in preparation, some of which we expect to get out very soon. The much delayed and several times postponed volume of Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan dialogues are all but ready to be submitted to the printer. The few things that still have to be done should not cause much greater delay, except possibly the index which we desire to add to that volume. However, the publication of this volume will be hastened as much as possible."

5. From the report to the 1939 NEC Session:

"...We did not succeed in bringing out a new volume of De Leon's work for substantially the same reasons, lack of sufficient help and inadequate equipment being important considerations."

No further reference to any plan to publish the works of Daniel De Leon, or to the manuscripts prepared by Henry Kuhn, would ever again appear in a report to the NEC or to a national convention. The only additional reference I have come across is a *Weekly People* editorial published in December 1942. That editorial, after calling attention to a De Leon editorial that appeared on another page of that issue, went on to state:

"Literally thousands of such editorials await publication in a more permanent form than we can give them in the columns of the *Weekly People*. Collecting these, segregating and annotating them, not to mention the mechanical work of their publication, entails not

only considerable labor, but considerable expense as well....”

From this one might think that the work of “collecting..., segregating and annotating...” had not even begun, much less reached the advanced state that Kuhn had left them in.

It was with some of this background in mind that I recently wrote to a member of the NEC, in part, as follows:

“While I cannot disagree that there is a great need for more timely leaflets and pamphlets as an aid in our efforts to attract new readers and members to the SLP, I don’t believe the fate of a major work of De Leon’s should be decided on that ground.

“As a matter of fact, for decades the SLP postponed the publication of De Leon’s ‘Collected Works,’ as assembled by H. Kuhn, on somewhat the same theory. Poverty and a lack of competent help were the reasons usually cited. Yet, the Party managed to publish a wide variety of propaganda literature between 1914 and 1941 when, suddenly, it also found the wherewithal to publish Volume I of...*Daniel De Leon: Social Architect*, plus the separate pamphlets that were incorporated into that volume. Volume II of this collection of essays *about* De Leon appeared in 1953.

“My point is this: with all due respect to Comrade Petersen, and the NEC or NEC Subcommittee members who approved those publications, wouldn’t the SLP have derived more lasting benefit had it poured those same resources into publishing works *by* De Leon?”

Obviously, the decisions that the Party made about its literature in the 1930s and 1940s, and since, were affected and conditioned by financial considerations. Yet, there can be no doubt that, tight as money was, literature was produced. Even though then National Secretary Petersen had expressed the view that publication of the works of De Leon was a duty, relatively few of the thousands of editorials and other articles De Leon wrote during his illustrious career were collected and published.

One possible explanation for this may be that the special fund intended for the purpose was also used to pay the wages of Henry Kuhn from 1919 to 1930, and that contributions to the fund fell off sharply after Kuhn’s death. The fund was then transferred from one managed by the business office to one managed directly by the national office. What that change meant in practical terms I cannot say. In any event, it appears that the concept of drawing on this fund for the purpose of publishing De Leon’s works, rather than drawing on the general funds of the Party, had something to do with it.

This may help to explain how the Party could publish a 2,000-copy,

cloth-bound edition of *Daniel De Leon: Social Architect*, in 1941, followed in 1953 by a second volume of similar essays about De Leon, while neglecting the works of De Leon himself. However, it does not explain why the question of financing the De Leon project was never brought up for discussion and reconsidered. Perhaps that possibility was raised somewhere along the line by a member of the NEC Subcommittee, but there is no indication in any of the annual reports to the NEC in session, or to any national convention, after the 1930s that any such discussion took place at those levels of the organization.

As near as I can tell, the Party has published a total of 32 pamphlets made up entirely of works of Daniel De Leon. Included in these pamphlets were 196 editorials, 10 addresses, three debates and 94 assorted articles and reports. This estimate includes the 67 “Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan” columns published in 1935 as “the first in what will become the Collected Works of Daniel De Leon....” It does not include 10 editorials published together with two other previously published works as an appendix to Arnold Petersen’s *Bourgeois Socialism: Its Rise and Collapse in America*.

Eighteen of the 32 pamphlets made up entirely of De Leon’s works were first published *before* his death in May 1914. Only 14 have been published since his death, and no new pamphlet drawing on De Leon’s voluminous writings has appeared since *Capitalism Means War!* That collection of 11 editorials made its first appearance in 1940 on the eve of the U.S. entry into World War II.

Frankly, comrades, for an organization that has hitched its star so closely to De Leon’s theoretical contributions that it designates its orientation as Marxist-De Leonist, I don’t think this is an admirable record.

As indicated, the national office has found no trace of the several manuscripts that were prepared by Henry Kuhn, with the exception of the 150 editorials and articles on industrial unionism that were originally designated to become the first two volumes of the *Collected Works*. Several hundred of De Leon’s “Letter Box” answers that were typed by Kuhn also have survived, as has his index of more than 3,600 editorials. In addition, Comrade Karp came across a partial manuscript for the original “Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan” collection. But the manuscripts on procapitalist unionism, social democracy and reformism, capitalist concentration, expansionism and imperialism, ultramontanism, and several others have disappeared without a trace. They may be buried in the large number of filing cabinets that Comrade Karp still has to sort through, or they may simply have been de-



stroyed. In fact, there is evidence that the editorial department's copies of those manuscripts were disassembled one article at a time for the purpose of reprinting De Leon editorials in the *Weekly People* over the years.

Our efforts to start again to identify and extract the works of De Leon from *The People* and the *Daily People* began in March 1987. What I was able to report to the 1987 convention was that the work had progressed through 1893. Since then, it has progressed through the end of the third volume year of the *Daily People*, i.e. down to June 30, 1903. All the material extracted to date is assembled chronologically in a collection of 53 binders containing a total of 15,098 pages and 6,658 articles. It should be pointed out that not all of these articles were written by De Leon. Many of them are about his activities, and will be useful whenever it becomes possible to prepare an authorized and authentic biography.

In addition, a separate binder consisting of 187 pages and 75 articles, letters, speech and debate fragments from the *Workmen's Advocate* has been compiled. The *Advocate*, of course, was the SLP's official English-language weekly newspaper before *The People* was launched in April 1891. We have also assembled a collection of 76 letters written between 1902 and 1913. The handwritten originals of these letters were found at the headquarters in Brooklyn before the move in 1974. They were sent to the State Historical Society in Wisconsin, where they were microfilmed and then added to the extensive collection of SLP papers on deposit at that institution.

I estimate that another 80 binders, each averaging about 200 pages, will be needed to complete extracting materials published in the *Daily People* between July 1903 and February 1914. Since this work is carried on only as time permits, it will probably take another 18 to 20 months to finish this stage of the program. After this initial stage has been completed sometime before the 1991 convention, the second stage of selecting, editing and annotating will begin.

Even though progress has been slow, it has been steady. It was necessary to suspend all activity in this regard a few months ago in order to prepare for the convention. However, depending on how the current situation at national headquarters develops, it should be possible to resume the work in the next few months.

I would be remiss if I failed to add that Comrade Karp has provided considerable assistance in this work, in particular by photocopying and assembling two extra sets of most of the material that has been extracted to date.

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The works of Daniel De Leon are an invaluable source of the theoretical and practical knowledge the working class needs if it is ever to shed its blinders and organize its might for the overthrow of the capitalist system. As Arnold Petersen once expressed it in responding to a critique of the SLP's determination to publish those works:

“...To say that De Leon's editorials have a purely transitory value is absurd....These editorials are, if anything, more valuable today than when they first appeared....To be sure, they have historical value, but they have that which is of much greater importance to us, namely, educational and agitational value. To contend otherwise is practically to repudiate the intellectual basis of the SLP. It would be as logical, and, of course, as ridiculous, to say that Capital by Marx has today only historical value. The De Leon editorials would, if reprinted right now, indeed fill a 'crying need,' and aside from current flavor nothing more up to date could be produced—at least not from the standpoint of the SLP....If...your remarks on this head are simply intended as a trite and obvious suggestion to interpret and analyze 'the economic and social phenomenon' of today we answer that this is being done to the fullest extent possible, and we contend that the De Leon editorials are a mighty factor in enabling the workers to analyze and interpret the economic and social phenomena of today....”

“It is true that by publishing these editorials we are rearing a monument to the great De Leon. It is, however, likewise true that we are rendering accessible to the workers a treasure-trove of knowledge and understanding the exact value (immense as it is) even we can not now properly estimate. Hence, it is incorrect to say that it is out of mere reverence for a great man that we have undertaken this task, though we do revere him, as we do any great mind that has fought on the side of the oppressed against the oppressing class....”

It is in that spirit that—time and other circumstances permitting—we intend to continue in this effort until it is finally completed.

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A motion to refer the “Works of Daniel De Leon” section of the National Secretary's report to an appropriate committee when elected was passed.

The National Secretary presented the following section of his report:

### ELECTION OF NEC AND NATIONAL OFFICERS

Article V, Section 2 (a) of the Party's Constitution provides for the

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election of a National Executive Committee composed of seven members by the following procedures:

Two months prior to the national convention, the national office is required to canvass the sections located within a 150-mile radius of national headquarters for the names of members who are eligible and willing to serve a two-year term as members of the NEC. Two sections having a combined membership of 38 are located within the prescribed radius. They are Sections Sacramento and San Francisco Bay Area.

The names of the members from the two sections who respond to the canvass are then to be presented to the national convention. The convention has the responsibility to elect the seven who, in its judgment, are the best qualified to serve as NEC members for the next two years.

The names of the members elected by the convention are then submitted to a general vote of the whole Party. Each of those whose names are submitted to the referendum are to be voted on separately, and each must receive a majority of the votes cast to be elected.

The term of the new NEC elected by these procedures commences following the official tabulation of the general vote on the acts of the national convention.

The national office has conducted the canvass as provided by the Constitution, with the result that eight members have responded and made their names available for consideration by this convention. All eight of those who responded are members of Section San Francisco Bay Area. Six of the eight are members of the NEC at the present time, and six are also members of the national headquarters staff. It should be noted for the convention's information and guidance that one of the eight members who responded to the canvass has informed me that he did so "reluctantly." The memorandum in which this member explains the reasons for this reluctance is available to the convention or convention committee to which this matter will be referred.

The eight members who have made their names available for convention consideration are:

Donna Bills, Kenneth Boettcher, Genevieve Gunderson, Paul Lawrence, Louis Lipcon, Diane Secor, Stephen Secor and Richard Whitney.

In addition to the election of an NEC, the national convention is charged with the responsibility of electing members to fill the offices of Editor of the Party's official organ, Financial Secretary and National Secretary. The members elected to these positions are also subject to

approval by the referendum process.

No member has been elected to fill the important post of Editor since that office was vacated in 1973. In bringing this to your attention, it is not my purpose to go over all the problems this prolonged vacancy has created, or the various arrangements that have been made to contend with them over the past 16 years. That has been done in great detail on numerous past occasions, and no constructive purpose would be served by reviewing them here. Suffice to say that the current set of problems we have to cope with, and which have been reported under another heading, are sufficient to occupy our time and attention. My sole purpose in mentioning the vacancy again is to report that there now is a member who has indicated to me that he would be willing to assume the burden of responsibility associated with the office of Editor. The member in question is present at this convention and available for interview by whatever committee is elected to consider nominations for national officers.

It should also be noted that the Party's current Financial Secretary, Comrade Genevieve Gunderson, has indicated to me that she would prefer not to continue in that office. Comrade Gunderson was elected to office in 1983, and is to be commended for the conscientious and efficient manner in which she has attended to her duties and responsibilities in that position during the past six years. Comrade Gunderson has no plans for leaving the national headquarters staff that I am aware of and, as indicated above, she is making herself available for the NEC.

The Party's interests require that every possibility for filling the office of Financial Secretary be explored by this convention. A member elected to the office need not have any special knowledge or expertise in financial matters to start, though these obviously would be helpful and desirable. However, it is important that any member who may be considered come equipped with certain qualities that would enable him or her to develop those skills within a reasonable time.

The financial affairs and concerns of the Party need to receive the complete and undivided attention that only a full-time Financial Secretary would have to devote to them. It would be a misfortune if the duties and responsibilities of the office were to receive anything less than that full attention. The office of Financial Secretary was established in 1980 in recognition of this fact, and not enough emphasis can be placed on the importance of locating a suitable member to fill this essential post.

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A motion to refer the “Election of NEC and National Officers” section of the National Secretary’s report to an appropriate committee when elected was passed.

The National Secretary presented the following section of his report:

### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

1. Article III, Section 1. (b): It is recommended that this provision be amended by the addition of the following sentence:

“Applicants must fill out the regular application form in its entirety and answer all the questions thereon in the affirmative.”

*Comment:* A similar provision was included before the Constitution was reorganized in 1983 and should be reinserted for purposes of clarity.

2. Article III, Section 1. (c): It is recommended that a new subsection bearing this designation be inserted to read as follows:

“(c) Copies of the Party’s Constitution, current Organizational Norms and Procedures, and Handbook on Intervention and Union Work shall be provided to each applicant at the time of application.”

*Comment:* This also is intended to restore a provision that appeared in the Constitution until 1983, and is recommended for the same reason. Please note, however, that the Handbook on Intervention and Union Work would be included, whereas it was not included in the pre-1983 provision. It should be included in view of the addition of Section 5(c) of Article XII two years ago.

3. Article IV, Section 2. (b): It is recommended that this provision be amended by striking the word “age” and by insertion of the phrase, “previous political affiliation (if any),” so that the provision as amended would read as follows:

“(b) Applications to form a section must be submitted to the NEC, and must contain the name, address, ~~age~~, occupation, previous political affiliation (if any), and signature of each applicant.”

*Comment:* Again, this is meant to restore a provision that existed

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prior to 1983 and would be consistent with subsection (a) of the existing provision, which requires applicants to form a new section to “sever all connection with other political parties.” It is recommended to strike the word “age” appearing in the present provision as the SLP no longer has an age requirement. A former provision did set a minimum age of 18 for membership. However, it was stricken from the Constitution in 1983.

4. Article V, Section 8. (b): It is recommended that this provision be amended by striking the words “and to” and by inserting a new phrase at the end of the current provision. The provision as amended would then read:

“(b) To supervise the agitation throughout the country, ~~and to~~ organize new sections and supply suitable charter application forms.”

*Comment:* The recommended addition is similar to a provision that appeared in the Constitution until 1983. However, this duty of the NEC was then included under the Article on Sections. Here it is intended to restore something which should not have been deleted and to place it where it logically belongs, i.e., together with all the other duties of the NEC as provided by Section 8 of Article V.

5. Article VII, Section 1. (a): It is recommended that this provision be amended, as follows:

“Section 1. (a) The party shall hold a national convention every odd-numbered year, the location and date to be determined by the NEC. This provision may be suspended, or a special convention may be called, by a general ~~referendum~~ vote of the membership initiated under Article XII, Section 2.”

*Comment:* The provision as now written enables the membership to skip regularly scheduled biennial conventions as it deems fit, but is unclear on their right to call for any intervening special convention they may regard as being appropriate or necessary. The addition of the underscored phrase would remove all doubt as to the right of the membership to demand that special conventions be held. The words that have been stricken through are redundant and should be deleted.

6. Article VII, Section 3: It is recommended that this provision be

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amended to include a new subsection (b), and that the existing provision be renumbered to become subsection (a) of Section 3. The new subsection (b) would read as follows:

“(b) The Financial Secretary shall render a written report to the national convention.”

*Comment:* Section 3, as now written, requires the Financial Secretary to provide the membership with an annual report of the Party’s finances. However, reporting on the Party’s financial condition, and reporting on what suggestions, recommendations and initiatives have or should be taken to enhance the Party’s financial position and what judgment is exercised in utilizing the Party’s financial resources, are entirely different things. The former, while necessary, stresses the routine obligations associated with the position to the neglect of the more creative and dynamic potentials of the office. There are any number of routine, obligatory and necessary duties and responsibilities connected with the offices of National Secretary and Editor of the official organ, which, within their own spheres, are comparable to those specifically associated by the Constitution with the office of Financial Secretary. However, much more is expected from both of those officers than their efficiency in handling the routine, and both are now required to report to the convention. It would serve to clarify and even enhance the importance of the office of Financial Secretary if the member holding that position had the opportunity to report directly to the convention in his or her own right.

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A motion to refer the “Constitutional Amendments” section of the National Secretary’s report to an appropriate committee when elected was passed.

### *Introduction of Matters Referred by the NEC*

The chair ruled, without objection, that the report on “Matters Referred by the NEC,” not be read but be referred to an appropriate committee when elected. (See Appendix.)

At 10 a.m., a five-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 10:08 a.m.

On roll call, all present except G. Long who arrived shortly thereafter.

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### *Introduction of Resolutions*

On motion, Resolution #1-A from Section Cook Co. and Resolution #1-B from Section Sacramento submitted through the national office were referred *separately* to an appropriate committee when elected without being read. (See Appendix.)

On motion, Resolutions #3-A, B, C, D, E and F submitted through the national office by national members-at-large Bradia, Richardson (2) and Silvey (3), respectively, were referred to an appropriate committee when elected without being read. (See Appendix.)

On motion, Resolutions #2-A and #2-B submitted through the national office by Delegates Schelin and Hollon were referred *separately* to an appropriate committee when elected without being read. (See Appendix.)

### *Discussion of Sections of National Secretary's Report*

There was no discussion of the "Introduction."

There was no discussion of the section on "Party Finances."

Discussion of the section on "National Headquarters" began at 10:29 a.m. Discussion ended at 10:35 a.m.

There was no discussion of the section on "State of Organization-I."

Discussion of the section on "State of Organization-II" began at 10:36 a.m.

At 11 a.m. Vice Chairman Liebau assumed the chair to allow Chairman Karp to enter the discussion.

Discussion of this section of the National Secretary's report ended at 11:50 a.m., at which time Delegate Karp resumed the chair.

Discussion of the section of the National Secretary's report on "General Activities" began at 11:51 a.m. Discussion ended at 12:24 p.m.

At 12:25 p.m. a motion was adopted to recess until 2 p.m.

### **AFTERNOON SESSION, SUNDAY, APRIL 30**

The session was called to order at 2 p.m.

On roll call, all present except Delegates G. Long and J. Thomas. Delegate G. Long arrived shortly.

### *Discussion of Sections of the National Secretary's Report*

There was no discussion of the remaining sections of the National Secretary's report on "Party Press and Literature," "Works of Daniel



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De Leon” and “Election of NEC and National Officers.”

### *New Business*

Delegate J. Frank introduced Resolution #2-C. (See Appendix.)

Delegate R. Whitney introduced Resolution #2-D. (See Appendix.)

Resolutions #2-C and #2-D were referred to an appropriate committee when elected without being read.

### *Determination of Committees*

A motion was adopted that four committees be established as follows: Headquarters and Finances, Organization and Agitation, Party Press and Literature, Constitution and Related Matters.

### *Referral of Matters to Committees*

Sections of the National Secretary’s report were referred to committees, as follows:

On motion, “Party Finances” to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, “National Headquarters” to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, “State of Organization-I” to the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

On motion, “State of Organization-II” to the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

On motion, “General Activities” to the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

On motion, “Party Press and Literature” to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, “Works of Daniel De Leon” to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, “Election of NEC and National Officers” to the Committee on Constitution and Related Matters.

On motion, “Constitutional Amendments” to the Committee on Constitution and Related Matters.

On motion, the report on “Matters Referred by the NEC” was referred to the Committee on Constitution and Related Matters.

Resolutions were referred to committees, as follows:

On motion, #1-A from Section Cook Co. to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

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On motion, #1-B from Section Sacramento to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, #2-A from Delegate R. Schelin to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, #2-B from Delegate J. Hollon to the Committee on Constitution and Related Matters.

On motion, #2-C from Delegate J. Frank to the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

On motion, #2-D from Delegate R. Whitney to the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

On motion, #3-A from National Member-at-Large D. Bradia to the Committee on Constitution and Related Matters.

On motion, #3-B from National Member-at-Large J. Richardson to the Committee on Constitution and Related Matters.

On motion, #3-C from National Member-at-Large J. Richardson to the Committee on Constitution and Related Matters.

On motion, #3-D from National Member-at-Large I. Silvey to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, #3-E from National Member-at-Large I. Silvey to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, #3-F from National Member-at-Large I. Silvey to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

### *Election of Committees*

The chair called for the nomination and election of committees with the following results:

*Committee on Headquarters and Finances:* A motion was passed that this committee consist of five members.

Delegates C. Turner, E. Barnes, J. Seekford, J. O'Neill and N. Karp were nominated.

The chair called for a show of hands for each of those nominated, and each was elected by a majority vote.

*Committee on Organization and Agitation:* A motion was passed that this committee consist of five members.

Delegates R. Whitney, J. Hollon, A. Bradshaw, J. Frank, K. Heck, and C. Camacho were nominated.

The chair proceeded to call for a vote to elect five members with the following results: R. Whitney - 23; J. Hollon - 14; A. Bradshaw - 21; J. Frank - 12; K. Heck - 22; C. Camacho - 23.

The chair declared Delegates Whitney, Hollon, Bradshaw, Heck and

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Camacho elected to constitute the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

Delegate J. Thomas arrived at 2:35 p.m.

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* A motion was passed that this committee consist of five members.

Delegates G. Milonas, S. Fink, R. Schelin, P. Kapitz, and D. Deneff were nominated.

~~On motion, these five members were elected to constitute the committee.~~ Each delegate nominated to this committee was elected individually by a show of hands.

*Committee on Constitution and Related Matters:* A motion was passed that this committee consist of five members.

Delegates J. Liebau, G. Long, A. Kleist, J. Morris and W. Walbridge were nominated.

~~On motion, these five members were elected to constitute the committee.~~ Each delegate nominated to this committee was elected individually by a show of hands.

At 2:50 p.m., the convention adjourned until 9 a.m., Monday, May 1.

### MONDAY MORNING SESSION, MAY 1, 1989

The session was called to order at 9 a.m.

J. Liebau was elected chairperson for the day.

J. O'Neill was elected vice chairperson for the day.

K. Heck was elected sergeant at arms for the day.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported four visitors present.

The minutes of Sunday's session were read, and were adopted with the following corrections:

Re Committees on Party Press and Literature, and Constitution and Related Matters: Each delegate nominated to these two committees was elected individually by a show of hands.

Resolution 1-A and Resolution 1-B were referred individually to an appropriate committee when elected.

Resolution 2-A and Resolution 2-B were referred individually to an appropriate committee when elected.

#### *Reports of Committees*

Committee on Headquarters and Finances: No report.

Committee on Organization and Agitation: No report.

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Committee on Party Press and Literature: No report.

*Committee on Constitution and Related Matters*: Delegate J. Liebau presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 2-B**

In considering Resolution 2-B, which was submitted by Delegate Joseph Hollon, Sr., your committee recognizes the good intentions which our comrade had in mind with regard to the involvement of all delegates in convention committees. However, making it mandatory that all delegates serve on a committee precludes the convention body's right to conduct its business in the most feasible manner. The convention should continue to have the option to set the number of members it deems requisite to conduct every committee's work.

Your committee further finds that the argumentation offered by Comrade Hollon in support of his resolution was not germane to it. His suggestions for distributing *The People* at mass demonstrations are not in the purview of this committee.

Therefore, your committee recommends nonconcurrency in this resolution.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU,  
JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON A. LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

On motion, the report was adopted.

At 9:30 a.m., the convention adjourned until 2 p.m.

**MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION, MAY 1, 1989**

The convention reconvened at 2:08 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported four visitors present.

*Reports of Committees*

Committee on Headquarters and Finances: No report.

*Committee on Organization and Agitation*: Delegate R. Whitney presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 2-C**

The committee concurs that it is a high priority for the Socialist La-

bor Party to issue a leaflet concerning the extreme environmental health hazards capitalism imposes upon society.

We recommend that the national office with the assistance of the editorial staff undertake the preparation of such a leaflet as soon as it is feasible to do so.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] RICHARD WHITNEY,  
ALAN BRADSHAW, CHRIS CAMACHO,  
KARL H. HECK. JOS. HOLLON SR.  
Committee on Organization and Agitation

On motion, the report was adopted.

Committee on Constitution and Related Matters: No report.

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

### **Re: Party Press and Literature**

In studying the National Secretary's report on our Party newspaper, *The People*, the statistics gathered in the report show that *The People* is the most effective propaganda tool we have and a most important help in attracting new members. Members returning from the convention back to their sections and hometowns should determine to distribute more issues of our paper and redouble efforts to get new subscriptions. Since the statistics also have shown classified ads for subs have had some good results, the committee recommends a continuation of placing these ads within our budget limits, and exploring the possibility of advertising for subscriptions in college papers which may give us a relatively large audience for the dollar and a direct approach to young people. Since the national office has already plenty of work to do with a shortage of personnel, sections should be asked to inquire from colleges in the locality as to advertising rates and amount of readers it would reach and then to pass the information back to the national office.

The National Secretary's report which is headed "New York Labor News" notes that no entirely new leaflets or standard pamphlets were published in 1987 or 1988, although a new edition of *Two Pages From Roman History* was finally published. The report shows that several standard leaflets were reprinted last year and the committee wishes to call special attention to the revised version of the brochure, "Socialist Labor Party: Position and Program," because it is not only useful for social study classes, but also serves as a most important source of in-

formation for new contacts, perhaps more so than any other pamphlet.

With respect to the pamphlet, *Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers' Power*, the committee agrees with those members who feel that an entirely new pamphlet on the subject is preferable to some revision or patching up of the 1957 issue. That edition apparently is badly outdated. Here again, it is asking for too much from the understaffed national office to do anything except to try to get some of our capable members elsewhere in the organization to submit a new version of the pamphlet. Such a pamphlet must necessarily leave some important questions unanswered such as portions of the population not included in the SIU formulation but just as Marx wisely avoided details and exact blueprints of a future society, some answers will have to be forthcoming out of the very process of the revolution with decisions made at that time by the victorious workers.

In summation, the committee recommends approval of the National Secretary's report headed "Party Press and Literature" and appreciates the great deal of work which his research and statistics show.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL D. DENEFF

Committee on Party Press and Literature

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

Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

**Re: Works of Daniel De Leon**

Our committee expresses appreciation of the hard work and dedication of both Comrade Karp and Comrade Bills in continuing research and assembly of Daniel De Leon's writings with a view of eventually publishing these in book form. We recommend approval and appreciation of this report.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL D. DENEFF

Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 3-F**

The committee finds much merit in the idea of converting articles published in *The People* into leaflets. We must point out, however, that this is already being done and has been done by a different and perhaps simpler method than the one proposed in the resolution. The resolution imposes additional work and complications in layout adjustments to an already overburdened and understaffed editorial department. The committee understands that a planned forthcoming newsletter will outline the presently used method of converting *People* articles which does not impose additional demand on *The People* staff. For these reasons we recommend nonconcurrency with the resolution.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL D. DENEFF

Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 1-A**

In considering Resolution 1-A your committee recognizes and agrees that there is a need for the publication of literature on Daniel De Leon, who he was, his relationship to the Socialist Labor Party, his contribution to Marxism, and an explanation of the difference between De Leonism and other schools of thought claiming to be Marxist.

Your committee feels that literature of this subject and scope should be part of the *Socialist Studies* series and not that of a leaflet.

Your committee recommends the concurrence of this resolution with the change suggested.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL D. DENEFF

Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

*Committee on Mileage:* Delegate N. Karp presented the following report:

Your committee reports that the delegates listed below have re-

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ported that their mileage in attending the convention is as follows:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Delegates</b>	<b>Expense</b>
Los Angeles (1)	Alan Bradshaw	\$ 75.00
Sacramento (1)	Daniel Deneff	25.00
S.F. Bay Area (2)	Nathan Karp	-0-
	Richard Whitney	-0-
Denver (1)	Frank Bell	302.00
St. Petersburg (1)	John Morris	342.00
Cook Co. (1)	George Milonas	343.00
Wayne Co. (1)	William Walbridge	340.00
Minneapolis (1)	Karl Heck	318.00
Akron (1)	Peter Kapitz	358.00
Cleveland (1)	John O'Neill	-0-
Portland (1)	Sid Fink	238.00
Allegheny Co. (1)	Edna Barnes	372.00
Philadelphia (1)	John Liebau	358.00
Seattle (1)	Charles Turner	89.95
Milwaukee (1)	Angeline Kleist	304.20
National Mbrs-at-Large (8)	William Braatz	108.00
	Chris Camacho	380.00
	Joseph Frank	429.00
	Joseph Hollon Sr.	379.00
	Gordon Long	-0-
	Ross Schelin	108.30
	Jennie Seekford	147.00
	Joe Thomas	95.00
Nat'l Sec'y	Robert Bills	-0-

In keeping with this report, your committee recommends that the delegates be paid the amounts due them, the total being: \$5,111.45.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] NATHAN KARP, GENEVIEVE GUNDERSON  
Committee on Mileage

On motion, the report was adopted and the bills ordered paid.

At 2:53 p.m., a motion to adjourn until 9 a.m., Tuesday, May 2, was made and seconded. An amendment to adjourn until 7 p.m. this evening was passed. The motion, as amended, passed.

**EVENING SESSION, MONDAY, MAY 1, 1989**

The convention was called to order at 7:01 p.m.



## THIRTY-NINTH NATIONAL CONVENTION

On roll call, all present except J. Thomas, who arrived shortly. The sergeant at arms reported three members present.

### *Reports of Committees*

*Committee on Headquarters and Finances:* Delegate N. Karp presented the following report:

#### **Re: Resolution 1-B**

Re: Resolution 1-B submitted by Section Sacramento, California, calling for the establishment of a convention delegate expense fund.

We have carefully considered the section's proposal and the supporting arguments it presented. We understand fully the concern that motivated the section's proposal. And though we know of no section that failed to send a delegate to this convention because of lack of funds, we realize that occasions may arise where a section may find itself financially strapped and unable to bear the expense of sending a delegate or delegates to a convention. However, in such case, the section can and should ask the national office for whatever financial assistance it requires in order to be able to do so. Simple organizational logic and Party interests dictate that such requests be acted upon favorably. In fact, such was the practice when the delegates were elected from the several states and the state committees paid for their expenses other than mileage.

To date, there has been no indication that any appreciable number of sections are unable to cover the expenses of their delegates. That being the case, there is no compelling reason to shift the entire expense to the NEC. The various rationales offered by Section Sacramento in support of doing that are not borne out by any known facts. One fact, however, that we believe is borne out by the Party's general experience is that the more incentives you remove or eliminate for raising funds locally, the less funds are raised.

After careful consideration, we are convinced that whatever changes future experience may dictate in the way the Party covers the expenses incurred in conducting its conventions, for the present the existing arrangement should be continued. Accordingly, we recommend non-concurrence in the resolution proposing revision of Section 7 of Article VII of the Party's Constitution.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] CHARLES TURNER,  
EDNA V. BARNES, JENNIE SEEKFORD,

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JOHN O'NEILL, NATHAN KARP  
Committee on Headquarters and Finances

On motion, the report was concurred in.

Committee on Organization and Agitation: No report.

Committee on Party Press and Literature: No report.

*Committee on Constitution and Related Matters*: Delegate J. Liebau presented the following reports:

**Re: Matters Referred by the NEC**

Your committee had considerable discussion on the advisability of accepting an applicant who is 14 years of age to membership in the Socialist Labor Party even though the Party's Constitution does not specify a minimum age. We were concerned that inasmuch as a person under the age of 18 is legally still a minor the Party may be subject to liability action by the minor's parent(s). It was feared that the minor's parent(s) may conclude that in some manner their child had been coerced into joining despite the fact that membership in our organization is a voluntary decision. The best interests of the Party would not be served by allowing this minor to be admitted.

In view of the discussion briefly stated above, we recommend that this applicant be denied admission to the Party.

We further recommend that the minimum age of 18 be restored to the Constitution under Article III, Section 1 (a). It is recommended that the revised section read, as follows:

“(a) Any person, who has reached the age of 18, accepts the constitution, principles, policies and discipline of the party, will support and participate in its activities, and severs all connection with other political parties, is eligible for membership.”

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] JOHN LIEBAU, WM. WALBRIDGE,  
GORDON LONG, ANGELINE KLEIST

Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

A motion was made and seconded to accept the report. A division of the question into two parts was called for.

Re: First part dealing with the age of the applicant: On motion, this portion of the report was referred back to committee.

Re: Second part proposing a constitutional amendment: A motion was made and seconded to accept this portion of the committee's report. On motion, action was postponed until the first part of the report is acted on.

**Re: Resolution 3-A**

Your committee has carefully reviewed resolution 3-A, which calls upon this convention to rule that someone other than the National Secretary intervene in organizational controversies within the sections.

We cannot agree with the demands of the resolution because it is based, in our view, on the mistaken impression that responsibility for investigating section disputes lies solely with the National Secretary. Our review of the Party's Constitution reveals that this is not the case.

Under Article V, Section 11 (a), the NEC has the power to appoint representatives to investigate organizational disputes. In our opinion, this clause grants the NEC the discretion to appoint any member or members it deems appropriate, including the National Secretary.

We find that the matters discussed in the resolution are already addressed adequately in the Party's Constitution. We can find no compelling reasons advanced in the resolution for restricting the NEC's discretionary power, and we were presented with no evidence that the NEC has abused its discretion in any respect.

Therefore, your committee is not persuaded that any changes in the Constitution are needed, and we recommend that this resolution be rejected.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN M. MORRIS,  
GORDON LONG, WILLIAM WALBRIDGE,  
ANGELINE KLEIST, JOHN LIEBAU  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

**Re: National Secretary's Report on "Constitutional Amendments"**

With reference to the section of the National Secretary's report on "Constitutional Amendments":

1. Your committee recommends concurrence with Item 1 of his report.
2. Your committee recommends concurrence with Item 2 of his report.
3. Your committee recommends concurrence with Item 4 of his report.

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4. Your committee recommends concurrence with Item 5 of his report.
5. Your committee recommends concurrence with Item 6 of his report.

In the instance of Item 3, we recommend nonconcurrence to strike the word “age” from Article IV, Section 2(b) of the Party’s Constitution. We do, however, recommend concurrence in the addition of the phrase “previous political affiliation (if any)” in this same provision.

The reason for the retention of the word “age” is that in dealing with ~~the portion of the National Secretary’s report, titled~~ “Matters Referred by the NEC,” your committee proposed to specify a minimum age for admission to the Party.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN M. MORRIS,  
GORDON LONG, WILLIAM WALBRIDGE,  
ANGELINE KLEIST, JOHN LIEBAU  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, action was postponed until after the committee’s report on “Matters Referred by the NEC” is rendered. (See page 125.)

The *Committee on Party Press and Literature* indicated it now had a report to present. Delegate S. Fink presented the following:

### **Re: Resolution 3-F**

The committee finds merit in the idea of converting articles published in *The People* into leaflets. Consultation with Comrades Boettcher and Whitney shows that the method described in the resolution is feasible. With the importance of getting out new leaflets in mind, the committee recommends acceptance of this resolution with the provision that the timing and selection of articles be left to the discretion of the editorial staff.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] SID FINK,  
ROSS SCHELIN, PETER KAPITZ,  
DANIEL D. DENEFF, GEORGE MILONAS,  
Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion, made and seconded, to adopt the report was not concurred in.

A motion, made and seconded, to refer this matter to the NEC for action was not concurred in.

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At 8:05 p.m., a motion was made and seconded to adjourn until 9 a.m., Tuesday, May 2. An amendment was passed to reconvene at 10 a.m. The motion as amended was adopted.

### **TUESDAY MORNING SESSION, MAY 2, 1989**

The convention was called to order at 10 a.m.

J. Liebau was elected chairperson for the day.

R. Whitney was elected vice chairperson for the day.

K. Heck and J. Thomas were nominated for sergeant at arms. K. Heck was elected by a show of hands.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported one member present.

On motion, the minutes of Monday's session were adopted as read.

#### *Reports of Committees*

*Committee on Headquarters and Finances:* Delegate C. Turner presented the following:

#### **Report on Financial Matters**

Until such time when the hoped-for increase in Party membership can be looked to for financial support in the way of contributions through the various fund-raising activities that are an ongoing part of the Party's normal affairs, your committee has concluded the best source of funds for the Party, at this particular time, is bequests from individual estates.

This is certainly nothing new to the delegates of this convention. This particular aspect of financial support for the Party's work received much attention at the 1984 convention, the Organizer's Conference in 1986 and the 1987 convention. In each instance delegates to those conventions and section organizers who attended the conference, to quote from the 1987 convention report on finances, "pledged to carry the 'message' home to other members of the sections, to energetically seek to clarify the matter for them, and to urge them to respond to the Party's appeal for members to 'remember the Party' in their wills or otherwise provide for the Party to share in their estates." On the basis of the report of the National Secretary to this convention there is reason to doubt there were "persistent efforts" to engage the members in their areas in discussions. If appeals were made, though not reported to the national office, the overall results were disap-

pointing because of the number of members who failed to respond to the appeal.

If the appeals were made at regular or special section meetings it is possible the subject, which is of such a personal nature, may not have lent itself to an immediate or public response. And, as we all know, dealing with the fact of our own mortality is not a matter most of us put at the top of our “list of important things to do” despite evidence to the contrary.

Your committee suggests that each delegate make an effort to talk to each member in their area individually, as well as presenting this matter before your section as a whole, to insure each understands the gravity of the situation and the need to discuss the most effective way to proceed when making these arrangements to insure what they want will be carried out.

Understanding fully the devastating effect a chronic illness or the frailty of the aging process can have on personal savings and the need or desire to provide for loved ones, the Party is not necessarily suggesting a fixed sum of money be set aside for the Party. A more practical approach suggested is that a percentage of an estate determined at the discretion of the individual member or sympathizer, be designated in accordance with the individual’s circumstances and desires.

From an extensive discussion with Comrade Nathan Karp, speaking from his experience as a past National Secretary and his knowledge of the national headquarters’ financial situation, it is clear the Party’s survival has been contingent on bequests on many occasions and its financial stability jeopardized by missed opportunities because well-meaning members/sympathizers have failed to notify the national office of provisions in their wills, resulting in the loss of money intended for the Party.

Again, borrowing from the financial report of the 1987 convention:

“It is also important that each of us strongly emphasize that if a member has made some financial arrangement, it is imperative that she or he let the national office know the what, when, where of the arrangement. *That is very important.* For unless the national office knows that the Party has been named in a will, or listed as a beneficiary on an insurance policy or included as a co-tenant on a bank account, or named as the intended recipient of an In Trust account, or had its name included as an interested party in a stock or bond portfolio, etc., etc., and has the opportunity to check the wording and make a record of the fact, there can be no positive assurance that the wishes of the Party’s intended benefactor will be carried out.” (Emphasis ours.)

Fraternally yours,  
[signed] CHARLES TURNER  
JENNIE SEEKFORD, JOHN O'NEILL,  
NATHAN KARP, EDNA V. BARNES  
Committee on Headquarters and Finances

On motion, the report was adopted.

Delegate E. Barnes presented the following report:

**Re: National Headquarters**

In considering the "National Headquarters" section of the National Secretary's report, we sought to concern ourselves with two primary objectives:

1. What could we do to assist the National Secretary and the NEC in resolving, or at least relieving, the difficult situation at national headquarters; and
2. What could we say in our report that would supplement in a constructive manner what has already been said in letters and reports to the membership over a considerable period of time?

In hopes of coming up with concrete suggestions, we discussed the headquarters section of the National Secretary's report in considerable detail in committee. We also invited the several members of the headquarters staff to meet with the committee at various times and present their views of the situation, its effect upon them, as well as what they perceived to be possible solutions.

We also asked the National Secretary to meet with us to answer our questions about, and clarify our understanding of, specific aspects of the national headquarters operations, and to give us the benefit of the outlook for the future as he saw it. We also inquired whether he had any special view as to how your committee and/or this convention could help ease the problems at headquarters.

Of course, the members of the Committee on Headquarters and Finances were generally pretty well aware of the seriousness of the situation that confronts the Party because of the conditions prevailing at national headquarters. Nevertheless, our meetings with the National Secretary and the members of the staff broadened our conception of the operations at national headquarters and our understanding of the complexity of the overall situation.

Unfortunately, and regrettably, those meetings did not result in the committee's coming up with precise and effective answers to the two

questions we had posed for ourselves, as a committee, at the outset of our deliberations.

It is clear that there are no easy answers to our headquarters problems. The primary ingredient—the human element—necessary to enable us to make concrete and lasting progress toward a solution is not readily available.

As the National Secretary noted in his report, he is planning to make an effort to find some of that much-needed human element. As soon as possible following this convention, he plans to contact members who there may be reason to believe—or hope—might be able to join the staff. He also informed us that he had recently been advised of a member who may be both willing to come to work at national headquarters and may have the potential to prove to be an asset. That lead, of course, he will follow up.

Naturally, we hope the results of these efforts will be positive. However, we can hardly let the matter rest on those hopes. At the very least, we must do the following:

1. Add our collective voices to the National Secretary's in conveying to every Party member that we are able to reach the scope and nature of the problems at national headquarters and the serious consequences they portend for the Party if we don't begin to reverse the trend.

2. Place those problems on our personal agenda and determine to do what we can to aid in easing those problems by responding to the fullest degree possible to the National Secretary's specific appeal for help under date of February 17, 1989. We quote the following from that letter.

“Any of the following contributions...would constitute a significant contribution to *The People* and serve both to improve the paper and materially assist the staff.

“**Articles.** These, of course, are the most obvious contributions that would serve the purposes noted above. They should be kept fairly short, generally under three typewritten pages (double-spaced with margins on both sides approximately one inch). National and/or international subjects should be avoided. Dealing with such subjects would be most likely to result in duplicating the efforts of *The People* staff. State and local subjects would be the best choice since they minimize the possibility of duplication and provide a ‘change of pace’ in the paper's overall contents. Each article should be kept to one subject, and all the source material should be sent in with the manuscript. This latter is most important.



“If in doubt as to whether or not to tackle a specific subject, check with the editorial department.

“**Pictures.** Our needs in this area are critical—and extensive. Good illustrative material is, in many ways, as important as copy...[We can] make excellent use of black and white photos. Any pictures that might serve to illustrate general...articles would be helpful. To some extent that can be determined by checking past issues of the paper, noting the many subjects that are treated time and again from one aspect or another. For example, pictures of pollution evidence, unemployment lines, factories, workers of various industrial occupations, office workers, city scenes, etc.—virtually any picture that could suggest editorial comment—would be highly useful. (These should be original pictures, not pictures clipped from other news sources.)

“**Graphics.** Here again our need is very great. It includes both general illustrative artwork (for which the same guidelines may be applied as in the case of pictures)...editorial cartoons [and caricatures]....

“**Letters.** “Letters to *The People*” on topics of general interest or commenting on specific items that have appeared in *The People*, making additional pertinent points, providing examples, offering comments or suggestions, etc. Also letters on specific events or relating a relevant personal experience, especially in industry or “on the job”...!”

Surely, most, if not all of us, can do one or more of these things, if we put our minds to it.

3. Appeal to the members in each of our areas, collectively and individually—and repeatedly, if necessary—for a similar response to the National Secretary’s February 17, 1989 letter.

4. If you know of a Party member, who, in your judgment, has the potential for filling a position on the staff at national headquarters, please convey that to the National Secretary before you leave for home, identifying the member, his/her qualifications as you evaluate them, your reasons for thinking he or she may be willing to join the staff, etc.

Your Committee on Headquarters and Finances regrets that we have not been able to develop a plan or propose more positive action that would serve to relieve the headquarters problems and reverse the trend. That is not for want of trying. We hope that the subject and details for this report will be given the most careful consideration and be subjected to thorough discussion and possible embellishment, so that we can be satisfied that we have come up with the very best that

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was in us as a body.

Comrades, the problems at national headquarters are not something apart from us; they are our problems, collectively and individually. We must put forth our very best and consistent efforts to solve them before our Party is irretrievably damaged.

Fraternally yours,

[signed] CHARLES TURNER

JENNIE SEEKFORD, JOHN O'NEILL,

NATHAN KARP, EDNA V. BARNES

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

On motion, the report was adopted.

*Committee on Organization and Agitation:* Delegate R. Whitney presented the following report:

**Re: “State of Organization” and “General Activities”**

Your committee has carefully considered the sections of the National Secretary's report encompassing “State of Organization” (Parts I and II) and “General Activities.” We also heard the testimony of a number of members present at the convention on the matters presented therein. In this report, we present our conclusions and recommendations on all three of these sections of the National Secretary's report, as all three pertain to the organizational life of the Socialist Labor Party.

Taken together, they present us with: the facts regarding recruitment and membership losses; the problems posed by the growing proportion of the membership that consists of members-at-large; the difficulties sections are having recruiting new and younger members; the failure of many sections to do the kinds of basic Party work as described and strongly urged by the 1987 convention; and the problem posed by resignations and dropouts from the Party.

In assessing the state of our organization, we must first of all avoid succumbing to despair because of the raw fact that the total membership continued to decline since 1987. We must balance this sobering news with another raw fact: we are still recruiting new members. We may not be recruiting them fast enough, we may not be recruiting them enough in cities with sections, but we are still recruiting them. That is an important starting point: it attests to the fact that we are still a viable organization.

The real questions before us, then, are how to recruit better, how to recruit more into the sections, in particular, and what steps can be

taken to reduce the losses of members who resign or drop out for non-payment of dues.

Facts presented in another section of the National Secretary's report indicate that *The People* itself remains a most central recruiting tool. Increasing the circulation of *The People* should be a top priority of the Party at this time, and we have certain recommendations to make in that regard.

One point noted in the National Secretary's report was the fact that national members-at-large distribute a smaller percentage of papers than do section members. We strongly urge national members-at-large to order bundles to increase the distribution of *The People* and suggest that the national office consider sending an appeal targeted to the members-at-large to follow up on this. Even members unable to distribute large quantities of the paper ought to be able to order at least a small bundle so that copies can be left at libraries or laundromats, or on buses, etc.

The relatively small number of commercial newsstands carrying *The People* suggests that this has been a too often neglected means of increasing the circulation of the paper. Some members are evidently unaware that to place an order for *The People* at a commercial news outlet (this includes bookstores and any other store that sells newspapers) does *not* always require placing the papers on consignment or visiting the outlet itself to deliver each issue. The section member merely has to get the outlet's owner or manager to agree to accept a bundle order and to display the papers, allowing the owner to keep the proceeds. The section or member then places the order with *The People* and only has to check back from time to time to be sure that it is, in fact, being displayed.

We also recommend that the national organization explore the potential for conducting an advertising campaign that could be more specifically targeted to municipalities where the Party has sections and active members-at-large. A number of cities around the country have "alternative news weeklies" with fairly sizable circulations; many of those publications are distributed free. For example, there is the *Village Voice* in New York, the *L.A. Weekly* in Los Angeles, the *San Jose Metro* in San Jose, *Westworld* in Denver, the *New Times* in Miami, etc. We recommend that the sections and members-at-large obtain relevant information on both classified and display ad rates and circulation of these papers and send that information along with a sample copy of the publication in to the national office. If the national office finds that an advertising campaign targeted to such publications is

feasible and carries it out, it could contribute to solving the problems of getting more recruits into the sections and cities with members-at-large where sections might be formed.

In regard to other areas of basic Party work, we note with great concern that a number of sections failed to implement the recommendations of the 1987 convention regarding basic Party work. That convention very pointedly emphasized that sections need to do *some* level of work in each of two areas: the basic “outreach work” required to attract people to the Party (leaflet and paper distribution, school lectures, letters to the press, intervention in issue-oriented movements, etc.) *and* the kinds of work needed to bring contacts closer to, and ultimately *into*, the Party (study classes, discussion groups, and personal contact visits). Yet the activity of a number of sections fell off in the first category of work, and was completely nonexistent in the second category.

We see no need at this convention to belabor what should be obvious; the evidence shows that when these kinds of basic work in both categories are done, we do—sooner or later—get new members.

As far as the question of leafleting and other basic outreach work is concerned, it essentially comes down to a matter of will—of fighting lethargy, force of bad habits, and demoralization by reviewing one’s convictions, recognizing the *fact* that diligence *will* pay off, and getting active. We have no magic answers to offer.

In regard to the matter of study classes and discussion groups, the same matter of will also applies, but we also have some specific observations to add.

First of all, some sections *did* make some efforts in this area that were not reflected in the statistics. For example, one section did, in fact, schedule discussion groups, but evidently did not include them on their activity reports because no one showed up. Members of other sections told us that they have been making some efforts in the area of personal contact work, some with a view toward trying to organize a discussion group. Members of two sections told us that they expect to be setting up discussion groups in the near future.

On the other hand, members of other sections explained their failure to conduct discussion groups or study classes with reasons that suggest that not enough efforts were made to overcome simple obstacles, or that faulty rationalizations have been too easily accepted.

Some said that only two or three members of their section were active, but that doesn’t explain why one of them could not conduct a discussion group.

Some cited the difficulty in finding a suitable location, but we find it difficult to accept that in any sizable city, one cannot find a library, community center, park facility, church, union hall, YMCA, ethnic organization hall, hotel, motel or restaurant—anywhere—in which to convene a small meeting.

Some cited the expense of procuring a meeting site. But expense should not stand in the way of doing this very essential Party work. It is safe to say that the national organization would not fail to assist any subdivision or member willing to conduct a discussion group or study class who needed financial assistance.

Some members told us, “Well, we tried that a few years ago, and it didn’t turn out very well,” or “no one showed up” or “only one person turned up.” That may be a reason to refocus on other work for a certain period, concentrate on personal contact visits, for instance, until the prospects for organizing a discussion group or study class appear more promising. But it does not explain why another attempt was not made by the sections in question during an entire two-year period.

Some have said that their past meeting sites are now in a “run-down neighborhood,” and that this discourages attendance. We are not unmindful that high-crime neighborhoods can affect attendance, but we should be careful not to presume too much or jump to conclusions. The “run-down neighborhood” is also the home of the poorest sections of the working class. Although common-sense judgment must be applied, these neighborhoods should not be written off too quickly in regard to conducting agitational and educational activities. And again, when necessary, alternative meeting sites can and should be found.

In sum, we emphasize again the importance of conducting activities like discussion groups and study classes, as well as public lectures and personal contact work. And it is our assessment that most sections—for all the difficulties of distance, infirmity, and other practical obstacles that have been cited—do have the capability of conducting some of these activities to some extent. We urge the sections to act accordingly.

The National Secretary raised the question of why—in view of the fact that large numbers of concerned workers do turn out for certain political events—“we fail to attract our ‘fair share’ of what are presumably politically motivated people.”

There is no way of determining what our “fair share” is, since there is no way of determining what we *ought* to expect in comparison to the numbers attracted to issue-oriented political events. When sections do good work and get six, eight or 10 new faces to come to an SLP

event, maybe that *is* our “fair share” under the present social circumstances. The turnout we get to an SLP event is, in the final analysis, a function of first, the material conditions and level of social awareness among the working class, and second, the quality and quantity of our own efforts to reach and attract workers. We can’t control the former; we can only control the latter.

We have already addressed the matter of increasing the quantity of our activity. As to how we can improve the quality of our work we do have a few suggestions and recommendations.

With regard to improving attendance at our events, once again the importance of doing contact work should be emphasized—both mailings to contacts and follow-up phone calls or visits—if we expect to have a decent turnout.

We would also suggest that, when sections and members publicize discussion groups or public lectures, the current topic to be discussed or addressed be prominently displayed in all publicity. If we’re going to be addressing the “hot issues” of the day, we ought to use it as a selling point.

One question raised in the National Secretary’s report in regard to recruiting activity is that of whether or not the preponderance of older members in some sections is itself a “turnoff” that causes us to lose young prospects. It is our conclusion that the problem does exist to some extent, but that it ought not to be exaggerated, nor concluded that it is a difficulty we are helpless to address. As we understand it, the problem is less one of age than of how section members present themselves and communicate with newcomers. Not all members are as adept at making newcomers feel welcome or at engaging them in relevant political discussion as others. Some comrades may tend to sidetrack conversations with extraneous matters. In some cases, section members may tend to “overwhelm” a newcomer with too much attention or with too brusque a criticism of their current level of social understanding. Some members may do too much talking and too little listening; others may do too much pandering and provide not enough political guidance.

The point is that all of these problems can contribute to an awkwardness in dealing with younger newcomers to our events. And the only way to overcome these problems is for the sections to discuss them openly and frankly and to take common-sense measures to correct them. If Comrade X is perceived to be engaging in behavior that is “turning off” newcomers, then it should be tactfully brought up, discussed, explained to Comrade X why his or her behavior is wrong, and

he or she should either be urged to correct it or prevailed upon to refrain from extensive communication with newcomers. If Comrades Y and Z are thought to be the most adept members at “breaking the ice,” then they should be so designated. After putting in considerable time and effort to attract people to our events, we cannot afford to have that effort nullified by the insensitivities or inaptitudes of a particular member or members, and by our collective failure to rectify the problem.

It should also be noted that the general lack of activity of a section may be a much bigger “turnoff” than age per se. If the young prospect gets the impression that the section never does anything and is not invited to participate in some kind of agitational activity, the prospect’s interest is all too likely to fade.

In regard to outreach work, the members should bear in mind that opportunities for distributing literature to politically motivated workers may be enhanced by getting on mailing lists of issue-oriented groups and otherwise “tuning in” to political events appropriate for our own presence.

It has been suggested to our committee that the Party should be making greater efforts to reach out to some of the most harshly exploited segments of the working class in the Latin American immigrant communities. Sections with bilingual members should discuss ways and means of reaching out to those communities and should inform the national office if they have the proficiency to translate some of our basic leaflets so that those can be added to the Party’s arsenal and help sections with bilingual members make some inroads into the Latin American immigrant communities.

To aid the recruitment of minorities in general, we urge the national office to make the preparation of a leaflet on racism a high priority.

Finally, under the heading of improving the Party’s agitational work, your committee is obligated to point out that there is a strong demand from many sections to make available videotaped copies of speeches delivered by some of the more proficient Party speakers. Sections that feel that they do not have qualified or competent speakers, or that believe that they would make a better impression upon contacts and sympathizers with such a tool in their discussion groups and contact work, are making especially urgent requests for such Party-made video presentations.

Your committee has concluded that there is potential for improving the effectiveness of discussion groups and contact work with such a tool, and we earnestly urge the national office to take steps to produce

and make available videotapes of sound SLP speeches to the subdivisions, and we earnestly urge the national office to take steps, time and circumstances permitting, to investigate the feasibility of producing and making available videotapes to the subdivisions.

However, we hasten to emphasize that it is important that the members not have too many illusions about the gains expected to be reaped by this, and that they not see videotapes as a substitute for other activities and efforts by members to develop their own capabilities as speakers and educators.

Videotapes may have the potential to impart SLP education in a manner that may be more articulate and effective than the efforts of some members to deliver their own speeches or lectures. But the same is true of *The People* and Party literature. It is still the responsibility of the local members to have the capacity to explain the Party's program and principles in areas not addressed by the videotaped speech, answer questions and get contacts interested in the activity of the Party.

In sum, videotapes must be seen as a tool with which to *augment* local discussion groups, public meetings or contact work—and nothing more.

There is one other area to be addressed in this report: the problem of keeping members in the Party, of minimizing the loss of members through resignations or nonpayment of dues. We found the “case histories” provided by the National Secretary to be very instructive.

When we lose members because they conclude that it is necessary to advocate reformism in order to attract workers to socialism; or because they are “greatly disenchanted with American politics as a whole”; or because they decide that Leninism is the road to socialism; or because they prefer to participate in the affairs of other organizations, left and right—all of this should tell us something. It should tell us that we are not properly or fully grounding our own members in, or reminding them of, certain basic principles, both political and organizational.

It should tell us that we are not adequately enforcing organizational discipline on members at the local level when they first show signs of going astray; that we may be too tolerant of minor indiscretions, or signs of unsound or unprincipled thinking, when they first begin to manifest themselves.

This is not to say that all of the members who resigned or dropped out could have been saved. Some aberrations are beyond our control. But the evidence presented in the National Secretary's report does tell



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us that in some cases, adequate efforts to correct these problems were not made.

These problems also underscore the added difficulties we have when most of our new members are members-at-large, as there are limits to what the national office can do to provide the kind of political and organizational guidance that a section can provide. More communication *from* the members-at-large, asking questions, political and organizational, to help their development might help bridge the gap somewhat. But the most reasoned conclusion we can draw is, again, the sections must get busy doing basic Party work and regaining the lead in recruiting new members.

This report contains a number of ideas and recommendations that your committee believes could help us improve the strength of the organization in the months ahead. But in its essence we are not saying anything fundamentally different from what was said at our convention two years ago. Indeed, we suggest that every member reread the state of organization report from that convention. We *know* that certain kinds of tried and true activities, persistently applied, can and will eventually yield results. The bottom line is implementation. This report cannot do anything about that. That is up to you, the members of the Socialist Labor Party.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] RICHARD WHITNEY,  
ALAN BRADSHAW, CHRIS CAMACHO,  
KARL H. HECK, JOS. HOLLON SR.  
Committee on Organization and Agitation

A motion was made to adopt the report.

A 10-minute recess was declared at 11:55 a.m. Upon reconvening at 12:11 p.m., discussion began on the committee's report.

At 1:12 p.m. Delegate N. Karp requested, and was granted, personal privilege to be excused for one-half hour.

An amendment, made and seconded, to substitute the words "investigate the potential of producing and making" for the words "take steps to produce and make" in the first full paragraph on page 150 of the report was defeated.

An amendment to substitute the words "and we earnestly urge the national office to take steps, time and circumstances permitting, to investigate the feasibility of producing and making available videotapes to the subdivisions." for the words "and we earnestly urge the national office to take steps to produce and make available videotapes

of sound SLP speeches to the subdivisions.” in the first full paragraph on page 150 of the report was adopted.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

A motion to adjourn until 3 p.m. was not concurred in.

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 3-E**

The resolution proposes that “the SLP produce some material suitable for propagandizing illiterate portions of the population for use in *The People*” and in separate publications, leaflets and handouts. The term illiterate is used to also include persons who read only a foreign language.

For those in our population who have real difficulty in reading English, printed material would not be of much help because composing somewhat complicated thoughts in three- or four-letter words offers us complications and demands special talents of our limited resources. The same holds true for the idea of cartoons or cartoon strips.

We are in agreement that more printed matter in foreign languages, for example Spanish, would be desirable. Presently we have on hand a limited quantity of “What Is Socialism?” in Spanish. There is nothing to prevent comrades *now*, who are capable, willing and interested, in offering leaflets to the national office in foreign languages from doing so. A special resolution for this is not necessary. But at this time, ~~the national office has a backlog of~~ there is a need for leaflets and other publications waiting to be taken care of and a seriously understaffed group to accomplish this. With these practical matters to consider against piling more instructions on the national office, the committee recommends nonconcurrence with the resolution.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL DENEFF

Comm. on Party Press & Lit.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

N. Karp returned at 1:25 p.m.

An amendment to substitute the words “the national office has a backlog of” with the words “there is a need for” passed by a show of hands, 13 in favor, 6 opposed.

A motion was passed to refer the report back to committee.

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At 1:35 p.m., a motion was made and seconded to adjourn until 2:30 p.m. An amendment was passed to adjourn until 3 p.m. The motion as amended was passed.

### TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION, MAY 2, 1989

The convention reconvened at 3 p.m.

On roll call, all present except Delegates J. O'Neill and G. Long. O'Neill arrived shortly.

#### *Reports of Committees*

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

#### **Re: "Party Press and Literature"**

In studying the National Secretary's report on our Party newspaper, *The People*, the statistics gathered in that report show that *The People* is the most effective propaganda tool we have and a most important help in attracting new members. A graph showing new members attracted to our organization would go up or down relative to the growth or decline of our paper's circulation. How much clearer can it become that the fortunes of our organization depend upon how successful and energetic we are in increasing the list of subscribers and readers of *The People*? It is vital that those members attending this convention make the urgency of this situation clearly understood. We are urging that a special meeting be called in the sections when we return calling for increased efforts to get subs and distribute more *Peoples* than we have been doing and asking individual members why, if they can, they hesitate to participate in this important service to the Party. We have an obligation when we leave this convention not only to personally increase our efforts in this matter but also to find ways to motivate the rest of the membership. The committee has a few specific recommendations to take back, namely:

1. The importance of making inquiries in cities where there are none or very few newsstands whether there is any barrier to putting stands or more stands on the street. Are there comrades willing and able to service these stands?
2. Commercial newspaper stores should be canvassed.
3. Public libraries and schools should be canvassed.
4. Increase our bundle orders and distribution.
5. Following up interesting letters to the press by mailing them

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sample copies of the SLP literature.

6. Let's make a greater effort to be devoted to contact work with a view to organizing study classes or discussion groups.

7. We have to urge more leaflet distribution work. These are specific goals to increase, motivate, and stimulate activity and it is important for the sections to report back monthly on the rate of progress.

8. Colleges should be canvassed by members to find out the rate charged for advertising for *People* subs, how large is the readership and this information sent back to the national office.

With respect to the pamphlet *Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers' Power*, the committee agrees with those members who feel that an entirely new pamphlet on the subject is preferable to some revision or patching up of the 1957 issue. That issue apparently is badly outdated. Here again it is asking too much from the understaffed national office to do anything except to try to get some of our capable members elsewhere in the organization to submit a new version of the pamphlet. Such a pamphlet must necessarily leave some important questions such as portions of the population not included in the SIU formulation but, just as Marx wisely avoided details and exact blueprints of a future society, some answers will have to be forthcoming out of the very process of the revolution with decisions made at that time by the victorious workers.

In summation, the committee recommends approval of the National Secretary's report headed "Party Press and Literature" and appreciates the great deal of work which his research and statistics show.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL DENEFF

Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment to strike the word "interesting" in item five on page 155 was not concurred in.

An amendment to substitute the word "members" with "contacts" on page 154 was not concurred in.

A motion to delete the last sentence beginning on page 155 was not concurred in.

On motion, the report was adopted.

*Committee on Constitution and Related Matters:* Delegate J. Morris presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 3-A**

Your committee regrets that Resolution 3-A, which was submitted by National Member-at-Large David Bradia, was brought before this convention for consideration. Your committee sees absolutely no merit in this resolution inasmuch as it is based on a ~~presumptive arrogance towards the National Secretary and shows a false~~ an erroneous conception of past and present Party practices that bear no connection to reality. No National Secretary ever arbitrarily imposed a policy of action on this Party.

Under Article V, Section 11 (a) of the Party's Constitution, it is stated that it is the NEC, not the National Secretary, that has the power to appoint representatives to investigate organizational disputes that arise in sections. This clause grants the NEC the discretion to appoint any member or members—including the National Secretary—whom it deems appropriate.

We find that the Party's interests are well provided for in the constitutional provision referred to above, and we can find no substantive reason for considering any changes in the Constitution. Accordingly, your committee recommends that this resolution be rejected.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU.

JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment to strike the words “a presumptive arrogance towards the National Secretary and shows a false” and insert the words “an erroneous” in the first sentence in the first paragraph was passed.

An amendment to add the following sentence at the end of the first paragraph: “No National Secretary ever arbitrarily imposed a policy of action on this Party,” was passed.

On motion, the report was adopted as amended.

Delegate Wm. Walbridge presented the following reports:

**Re: Matters Referred by the NEC-Part I**

Your committee has reviewed ~~the section of the National Secretary's report dealing with the concerns of~~ Matters Referred by the NEC on admitting a 14-year-old person into the Socialist Labor Party. We have discussed the matter at length and concluded that it would be against the best interests of the Party to admit so young an individual.

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It is our opinion that a person of that age is not mature enough to assume the duties and responsibilities that go with membership in the SLP even though he/she may have an enthusiasm for and an understanding of our principles and program. It is our feeling that when an individual has reached the age of 18, at which time he/she would be entitled to vote ~~and to be drafted~~, he/she has acquired enough maturity and knowledge to take on the responsibilities of membership in our Party.

In view of the brief discussion above, we recommend that the 14-year-old applicant be denied admission to the Party.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU.

JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment to strike the words “and to be drafted” in the last sentence of the first paragraph was passed.

An amendment to insert “/she” following the word “he” in the report was passed.

An amendment to strike the words “the section of the National Secretary’s report dealing with the concerns of” and insert the words “Matters Referred by the NEC on” in the first sentence of the report was adopted.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

**Re: Matters Referred by the NEC-Part II**

This report is in further reference to ~~the portion of the National Secretary’s report on~~ “Matters Referred by the NEC.” In view of the discussion and conclusion presented in Part I of our report on this subject, we recommend that the Party adopt the minimum age of 18 to qualify for membership.

We also recommend that Article III, Section 1 (a) be amended to read, as follows:

“(a) Any person, who has reached the age of 18, accepts the constitution, principles, policies and discipline of the party, will support and participate in its activities, and severs all connection with other political parties, is eligible for membership.”

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU.

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JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment to strike the words “the portion of the National Secretary’s report on” in the first sentence of the report was adopted.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

At 3:45 p.m., Delegate D. Deneff requested, and was granted, a personal privilege to be excused for five minutes.

Delegate J. Liebau reintroduced the committee’s report “Re: National Secretary’s Report on ‘Constitutional Amendments.’” (See pages 133 and 134.)

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment to delete the words “the portion of the National Secretary’s report, titled” in the last paragraph was passed.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

*New Business*

A motion to suspend the rules to allow the *Committee on Party Press and Literature* to present a report was passed.

Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 3-E**

The resolution proposes that the Party produce some special literature that would be effective in attempting to conduct agitation among workers who have not yet mastered the reading of English or have other reading difficulties.

For those in our population who have real difficulty in reading English, printed material would not be of much help because composing somewhat complicated thoughts in three- or four-letter words offers us complications and demands special talents of our limited resources. The same holds true for the idea of cartoons or cartoon strips.

We are in agreement that more printed matter in foreign languages, for example Spanish, would be desirable. Presently we have on hand a limited quantity of “What Is Socialism?” in Spanish. There is *nothing to prevent comrades now*, who are capable, willing and interested, in offering leaflets to the national office in foreign languages from doing so. A special resolution for this is not necessary. But at this time there is a need for leaflets and other publications waiting action to be taken care of and a seriously understaffed group to accomplish this. With

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these practical matters to consider against piling more instructions on the national office, the committee recommends nonconcurrency with the resolution.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] SID FINK,  
PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN  
GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL DENEFF  
Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

The chair polled the committees to determine the amount of work left and the time needed to complete the work.

*New Business*

Delegate J. Hollon introduced the following:

**Resolution on a Source of Material for New Leaflets**

There is a great need for new leaflets, and especially on burning issues that are of widespread concern by the working class.

They should be readily available, on relatively short notice, as the need arises.

It is recommended that the NEC consider arranging for articles to be printed in *The People* in such appropriate manner that they can be approved in advance of publication, and in such form as to be more readily printed separately as a leaflet.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOS. HOLLON SR.

On motion, the resolution was not concurred in.

At 4:15 p.m., a motion was made and seconded to adjourn until 6 p.m. An amendment to reconvene at 7 p.m. was passed. The motion, as amended, was passed.

**TUESDAY EVENING SESSION, MAY 2, 1989**

The convention reconvened at 7:09 p.m.

On roll call, all present except Delegate J. Thomas.

The sergeant at arms reported two members in attendance.

*Reports of Committees*

*Committee on Organization and Agitation:* Delegate R. Whitney



presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution on Capitalism and Socialism**

Your committee has considered at length Resolution 2-D submitted by Delegate Richard Whitney “On Capitalism and Socialism.”

It is our recommendation that this convention adopt the following revised version of that resolution, retitled “Resolution on Capitalism.”

RESOLUTION ON CAPITALISM

Prompted by the latest tumultuous developments in the Soviet Union and China and by what has been described as the “longest peacetime expansion in U.S. history,” the beneficiaries and defenders of capitalism today are boasting that capitalism has “triumphed” over socialism, that it is the superior system and the “wave of the future.”

These claims are false, in both their premises and their conclusions.

The Soviet and Chinese ruling classes in their efforts to deal with the problems resulting from their bureaucratic rule have instituted policies that allow a greater degree of private ownership, foreign and domestic. Those policies are no reflection on socialism, since socialism has never existed in the Soviet Union or China. In both nations, and in others following the Soviet model of bureaucratic statism, the means of production have never been owned by society and controlled by the workers; they have always been owned by the state and controlled by a bureaucratic ruling class. The failings of that system are the failings of bureaucratic state despotism, not socialism.

Socialism is a social system that has yet to come into existence. It is a system that *will* come into existence when the working class of an advanced industrialized capitalist society like the United States recognizes that private ownership of the means of production no longer serves the social interest and is incapable of meeting the workers’ needs; and when that class organizes, politically and industrially, to overthrow capitalism and establish a socially owned economy democratically administered by the workers themselves through their industrially based organizations.

For capitalism’s champions to justify their claims, they would have to demonstrate that capitalism has solved its manifold internal problems and contradictions, that it has negated the class struggle and eliminated all motivation for workers to oppose it. This they have not done and can never do. Capitalist claims of a “record peacetime expansion” notwithstanding, the reality is that the overall condition of the U.S. working class has been growing worse, conditions are being

created for a more severe economic crisis in the future, and the U.S. working class is very much engaged in the class struggle—a struggle that can be resolved in the workers' favor only through the establishment of socialism.

According to official government figures, there were 6.7 million U.S. workers counted as unemployed at the beginning of 1989, or 5.4 percent of the “labor force.” Only 20 years ago, such a rate would have been considered distressingly high, even by the capitalist politicians and media. It is only because unemployment soared to substantially higher levels from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s that these mouth-pieces for capitalism can falsely portray 5.4 percent as a “low” unemployment rate and suggest it is cause for celebration.

In the process, they conveniently ignored the fact that, as 1989 began, there were 5.1 million workers who wanted full-time work but were employed part time. There were at least another one million “discouraged” workers—unemployed workers who needed jobs but after repeated failure to find them have given up actively looking for them. Adding these two groups to the ranks of the unemployed yields a more realistic unemployment rate of 10.2 percent. And there are others who can and should be counted among the unemployed.

But even that just begins to describe the real condition of the U.S. working class today. Millions of other workers who were unemployed for long periods during the 1980s were finally forced to accept much lower paying jobs. Millions more were forced to accept cuts in wages and benefits and/or more burdensome working conditions. In short, there has been a general downward slide for the entire working class, from the better paid workers who mistakenly considered themselves “middle class” and are now struggling to “get by,” to the growing number of poor, employed and unemployed, who have been cast into the ranks of the hungry and homeless.

The rate at which workers are exploited—the rate at which they produce value, in excess of their own wages, that accrues to the capitalist class—has continued to increase, as Karl Marx demonstrated it must over 140 years ago. As of 1986, U.S. workers in basic industries, on average, produced \$4.47 worth of product for the capitalist class for every dollar they received in wages. This is a substantial rise from 1972, when workers produced \$3.18 worth of product for the capitalists for each dollar in wages.

Not only do wages form a shrinking percentage of the workers' total product, they are shrinking, period. With the commodity labor power in oversupply, the capitalist buyers of labor power have been able to

lower the price of labor power—wages. Moreover, inflation and shifts in the industrial composition of the economy have eroded the buying power of workers' wages.

According to government figures, the buying power of the average wage in January 1989 was 15 percent less than what it was in 1972. During that same period, the productivity of the working class, measured by output per hour, *rose* by at least 16 percent.

This general decline in wages has increased the ranks of the working poor. Today an estimated 34.2 percent of all workers receive a wage at or below the government's arbitrarily set poverty level. About 23 percent of the homeless are actively employed.

The increase of the working poor, combined with still widespread unemployment, has meant that growing poverty, hunger and homelessness has continued throughout the highly touted period of "expansion." In the United States today there are 36 million people living below the official poverty line, up from 23 million in 1973. Only an increase in the numbers of two-paycheck families has kept it from rising higher.

In sum, the condition of the working class, the producers of all social wealth, is steadily growing worse, even as their ability to create wealth in abundance steadily increases.

That being the case during the so-called "record peacetime expansion," the consequences will be dire indeed when the present expansion comes to an end in an economic depression. Such a depression is inevitable. Try as it may, the U.S. capitalist class cannot escape the contradictions inherent in its own system.

All told, to boast of capitalism as the wave of the future, the capitalists and their political and media mouthpieces must pretend not to see the real condition of the working-class majority. They must pretend not to see that our society is on the edge of an economic catastrophe.

~~The capitalists would also have to demonstrate that the class struggle between the capitalist class and the working class has been reconciled or negated. Yet the evidence is everywhere that the class struggle not only is still a fact, it is growing more intense.~~

The capitalists must also pretend that the class struggle between the capitalist class and the working class does not exist in the United States. Yet the evidence is everywhere that the class struggle in the United States not only is still a fact, it is growing more intense.

Wage concessions, freezes, speed-ups, the displacement of labor with new machinery—these efforts to increase the rate of exploitation have hit workers in virtually every industry. And workers have strug-

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gled to resist, fighting desperate battles to defend their wages and working conditions.

Meatpackers, cannery workers, airline workers, farmworkers, lumber workers, paper workers, teachers, railway workers, miners, hospital workers and hotel and restaurant workers are among those who have shown a militant spirit in strikes during the last few years. At the rank-and-file level, there have been instances of a growing awareness that workers have a common interest in supporting each other's struggles. In that development lies the beginnings of classconsciousness, and classconsciousness points squarely in the direction of socialism.

Sooner or later the combination of worsening conditions, deepening crises, intensified struggle and the energetic efforts of socialists will convince our fellow workers that socialism provides the only solution to the host of social, economic and political problems confronting our nation.

It will become clear that the reason *why* poverty and hardship exist in the middle of plenty, the reason *why* pollution, war, social strife and chaos grow worse, is that we live in a social system in which the means of production are privately owned and controlled by and for a small minority of people.

It will also become clear that the solution to these woes lies in placing the means of production under the ownership and control of all society, and placing the administration of the industries and the economy into the collective hands of the workers themselves, organized to control them democratically through their own socialist industrial unions.

Capitalism has not triumphed over socialism. Its real battle with socialism has yet to be fought. And capitalism's own disintegration is increasingly demonstrating that it *must* give way to a higher, superior form of social organization—socialism—if the human race is to survive and flourish.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] RICHARD WHITNEY,  
ALAN BRADSHAW, CHRIS CAMACHO  
KARL H.HECK, JOSEPH HOLLON SR.  
Committee on Organization and Agitation

It was moved and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment was made and seconded to substitute the second complete paragraph on page 166, with the following: "The capitalists must also pretend that the class struggle between the capitalist class

and the working class does not exist in the United States. Yet the evidence is everywhere that the class struggle in the United States not only is still a fact, it is growing more intense.” On motion, the amendment passed.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 3-D**

Resolution 3-D headed, “Networking,” was studied carefully by the committee. Taking the sense of the resolution from the first sentence, “The Party should establish NEC-monitored networks composed of members-at-large who are willing and able to pool their efforts on projects and activities of value to the Party,” there is no need for such a resolution.

Clearly, in planning joint projects by or for members-at-large the channels to communicate such activities to the NEC are already open and considered necessary. There is no apparent need to make formal a procedure already made formal in practice by calling it “NEC-monitored networks” or introducing this as a resolution.

Members-at-large *can* communicate with each other through the newsletter or via the NEC which in any event is already conceded by the author of the resolution.

The committee considers the resolution redundant and recommends nonconcurrence.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL DENEFF

Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

The chair polled the committees to determine the amount of work left and the time needed to complete the work.

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* One report remaining; about two hours of work.

*Committee on Constitution and Related Matters:* Three reports remaining; about two hours of work.

At 7:47 p.m., a motion was made and passed to adjourn and to reconvene at 10 a.m., Wednesday, May 3.

**WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION, MAY 3, 1989**

The convention was called to order at 10 a.m.

J. Liebau was elected chairperson for the day.

N. Karp as elected vice chairperson for the day.

C. Camacho was elected sergeant at arms for the day.

On roll call, all present except Delegates J. O'Neill and J. Thomas.

The sergeant at arms reported two members and one nonmember present.

The minutes of Tuesday's session were adopted as read.

*Reports of Committees*

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

**Re: Resolution 2-A**

The committee not only carefully read the resolution which calls upon the NEC, the national office and *The People* staff to help publish a new piece of literature that may be called "Looking Forward to Socialism," but we also enjoyed it. The resolution's author offered 10 pages of imaginative descriptions of a future socialist society. It was refreshingly new and different.

While we enjoyed it, the committee is conscious of a pile of work waiting to be done by an understaffed crew at the national office. A project such as this one demands careful preparation, careful scrutiny, and the kind of very responsible effort that does not get carried away from a factual projection of what could be expected after a successful revolution.

The committee considers this theme and resolution too worthwhile to be neglected. However, we are also aware of the practical difficulties which face us in trying to implement this resolution in the near future.

The committee therefore votes concurrence with the resolution with the understanding that action on this will be taken when feasible.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] SID FINK,

PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,

GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL DENEFF

Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

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

At this point (10:55 a.m.), Delegate K. Heck requested to be excused from the duration of the convention. His request was granted.

The motion to refer the report back to committee passed by a show of hands, 11 in favor, 9 against.

*Committee on Constitution and Related Matters:* Delegate J. Liebau presented the following reports:

### **Re: Resolution 3-B**

Your committee has reviewed and discussed the contents of the resolution, which proposes to amend Article V, Section 14, by granting a member expelled by the NEC the right of appeal before the National Convention.

Your committee can find no merit in the stated purpose of this resolution to clarify the “limitations of authority vested in the NEC.” Our review of applicable sections of the Party’s Constitution, i.e., Article V, Sections 12 (a) and 14, reveals that the authority and limitation of the NEC are clearly defined. Under Section 12 (a), the NEC has the authority to impose sanctions up to and including suspension, which is submitted to the following National Convention for review. Pending that review, however, the NEC’s sanctions are binding upon the members or subdivisions, as provided in Section 14. If the member or subdivision refuses to abide by the sanctions, they face expulsion and the loss of the right of appeal.

By maintaining the provisions as they now stand, both the rights of the members and the integrity of the organization are maintained. As the National Secretary stated in his report at the October 14-18, 1977 NEC Session:

“The rights of individual members and sections are safeguarded by strengthening the process of appeal, curbing executive authority and expanding that of the representative convention. The rights of the organization can be protected only by making the process inviolable and adherence to it unconditional.”

Your committee rejects the resolution’s arguments that its proposed amendment will not curtail any authority of the NEC. In our view, adoption of the amendment would destroy the authority of the NEC and confer license on the member or section to break organizational discipline.

Therefore, your committee recommends that this resolution be rejected.

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Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU,  
JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

On motion, the report was adopted.

**Re: Resolution 3-C**

Your committee has reviewed and discussed the contents of the resolution calling for the censure of the NEC for an alleged unconstitutional act.

The resolution only tells us that a member-at-large was expelled by the NEC in March 1988. It does not identify the member nor present a statement of the events and circumstances leading to the member's expulsion.

In support of its demands, the resolution relies on Article III, Section 4 (b) and Article V, Section 12 (a), the latter of which states that "The NEC shall have the authority to impose organizational sanctions up to and including suspension...." Suspension will be reviewed by the National Convention, which alone shall have the power to order expulsion.

The resolution forgets to mention Article V, Section 14, which provides that NEC decisions shall be binding until convention review, and that refusal to abide by those decisions will be grounds for immediate expulsion.

In our view, it was incumbent upon the author of this resolution to establish a case by presenting all the relevant facts to support the charges made.

It is not the burden of this committee to make a case and then decide the merits of the resolution.

Your committee finds that this resolution has no merit and recommends it be rejected.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU,  
JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

On motion, the report was adopted.

Delegate W. Walbridge presented the following report:



THIRTY-NINTH NATIONAL CONVENTION

**Re: Election of NEC**

We recommend that six of the members listed in the section of the National Secretary's report entitled "Election of NEC and National Officers" be elected to serve on the National Executive Committee for the coming two-year term. They are: Donna Bills, Kenneth Boettcher, Genevieve Gunderson, Louis Lipcon, Diane Secor and Stephen Secor.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU,  
JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

On motion, the report was adopted.

At 11:25 a.m., a brief recess was declared. Reconvened at 11:27 a.m. Request of Delegate J. Hollon to be excused briefly was granted.

At 11:30 a.m., it was moved and seconded to recess until 12 noon. An amendment to adjourn until 2 p.m. passed by a show of hands 9 in favor, 5 against. The motion as amended was adopted.

**AFTERNOON SESSION, WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 1989**

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

On roll call, all present except Delegates J. O'Neill, J. Seekford and J. Thomas. J. Seekford arrived shortly.

*Reports of Committees*

*Committee on Constitution and Related Matters:* Delegate J. Morris presented the following report:

**Re: Election of Editor of *The People***

We find that there is a member who is willing, also qualified, to serve as Editor of *The People*, if nominated, and we are prepared to make such a nomination.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] JOHN LIEBAU,  
JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,  
WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST  
Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

On motion, the report was adopted.

Delegate J. Morris placed Richard Whitney's name in nomination for the office of Editor of *The People*. On motion, Comrade Whitney

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was unanimously elected. (Applause)

R. Whitney took the podium and addressed the delegates.

Delegate A. Kleist presented the following report:

### **Re: Election of National Secretary**

We find that there is a member willing to serve as National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party if nominated, and we are prepared to make such nomination.

The committee regrets that after discussion with the current National Secretary and current Financial Secretary it was unable to find a member willing to serve in the capacity of Financial Secretary.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] JOHN LIEBAU,

JOHN M. MORRIS, GORDON LONG,

WILLIAM WALBRIDGE, ANGELINE KLEIST

Committee on Constitution and Related Matters

On motion, the report was adopted.

Delegate W. Walbridge placed the name of Robert Bills in nomination for the post of National Secretary. On motion, Comrade Bills was unanimously elected. (Applause)

R. Bills took the floor and addressed the delegates.

*Committee on Party Press and Literature:* Delegate S. Fink presented the following report:

### **Re: Resolution 2-A**

Your Committee on Party Press and Literature has carefully reviewed the resolution proposing the publication and distribution of a new piece of literature that the delegate submitting the resolution suggested “may be called ‘Looking Forward to Socialism.’”

While we haven’t the slightest doubt that the resolution was prompted by the very best of intentions; unfortunately, the presentation itself makes a number of charges or claims and implications that we cannot permit to stand on the record without comment and/or refutation.

For example, the resolution states that “it is time to make some change in our approach to educating the working class.” That amounts to a far-reaching proposal with serious implications however unintended. Yet, nothing is offered to support that contention other than the general observation that despite our efforts to date “we seem no nearer to our goal of socialism than we were in De Leon’s time.”

## THIRTY-NINTH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Similarly, the resolution states that “our literature must be lacking something and that should be corrected.” This implied criticism has even greater implications. Yet, again, no evidence or argument is advanced to justify the contention.

Finally, the resolution generally implies that the Party has over the years completely neglected to make efforts to portray what life under socialism may be like.

We emphatically reject the contentions and implications noted above.

As for the ultimate intent of the resolution, it is to furnish new literature with an approach to visualize some of the benefits of the socialist revolution. This certainly has some merit and we appreciate the dedicated work of preparing the resolution. Nevertheless, for the cogent reasons stated above the committee recommends nonconcurrency.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] SID FINK,  
PETER KAPITZ, ROSS SCHELIN,  
GEORGE MILONAS, DANIEL DENEFF  
Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

### *New Business*

A motion authorizing the national office to edit the minutes of the proceedings was adopted.

The minutes of Wednesday’s session were read and approved.

On motion, the minutes of the entire convention as amended were adopted.

On motion, the 39th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party adjourned *sine die* at 2:33 p.m.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] ANGELINE KLEIST  
Recording Secretary

[signed] DONNA BILLS  
Assistant to the Rec. Sec’y

## APPENDIX

### MATTERS REFERRED BY THE NEC

Last month, the national office received an application for membership from a young man who resides in the State of New York. The application was properly completed, and it was accompanied by a brief letter in which the applicant gave his reasons for wanting to become a member of the Party. The body of that letter read as follows:

“The reason I would like to join the Socialist Labor Party [is] because I feel that the SLP is the political party which represents the workers and their interests and is the sole representative of socialism in the United States. Because I am in complete agreement with the program, platform, and principles of the Socialist Labor Party, I find that the SLP is the only political organization which represents my beliefs.”

The applicant first came to national office attention in May 1987 when he wrote a letter requesting information about the Party. Within the month, he took out a subscription to *The People* and purchased the pamphlets recommended for beginning students of socialism. He purchased a large number of pamphlets and *Socialist Studies* in June 1988.

Last February, he wrote to request information on how to join the Party. In response, the national office sent the usual letter addressed to prospective members, a membership application form, and copies of the Party's Constitution, Norms and Procedures, and the Handbook on Intervention and Union Work. He returned the application under date of March 19, at which time we discovered that this young aspirant to Party membership was only 14 years old!

The application was routinely submitted to the NEC at its regular monthly meeting on April 12. However, following a lengthy debate the NEC decided that the application should be referred to the convention, in part because of the age of the applicant, but primarily because the NEC believes the Party's policy on the general question of an age limit should be clarified for its own future guidance, and for the guidance of the sections.

Following the NEC meeting, I wrote the young man, in part, as follows:

“Your application was formally presented to the committee by the undersigned, which is the usual procedure. A motion to accept

your application and to admit you to membership as a national member-at-large was made.

“The ensuing discussion was lengthy, but it did not focus on your qualifications as a prospective member. It focused, instead, on the question of age, and whether or not it would be in the Party’s best interests to admit a member as young as yourself.

“The question was eventually called and the motion put to a vote. That vote ended in a tie, with half the committee voting in favor of the motion to accept your application and half voting in the negative. When that occurs, the chairperson is to cast the deciding vote. The chairperson voted against the motion to accept your application. However, that did not end the matter.

“A few moments after the vote was completed a motion to reconsider was made and won a majority of the votes. This was followed almost immediately by a motion to refer your application for membership to the Party’s 39th National Convention, which is scheduled to convene at Santa Clara, Calif., on Saturday, April 29. That motion also received a majority of votes, and that, for the moment, is where the matter stands.

“I cannot anticipate what the convention will decide. However, your application has presented the Party with an opportunity to clarify its policy on what, if any, minimum age should be set before an otherwise seemingly qualified person such as yourself can or should be admitted to membership in the SLP.”

For nearly half a century, the Party’s Constitution contained a provision which required that all applicants for membership be at least 18 years of age. That provision was amended into the Constitution in 1936, but was rescinded in 1983.

When proposing the addition of the age limit to the 1936 National Convention, then National Secretary Comrade Arnold Petersen offered the following argument in its favor:

*“Comment:* We have now no provision with respect to the minimum age at which a person may be admitted to the Party. It is felt that in most cases anyone below eighteen years of age is scarcely mature enough for the responsibilities that go with membership in the revolutionary Socialist Labor Party, even though such persons may possess a fair understanding of the Party’s principles and program. It has been considered desirable to have a definite age limit fixed in the Constitution, for the reason that every now and then the question comes up and decisions by the National Office have, in the nature of things, been more or less arbitrary.”

This may be contrasted to the argument the 1983 National Convention’s Committee on Constitution offered in urging that the age re-

quirement be rescinded. That argument, which was concurred in by the convention, was as follows:

“The minimum age requirement has no relevance to the character or ability of any person. There is no logical connection between the age of a person *per se* and whether or not that person will make good membership material. Consequently, there is no need to maintain this artificial impediment to our ability to recruit potentially good people and thus build our party. We must trust to the good sense and judgment of the sections and the NEC in such matters.”

It does not appear that there was any clearly established Party policy in this regard prior to 1936. The only reference to the subject I have come across from the pre-1936 period is a brief “Letter Box” response that appeared in the *Daily People* on May 7, 1911, as follows:

“L.S.B., Albany, N.Y.—Anyone 18 years of age and properly endorsed can become a member of the Socialist Labor Party.”

However, nothing appeared in the Party’s Constitution from that period, or in any other Party Constitution from at least the 1880s down to the amendment adopted in 1936, imposing such a limit. If the 18-year-old limit existed it was either by common consent or as provided by section and/or state committee bylaws. From the way in which Comrade Petersen approached the question when he presented the argument for establishing a definite age limit it may be inferred that applicants of less than 18 years of age occasionally were admitted to membership, and that their applications were not dismissed out-of-hand on that ground.

#### **RESOLUTION #1-A FROM SECTION COOK COUNTY, ILL.**

*Resolution: Leaflet on Daniel De Leon and De Leonism*

Be it resolved that the national office and the National Executive Committee investigate the feasibility of publishing a leaflet on Daniel De Leon and De Leonism.

At the present time the Party does not have any free available information on who Daniel De Leon was; his relationship to the Socialist Labor Party; his contributions to Marxism and an explanation of the difference between De Leonism and the other schools of thought claiming to be Marxist.

This special leaflet would complement other Party leaflets when

given to contacts and other interested persons. It would leave them with vital information on Daniel De Leon, De Leonism, and the philosophy of the Socialist Labor Party.

Yours for De Leonist Enlightenment,  
[signed] GEORGE MILONAS  
Organizer

**RESOLUTION #1-B FROM SECTION SACRAMENTO, CALIF.**

*Resolution Calling for a Convention Delegate Expense  
Fund—Replacing the Current Convention Mileage Fund*

Because the Party's Constitution specifies two different versions relative to the National Convention delegate expense—one for the section delegates and another one for the national members-at-large delegates—be it resolved that Section 7 of Article VII of the Party's Constitution dealing with National Convention delegate expenses be revised to read as follows:

“The expenses of the national members-at-large delegates plus the lodging expenses of the section delegates shall be defrayed by the convention delegate expense fund. Unless there are any special considerations—the lodging expenses of all the delegates shall be in line with the lowest rates that are available to the Party. The fare of all the delegates, both coming and going, shall also be defrayed by the convention delegate expense fund, provided doing so does not conflict with federal or state laws. All other section delegate expenses, if any, shall be borne by the sections sending them.”

**REASONING:**

(1) At present, Section 7 of Article VII of the Party's Constitution specifies that all expenses of the national delegates-at-large, other than travel expenses, will be paid by the NEC. This provision, however, does not apply to the expenses of the section's delegates. Perhaps, the original concept here was that all sections could and should frequently hold fund-raising affairs and thus accumulate sufficient funds in their respective treasuries, while for practical (geographic) reasons such fund-raising socials are not possible for national members-at-large.

(2) However, upon close examination of individual small sections, those consisting of less than 10 members, also find difficulties in gathering sufficient members and friends—a prerequisite for successful

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money raising affairs. Because of such difficulty on the part of small sections, their treasuries are practically empty or entirely empty.

(3) For instance, if a small section like Section Sacramento, somehow manages to accumulate \$100 in its treasury —the section will be obligated to use this fund toward the expenses of its elected delegate. Thus, no funds will be available to the section to contribute a donation at the convention's banquet collection. Again, if another small section has no funds in its treasury, then, there are three possibilities available for such a section, namely, (a) request financial support from the national office for their delegate expenses, other than travel expenses; or (b) not bother at all in electing and sending a convention delegate; or (c) the section may be forced to elect a delegate who could and is willing to absorb his own convention expenses, other than travel expenses, but such elected delegate may not be the most qualified to represent the section at the convention.

(4) Larger sections, those with 10 members or more with funds in their treasuries and financially able to defray the expenses of their delegate or delegates will have no choice but to reduce their section donations at the convention banquet collection by the amount needed to field their delegate to the National Convention. Thus, it is obvious to us that the national organization will not be better off financially by requiring that the sections continue to defray all delegate expenses other than travel expenses, as the Party's Constitution now requires.

(5) Therefore, we of Section Sacramento appeal to the convention delegates to give careful consideration to this section resolution, which if adopted, we believe, will greatly simplify all financial considerations of all sections, small or large, in conjunction with the needed financial expenses in electing and sending section delegates to the future National Conventions.

(6) Finally, we recommend that the convention expense fund, if approved, should be funded by the current mileage assessment fund, plus direct voluntary contributions by members and sections and, if necessary, by 3 percent to 5 percent outlay from the convention's banquet collections deemed necessary by the NEC.

[signed] DANIEL D. DENEFF  
Organizer



**RESOLUTION #3-A FROM NAT'L. MEMBER-AT-LARGE D.  
BRADIA, N.Y.**

*Resolution*

Whereas, a practice has been instituted in the Party that is detrimental and wrong and should be changed.

The practice was introduced by the former National Secretary and is continued by the present one.

The condition herein referred to is: "A troublesome or problem section emerges from time to time." In such a situation, where all the members of the section are highly emotionally charged, both those who instigated the problem as well as those who did not, confrontation by the National Secretary is not the answer. Instead, someone else should be sent, not the National Secretary, if there is to be any hope of salvaging as many members as possible from such a mess. And this person should be sent reasonably soon after the problem emerges giving those who started the problem as little time as possible to corrupt the other section members.

This method was used for many years by Arnold Petersen, and it is far superior to the present one. Whether it involved a section clear across the country or a section under his doorstep, so to speak, in New York City where he worked every day, Petersen kept his place and his distance, and always sent someone else. And he did so not out of fear, unless it was fear of the outcome, but out of wisdom.

This is not a question of valor. It is a question of wisdom. And "Wisdom is the better part of valor." This wiser method will also reduce the wear and tear of the National Secretary and leave him with a better image.

There are a number of members who are capable and trustworthy of handling such an assignment. Any one of the three on the staff of *The People* could handle such an infrequent assignment. And in the field, Comrade Bortnick of Texas, Comrade Ross Schelin of Minnesota, Comrade George Taylor [of] Pennsylvania, or Comrade Connie Furdeck of Florida could handle the assignment, after being given orientation and direction. And I believe there are others in the Party who are so qualified. Whoever is sent to do the confrontation should simply be instructed to cover the specific requirements to solve the problems and to deliver a complete report on the outcome.

With highly escalated emotions involved, the Petersen method here is tried and true and a step forward. The method that has been practiced since Petersen passed away is a step backward.

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Resolved, where a troublesome or problem section has developed, the National Secretary shall not himself go to resolve the situation, but shall send someone else to confront the section with its situation. And such person shall send a complete report to the National Secretary and the NEC. We must use good and the best wisdom, if the Party is to expand instead of diminish in size.

[signed] DAVID BRADIA

National Member-at-Large

**RESOLUTION #3-B FROM NAT'L. MEMBER-AT-LARGE J.  
RICHARDSON, ORE.**

*SUBJECT: Proposed Amendment to the Constitution  
of the Socialist Labor Party*

ARTICLE V, SECTION 14: It is proposed that this Section be amended to read as follows:

Section 14. All NEC rulings shall be binding until convention review. Refusal to abide by such rulings will be grounds for immediate expulsion by the NEC. Any member so expelled retains the right to appeal the matter to the following convention. (Proposed change underlined.)

*Comment:* The proposed addition to this Section merely clarifies the limitations of the authority vested in the NEC by the Party Constitution. To make this amendment would bring this Section into agreement with Section 12 (a) which reserves the power of final expulsion only to the Party convention and avoid any confusion as to the powers of the NEC to expel. The authority of the NEC to review expulsions by sections is not affected.

As it stands now, Section 14 can easily be interpreted to grant the power of final expulsion, with its attendant loss of any rights to appeal or review, to the NEC. To accept this interpretation of Section 14 is to abnegate the authority of the convention as the representative body of the SLP membership, and to subjugate the final authority of the convention to the authority of the NEC. The NEC clearly is not, nor was it ever intended by the membership of the Party to be, the final authority on Party matters. The NEC is the administrative body of the Party and the caretaker of Party operations between conventions. Final authority has always rested with the sections and membership of the SLP and

is expressed by means of the Party convention and Constitution.

This amendment will not curtail any of the authority of the NEC presently vested in that body by the Constitution. It merely explicitly states that final authority on such a serious action as immediate expulsion of a member or members rests with the Party convention and membership. This fact is already stated in Section 12 (a). The NEC will still retain the authority it now has to order immediate expulsion in the extraordinary circumstances which require that drastic act, and this amendment makes it clear that the act of immediate expulsion is subject to the review of all sides of the question by the convention for confirmation in order to become final and complete. To reason otherwise is to conclude that the NEC has a final authority to deny review of its actions which affect the Party sections and membership.

Respectfully submitted,  
[signed] JILL RICHARDSON  
National Member-at-Large

**RESOLUTION #3-C FROM NAT'L. MEMBER-AT-LARGE J.  
RICHARDSON, ORE.**

*SUBJECT: Resolution Calling for Censure of the National Executive Committee and Vacating an Unconstitutional Action by That Elected Body*

Whereas, the National Executive Committee, in formal executive session, did vote to expel a member-at-large in March of 1988 prior to any formal charges of violation of the Constitution of the SLP, violation of any specified rule or provision of the Party's Norms and Procedures by that member-at-large, or any period of suspension imposed upon that member; and

Whereas, Article III, Section 4 (b) of the Constitution of the Socialist Labor Party states quite plainly and unequivocally that: "All NEC decisions in disputes involving members-at-large shall be final, except as otherwise provided in Article V, Section 12 (a)." (Emphasis added.)

Article V, Section 12 (a) states without any reservations or any exceptions allowed:

"The NEC shall have the authority to impose organizational sanctions UP TO and including SUSPENSION on a member or members. All suspensions made by the NEC shall be submitted to the following CONVENTION for review, which ALONE SHALL HAVE THE POWER

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TO ORDER EXPULSION.” (Key phrases and words emphasized.)

Whereas, the action of the NEC in expelling a member-at-large in formal session during the month of March in 1988 was *prima facie* evidence of that body exceeding the authority granted to it under the Constitution of the Socialist Labor Party; and

Whereas, this action by the NEC was a direct violation of the above-cited provisions of the Party Constitution,

Be it therefore resolved that the 39th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party censures the National Executive Committee for the act of expulsion of a member-at-large which exceeded the scope of the authority vested in the NEC by the Constitution of the SLP, and hereby declares said act to be null and void.

Respectfully submitted,  
[signed] JILL RICHARDSON  
National Member-at-Large

**RESOLUTION #3-D FROM NAT'L. MEMBER-AT-LARGE I.  
SILVEY, CALIF.**

*Resolution on Networking for the 1989 Convention*

RESOLUTION:

1. The Party should establish NEC-monitored networks composed of members-at-large who are willing and able to pool their efforts on projects and activities of value to the Party. By “network” is meant a group of members-at-large who could and would communicate with each other by mail to contribute to a cooperative undertaking of value to the Party, such as leafleting, letter writing, researching and writing of articles for *The People* about subjects on which they share an expertise or interest, newsstand operation, speaking before groups, and other activities for which there is always a need.

ARGUMENT:

1. It is urgent that the Party access members for any assistance they can render the editorial staff of *The People*. As well, the Party has had an ongoing need to tap the resources of its members in ways that only team-style approaches can accomplish. Unfortunately, the extreme isolation of members-at-large prevents their team talents being initiated or exercised to the advantage of the Party, as well as depriving them of support which other members may be able to offer. We cannot afford the waste of a portion of the Party's resources, specifically,

members-at-large whose potential has not, and cannot, be realized within the present organizational format.

2. A working acquaintance with each other, and each other's ideas and abilities, will also assist members-at-large to make more informed choices and decisions when asked to select delegates for various purposes and to vote on a range of matters. Our relative ignorance of each other makes an election of member-at-large delegates to the National Convention one which produces but a modicum of representation, if not a mere sampling of convenience.

3. Both of the above problems can be alleviated by adopting "networking" as a *modus operandi*. (The extreme cellular mode presently in place is appropriate for bodies working in fear of discovery. Such may not be the type of organization suitable for the SLP.) "Networking" has a basis in primitive cultures, as well as in contemporary capitalist society. An example of its use by primitives is the famous Australian "walkabout," whereby an individual native is able to travel throughout and across immense distances, far from home, secure in the knowledge that he will find support because his gens, or clan, will be represented in any tribal enclave he encounters along the way. Also, it is quite well known how primitive hunting parties organize their members into networks to trap their prey. Contemporarily, we are quite familiar with the multitude of firms that offer goods and services enhanced by a commitment to supply customer support through networks of conveniently located facilities. The effectiveness of police, isolated in urban sprawls, is dependent on their ability to function as part of a network and to act in concert when so required.

4. In the case of the SLP, the switchboard governing networks of members-at-large must probably be the NEC, though the NEC has got enough to do as it is, since it already performs this function in the case of the sections. Even so, much of the tedious referencing required could be handled by computer. At the present time, members-at-large are in total ignorance of one another's whereabouts, addresses and phone numbers. The only body that is currently able to effect contacts between these members is the NEC. If confidentiality is to remain of paramount importance to some or all of the members, then it would seem no other alternative exists to the NEC as a clearing house for intra-Party communication.

5. It is clear that there has been a slow, but steady, deterioration in the Party's and *The People's* ability to handle newly emergent issues with the strength and/or depth previously evidenced. When *The People* was reduced from a weekly to a biweekly publication the member-

ship was assured this would release energy and resources for new projects. In actuality, the greatest, if not sole, task has remained that of keeping *The People* in print, as well it should be. But now we have reached the point where that is in even greater jeopardy than before, or so it would seem from the Feb. 17th letter circulated by Comrade Bills. It appears that, if such is the case, then obviously we are near rock bottom and some original approach, such as “networking,” is surely needed.

6. Lastly, there is the issue of how the Party can continue to function through a membership that seems less and less section-oriented. As the number of members-at-large grow in proportion to those attached to sections, the problem becomes not simply that of treating with auxiliaries; very shortly, members-at-large could well be the principals upon which the Party’s future depends. In that regard, the development of networks of members-at-large as a working proposition may remain the only method of maintaining, if not restoring, the SLP as a viable and vigorous organization.

Fraternally,  
[signed] IRVING SILVEY  
National Member-at-Large

**RESOLUTION #3-E FROM NAT’L. MEMBER-AT-LARGE I.  
SILVEY, CALIF.**

*Resolution on Material for Propagandizing the Illiterate*

RESOLUTION:

Proposed that the SLP produce some material suitable for propagandizing illiterate portions of the population, for use in *The People*, and/or in separate publications, leaflets and handouts. The term, “illiterate,” may be taken to refer also to persons who read only a foreign language, such as Spanish.

Argument:

It hardly seems necessary to put forward an argument for this resolution. The only question that could reasonably be raised is whether it would overly tax the Party’s resources. A specific material which comes immediately to mind is the cartoon strip. If the special skill is not available within the Party to produce a cartoon strip, perhaps some members or a “networked” group of members might make a focused effort to acquire the requisite training, perhaps with some funding by the Party, if needed. But the incentive of knowing *The*

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*People* or Party would provide an outlet for their material might be all that is necessary to get members to undertake developing this skill on their own.

Fraternally,  
[signed] IRVING SILVEY  
National Member-at-Large

**RESOLUTION #3-F FROM NAT'L. MEMBER-AT-LARGE I.  
SILVEY, CALIF.**

*Boilerplate Resolution for 1989 Convention*

RESOLUTION:

Proposed, that *The People* contrive a suitable boilerplate of the size of a standard 8-1/2" by 11" sheet of paper that will permit articles of an appropriate length to be cut from *The People* and fitted within the boilerplate for reproduction and handout purposes. Also, when possible, that articles of that size be printed as a piece for the convenience of formatting them onto the boilerplate. This is to apply, as well, for articles suited to double-sided handouts.

Argument:

With the modest price and/or widespread access to copying machines which are available to many of us, a ready process for creating leaflets from material in *The People* seems at hand. However, by taking a blank sheet of 8-1/2" by 11" paper and going through several editions of *The People*, you will find that few articles readily lend themselves to the size and shape of your blank sheet. Those that do are rare. Some articles are the right length, but need piecing together from different pages. To do this, it is necessary to reorganize the columns, which is time-consuming and requires painstaking, cut-and-paste work to keep the results from looking messy.

It is proposed, here, that *The People* contain an article in each issue that would be suitable for leafleting purposes and that would fit within the aforementioned boilerplate. In addition, the boilerplate would be available to fit some other article into, as the user may find more desirable for his/her needs. Perhaps a special display format could be adopted so that when copies were made they would look like completely designed leaflets. A letterhead, border, date, phone numbers, mailing address, etc., could give it greater utility, as well. If both sides of the sheet were to be used, then it may be an advantage to design the boilerplate for that as well.

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This proposal is not meant to suggest any major revision of the layout of *The People*. I consider it the best-looking newspaper I know of. The intention is to bring to your attention the opportunities inherent in the use of current state-of-the-art copiers. The ability to tailor-make leaflets by appropriating *The People's* articles in an easy manner may motivate more members to distribute the Party's messages.

I've tried to imagine what dangers there would be in this method of disseminating material. There would certainly be a loss of quality control, and there would also be the possibility of having unauthorized material distributed under the seeming aegis of the Party. The second of these dangers, it seems to me, has always existed. The fact that it has not become an issue for Party concern in recent decades (at least, I'm not aware it has) indicates the lack of threat from that possibility. The loss of quality control is more serious, but might not the Party have to grant that a certain amount of goodwill and earnest intent on the part of people willing to make use of the material, in such a way as I have suggested, will offset honest errors, which are no doubt bound to occur? Perhaps another objection may come from its loading an additional task onto the editorial staff which, as far as I'm concerned, is already doing a terrific job. But, if a workable networking arrangement, as proposed in another resolution to this convention, can also be contrived, then this task, as with many others, may be off-loaded.

Fraternally,  
[signed] IRVING SILVEY  
National Member-at-Large

### **RESOLUTION #2-A FROM DELEGATE R. SCHELIN**

#### *Resolution to the 39th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party*

Whereas, the SLP publishes and distributes the works of Marx, Engels and De Leon as well as other writers in the SLP, and we shall continue this practice; [and]

Whereas, this literature is analytical in nature and describes the workings of capitalism and describes how the workers can organize themselves to take over all of industry and services for the social good; [and]

Whereas, despite our continued spreading of this message over these nearly 100 years, we seem no nearer to our goal of socialism than we were in De Leon's time; therefore be it



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Resolved that we, at this the 39th National Convention of the SLP call upon the NEC, the N.O., and *The People* staff to publish a new piece of literature that may be called, "Looking Forward to Socialism."

In this we would project ourselves into a socialist society and using our imaginative and writing skills could predict quite nearly the truth just what life under socialism would be. In doing this the reader of it would be more apt to want to know more about our program, so that socialism can be realized in our time.

It may improve the image of the SLP in the eyes of the working class.

Argument: I believe it is time we make some change in our approach to educating the working class. We have not been making satisfactory progress in attracting new members. I believe that if a clearer picture of socialism could be portrayed, other than what is included in our leaflet, "What Is Socialism?" we will get a more enthusiastic response.

In a brief encounter with an economics professor at the University of Minnesota in Duluth, he told me he did not get answers he was seeking when he read these four SLP pamphlets he ordered from the NYLN: *Reform or Revolution*, *Socialist Reconstruction*, *Socialism Today* and *The Nature of Soviet Society*.

That sent me the message that our literature must be lacking in something, and that should be corrected.

Conclusion: Accompanying this resolution is my version of "Looking Forward to Socialism." It is submitted to show what can be done in this project. It was not my intent that what I have written is what the Party should print. It is more a sample of what can be done in this area.

"Looking Forward to Socialism" would have to be more than a bi- or trifold leaflet. It would take on more of a *Socialist Studies* format to be printed for mass distribution.

I move that this resolution be adopted by this, the 39th National Convention of the SLP.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] ROSS SCHELIN  
Delegate

\* \* \*

### LOOKING FORWARD TO SOCIALISM

Yes, we are looking forward to socialism, and there are several good reasons for doing so.

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First, under socialism there will be no such thing as involuntary unemployment. Because we will now own all means of production collectively, and, therefore, will manage all collectively, all persons will have equal opportunity to work at a job of their choice.

Owning and controlling all means of production collectively means we will, at our place of work, control conditions through our union councils so that we will make our workplace safe from accidents and have a healthy environment. We can improve working conditions. We can improve production quality and find ways to increase it without any speedup. The best part is that because the productivity of labor has increased dramatically with the introduction of automation, we can produce so much in a short time our workday will be shortened. Our workweek will be cut from 40 hours to more like about 20 hours or less per week for about 26 weeks per year. With those few workdays, we would enjoy a lifestyle that would today cost about \$40,000 per year.

Before going any further, it should be pointed out that the socialism referred to here is genuine socialism, advocated by Marx and Engels, De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party. That socialism does not now exist anywhere in the world, and never has.

Russia, Cuba, and others claiming to be socialist, are not. They have a state bureaucracy that controls all industry and services, etc.

Another reason for looking forward to socialism is, with the establishment of socialism, capitalism will have been abolished, and with it, so will money, as we know it, be abolished.

No money? How can we get along without money? Very easily. Instead of a daily or weekly paycheck, we will receive a time voucher showing the number of hours we have worked. This voucher will be issued for, and can be used only by that individual for whom it is issued. It will be valid at any distribution center (similar to a supermarket or shipping center). Any number of hours not used at one time will be noted on the voucher by computers, and can be used at a later date.

Goods in a distribution center will be “priced” by hours and minutes, rather than dollars and cents. That is determined by the length of time it takes to produce any given article. If it takes an hour to produce a product, that will be the “price” of that product. There is no “markup.” You exchange your voucher for goods on that basis.

In time, after we have all become accustomed to our new way of life, maybe in a decade, it may no longer be necessary to issue time vouchers. We will want to put in our hours of work and the idea of trying to

cheat for personal gain will have disappeared. We will want to do our thing, and we will be able to secure from the social store what we need. It will always be stocked so there will be no need for individuals to accumulate goods.

When time vouchers are issued, say for a 10-hour week, the voucher may show only eight hours. Those two hours not shown cover the “free” services, such as public transportation, medical services, entertainment, education and retirement.

In our productive years from about 25 years of age to retirement at about 50 years of age, we will produce enough to cover ourselves from birth to death.

A big advantage of no money is that it will stop most crime dead in its tracks. Monetary reward is the object in most crimes, except in the case of psychotic killers and rapists. The illicit drug trade will end promptly. Drug trade involves large sums of money, so it will stop for lack of motive. (Money having been abolished, it will not be accepted in any distribution center.) Drug addicts will be treated in medical centers with intent to end their addictions.

For all mothers socialism certainly will be a boon.

In the typical home of father, mother and children, if the mother chooses to remain at home to care for the children, she may do so. With the reduced hours of work necessary to make a living, the husband/father can work a short workweek and provide a life of comfort and pleasure for the whole family.

The unwed mother can now support herself and child/ren by working that short workweek. While at work her child/ren will be in a very good day care center, at, or very near, her place of work. The anxiety and fear of being alone to care for her child/ren will vanish.

The same fear for an unwed woman who is pregnant will also be no more, thus eliminating the need or desire for aborting the pregnancy, except in certain circumstances.

An expectant mother can take leave from her job as long before the birth of a child as health conditions dictate, and remain from her job as long after the child’s birth as needed.

Pregnant teen-age girls, and women not yet ready to begin employment, will be cared for. They, in turn, will in their productive years, produce enough to replace what they have been given.

Socialism will solve the housing problem. There are, in most cities and towns, buildings that can be converted into apartments. Those office buildings that house attorneys, insurance agents, and the varied financial institutions, and advertising agencies will be vacated. The

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services of these persons will not be needed under socialism, so their offices can be converted into apartments.

These displaced persons will be absorbed into industry, transportation and other services.

All housing will become social property, so any vacant houses will be immediately available to those needing housing. The homeless, the street people, will have first chance at housing. They will get clothing and food, and job training, so they can again become useful members of society.

Any house or apartment, when vacated by those occupying it, will become available for others. There will be no private ownership of any dwelling. Where you live will be your home as long as you live there. No one can force you from your home.

Our transportation patterns are going to change, because they must. There will be no automobiles on city streets to pollute the air. This is something we must do for our own safety and preservation of life. The millions of automobiles across the nation pouring carbon monoxide into the air 24 hours each day must be stopped. We will have a public transportation system that will be efficient and will take care of transportation of persons to and from work, for shopping and recreation.

If there is a continued need for some automobiles, their motors will be designed for more efficient and less consumption of fuel with a minimum amount of pollution. The fuel used will also be designed for that end. These are things we must do to prevent the “greenhouse” effect from intensifying and to reverse it if that is possible.

Cross-country transportation can again be done by train and trains and tracks will be maintained in top condition. Freight can be hauled more efficiently by rail over long distances. The “18 wheelers” should be taken off the roads and smaller trucks be used for short distance deliveries.

The extensive use of automobiles on the city streets and highways being ended, the loss of life due to auto accidents will end. Thus will end the daily tragedies that occur across the nation.

We will make these big changes because we must and want to make life safer and healthier. It is a change that will be made by majority decision.

If we continue to use air traffic, all airplanes will have to be made and kept in safe flying condition. No plane shall leave a runway if there is any doubt about safe flying conditions due to weather or condition of the plane.

Our medical care will now see a big improvement. The American

Medical Association will cease to exist and to dominate the medical services. The practice of medicine will now be directed by the doctors in the socialist industrial union of the medical profession. Everybody will receive full medical and dental care.

The practice of using drugs to cure illness will turn more to the use of a preventive medicine. When the diet of an individual is insufficient to prevent disease supplemental vitamins and minerals can be prescribed. That isn't to say drugs will never be needed, but they will be limited to use against some persistent disease.

Drugs that are used will be carefully produced to cure certain persistent dread diseases, such as cancer, AIDS, etc. They will be produced for medical use and not for sale with a view to profit as is the case under capitalism.

Research in the medical field will go forward unceasingly. Funding will not be a problem under socialism. The same will be true in all fields of research.

Education will begin when a child shows a definite aptitude for learning and will continue until about the age of 25. At that time a person's productive years start. Learning, of course, will continue through experience and continued study.

The education one receives in these formative years will be more than job training. It will include a wide range of subjects including history, geography, mathematics, the languages, literature and the sciences.

A person's work years, beginning at or about 25 will continue until about age 50 when an individual may retire. When a person retires, he/she may continue to live a full life with no restrictions as is the case now, when most retired workers are forced to exist on a substandard lifestyle. Those incapacitated and crippled by old age will receive the best our civilization can offer.

Socialism will put a stop to child abuse, which now occurs as a result of being underfed, underclothed, and physically abused by parents who may be unemployed and subject to alcoholism and drug abuse, the results of capitalism's workings.

A special effort will be made immediately to rescue these children from those sordid conditions by giving them a good home, with good food and clothing and the treatment they deserve—tender, loving care.

The problem of battered women/men can be more positively addressed. They will now have the opportunity to get a home of their own and a job so they won't be dependent on their battering spouses for a living. They will, if need be, receive counseling so they can con-

trol the trauma resulting from the physical/mental abuse they have been subject to.

Competition will not end with socialism, except the vicious competition between capitalists for domination of markets at home and abroad; also the competition between workers due to sex and race in their frantic search for jobs. That competition will end with socialism. The friendly competition in sporting events will continue with a difference. These sporting activities will be for the pleasure and physical exertion and prowess of the players. Winning will no longer be the driving force we find now, because there will be no financial reward for winning; the personal satisfaction of having participated will be reward enough.

As soon as possible after socialism is established, the prisons would be emptied. All persons imprisoned for minor infractions, as petty theft, etc., would be released immediately. Those who have been imprisoned with no charges having been filed against them, too, will be immediately released. Only the hardened criminals, the murderers and rapists would have to be detained for some time to undergo education, job training, and orientation into our new society before they would be released.

With socialism there will no longer be a need for militarism. All foreign-based soldiers would be called home and the domestic army discharged. All these soldiers would be absorbed into the industries and services. Some may need job training.

The manufacture of military equipment would end immediately. As soon as it can be safely accomplished, all nuclear weapons on hand will be deactivated and dismantled.

The testing of all nuclear and chemical weapons will end immediately. That message will go around the world and the workers in other countries will soon follow our lead. Then the world will become united and we will enjoy the peace and prosperity that only world socialism can offer.

There will be no place in a socialist society for nuclear power unless plants can be built that will be 100 percent foolproof. All present nuclear power plants will be shut down as soon as it is feasible to do so.

A great change in our TV viewing will come with socialism. The programming will be updated to being entertaining and educational. The best part will be the elimination, completely, of commercials, which for the most part are revolting, and an insult to the intelligence of the average TV viewer. (Presently, under capitalism, the commercials pay for the programming and programming is influenced by the

companies paying to have their commercials aired.)

The family farm has been dying out for many years. It is a very tough struggle for the small farmer to compete in the market with their products, with the corporate farm. With socialism there will no longer be that competition. All farms will be socially owned. Those now operating small farms, if they are efficient, could continue to operate "their" farms. The difference being they would no longer "own" the land and equipment they use, and they no longer would have mortgage payments to meet. They would get time vouchers for the hours they worked as any other worker. The product of their labor would be common property.

There would be no such ridiculous thing, as now is the case, of withholding land from production to control market prices. We will plan for what our immediate needs will be. We will make allowances for drought and other natural disasters so that we will always have a reserve supply of food that can be stored. Perishable foods will be grown in areas that at that time are not subject to drought. Some perishable foods can be preserved by freezing and/or canning. Care will be taken in such preserving processes that ingredients harmful to our health will not be used in the process.

All this planning will be done by our socialist industrial union councils of the food industry. These councils will be elected by the workers in the food industry.

In electing representatives in any industrial union council, those elected will get no more "pay" than at their usual jobs. They will be responsible to those who elected them and may be recalled by them if they do not perform satisfactorily.

There will be no campaigns for office as we now know, in the selection and election of these representatives to the councils. There will be no more political campaigns!

A big job we must tackle right now is to clean up our environment: the air, water, and soil. Before we can fully accomplish this we must move to end the practice that contributes to this pollution. The burning of fossil fuels in industry, in automobiles and heating our homes must be stopped, or measures taken that will eliminate the by-product of acid rain in burning this type of fuel. Then the cleanup will begin. Maybe we should give the idle rich the opportunity to do this cleanup. After all, it was their quest for an ever greater profit system that created this situation. Let them now show their worth by helping to undo some of the great damage their system has done.

To the new reader the foregoing may sound too good to be true, but

it isn't, and there are many more benefits that will be found with the establishment of socialism.

To accomplish the foregoing, we must study the literature of the Socialist Labor Party to learn how to organize our latent power as a working class into socialist industrial unions so that we can take over all industry and lock out the capitalist class. That is the only way out of the mess this country is in.

For those of us who have lived in or near poverty all our lives, we may find getting used to socialism the greatest experience of our lives. Finally, we can live in comfort with all the good things life can offer.

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR???

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] ROSS SCHELIN  
Delegate

**RESOLUTION #2-B FROM DELEGATE J. HOLLON SR.**

*Resolved, That Every Delegate to the Convention Be on a Committee*

Although inept at phrase, my intent is that every delegate, each of whom was elected to a seat at this convention, represents a pool of untapped talent when not involved in actually putting forth ideas that must be brought forth to revitalize our Party.

If the convention feels that eight or 10 persons is too unwieldy to properly conduct the work of the very necessary committees, then my suggestion would be to have more committees to explore all avenues.

For instance, my experience just last Sunday taught me many things about mass demonstrations that might be considered by an agitation committee formulated just to grapple with the latest issue of abortion, pro and con, that has swept the nation. With the exception of the national office and the editorial staff of our magnificent publication, *The People*, we have been caught napping again. It is a great disappointment to me that eastern coast sections were not aroused to put forth the effort that the Chicago section does with their Youth Issue. If we had six able-bodied men like Comrade Prorok in Washington, D.C., that day they could have put out their 30,000 copies like in Illinois.

That would have been only a fraction of the most conservative estimate given for marchers. Metropolitan police say 600,000, and my feeble effort was only on the east side of the Capitol. Most of the action was on the west side up to the Washington monument and earlier in the day. On page seven of *The People* issue of March 11 under the



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word "...When?" in italics, "*Socialists must gear their activity on the assumption that the forthcoming crisis...will be the culminating crisis of capitalism.*" And, further on, "The danger is in failure to proceed on the assumption that the revolutionary temperature *will* rise to fever heat..." I saw fever and fervor Sunday.

Those kids are ready, they just don't know what we have to offer them.

As the National Secretary said to the convention in 1984, re: Central America: "let's not be caught asleep at the switch on this one."

Fraternally yours,  
[signed] JOSEPH HOLLON SR.  
Delegate

**RESOLUTION #2-C FROM DELEGATE J. FRANK**

*Re: Party Agitation*

Inasmuch as the polluted state of the environment cuts across socio-economic boundaries, it would appear to be more difficult for the capitalist class to refute the need for an environmentally sane socialist society.

Hence it would appear appropriate for the Party to issue a hard-hitting environmental leaflet considering the health hazards of:

- a) Dumping of hazardous wastes, i.e., toxic and also radioactive wastes;\*
- b) Timbering off the equatorial forests (greenhouse effect);
- c) Use of agricultural chemicals;
- d) Manufacture of fluorocarbons (ozone depletion);
- e) Failure to utilize alternate energy sources, i.e., solar, wind and hydro.

\*Low level radioactivity causes cancers, birth defects and infant mortality in humans and animals; and the accelerated mutations of microorganisms.

(Ref.: Chem. Tech., Jan. 89 by Doctors Sternglass and Gould; NIRS fact sheets; Radioactive Waste Campaign leaflet.)

Respectfully,  
[signed] JOSEPH J. FRANK  
Delegate

**RESOLUTION #2-D FROM DELEGATE R. WHITNEY**

*Resolution: On Capitalism and Socialism*

Encouraged by the Soviet Union's and China's recent accommodations to capitalism, and by what has been described as the "longest peacetime expansion in U.S. history," defenders of capitalism today are boasting that capitalism has "triumphed" over socialism, or at least has demonstrated that it is the superior system.

These claims are false, in both their premises and their conclusions.

The recent moves by the Soviet and Chinese ruling classes to allow a greater degree of private ownership of the means of production, foreign and domestic, to exist within their borders is no reflection on socialism, since socialism has never existed in the Soviet Union or China. In these two nations and in others following the Leninist model of revolution, the means of production have never been owned by society and controlled by the workers; they have always been owned by the state and controlled by a bureaucratic ruling class. The failings of that system are the failings of bureaucratic state despotism, not socialism.

Socialism is a social system that has yet to come into existence. It is a system that *will* come into existence when the working class of an advanced industrialized capitalist society like the United States recognizes that private ownership of the means of production no longer serves the social interest and is incapable of meeting the workers' needs; and when that class organizes, politically and industrially, to overthrow capitalism and establish a socially owned economy democratically administered by the workers themselves through their industrially based organizations.

For capitalism to claim a triumph over socialism, it would have to be demonstrated that capitalism has managed to solve its own internal contradictions, that it has negated the class struggle and eliminated all motivation for workers to oppose it. This it has not done and can never do. The claims of a "record peacetime expansion" notwithstanding, the reality is that the overall condition of the U.S. working class has been growing worse, the conditions are being created for more severe economic crises in the future, and the U.S. working class is very much engaged in the class struggle—a struggle that can be resolved in workers' favor only through the establishment of socialism.

According to official government figures, there were 6.7 million U.S. workers counted as unemployed at the beginning of 1989, or 5.4 percent of the "labor force." Only 20 years ago, such a rate would have been considered distressingly high, even by the capitalists' politicians

and media. It is only because unemployment soared and remained at substantially higher levels from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s that these mouthpieces for capitalism today can falsely portray this as a “low” unemployment rate and suggest it is cause for celebration.

Moreover, as 1989 began, there were 5.1 million workers who wanted full-time work but were employed part-time. There were another one million counted by the government as “discouraged” workers—unemployed workers who want jobs but have given up actively looking for them. Adding these two groups to the ranks of the officially unemployed yields a more realistic unemployment rate of 10.2 percent. According to some nongovernmental estimates even that figure understates the actual rate of unemployment.

But even that just begins to describe the real condition of the U.S. working class today. Millions of other workers were unemployed for long periods during the 1980s and were forced to accept much lower-paying jobs. Millions more were forced to accept cuts in their wages and benefits, or more burdensome working conditions. There has been a general downward slide for the entire class, from the better-paid workers who mistakenly considered themselves “middle class” and are now struggling to “get by,” to the growing multitudes of poor, employed and unemployed, who have been cast into the ranks of the hungry and homeless.

The rate at which workers are exploited—the rate at which they produce value, in excess of their own wages, that accrues to the capitalist class—has continued to increase, as Karl Marx demonstrated it must over 140 years ago. As of 1986, U.S. workers in basic industries, on average, produced \$4.47 worth of product for the capitalist class for every dollar they received in wages. This is a substantial rise from 1972, when workers produced \$3.18 worth of product for the capitalists for each dollar in wages.

Not only do wages form a shrinking percentage of workers’ total product, they are shrinking, period. With the commodity labor power being in such oversupply, the capitalist buyers of labor power have been able to lower the price of labor power—wages. In a commanding position to break workers’ resistance by replacing them as necessary, the capitalists were able to force concessions or wage freezes on millions of workers. Along with the effects of inflation and shifts in the industrial composition of the economy, this drove down the buying power of workers’ wages.

According to government figures, the buying power of the average wage in January 1989 was 15 percent less than what it was in 1972.

During that same period, the productivity of the working class, measured by output per hour, rose by at least 16 percent.

This general decline in wages has increased the ranks of the working poor. Today an estimated 34.2 percent of all workers receive a wage at or below the poverty level. About 23 percent of the homeless are actively employed.

The growth of the working poor, combined with still rampant unemployment, has meant growing poverty, hunger and homelessness throughout the 1980s, continuing through the highly touted “expansion.” In the United States today there are 36 million people living below the official poverty line, up from 23 million in 1973; only an increase in the numbers of two-paycheck families has kept it from rising higher.

In sum, the condition of the working class, the producers of all social wealth, is growing steadily worse, even as their ability to create wealth in abundance steadily increases.

That being the case during a “record peacetime expansion,” the consequences will be dire indeed when the present expansion comes to an end in an economic depression. Such a depression is inevitable. Try as it may, the U.S. capitalist class cannot escape the contradictions inherent in its own system.

One of its contradictions stems from the very fact of exploitation. As the capitalist class robs the working class of the majority of the wealth it creates, the working class can only buy back a fraction of the total quantity of commodities created. That inescapable fact, combined with the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of a relative few capitalists, periodically creates a situation in which the production of commodities exceeds the total market demand for them. At the same time, the capitalists’ incentives to invest in new means of production are constrained, both by the restricted consumption of consumer goods and the general tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Accordingly, production is cut back, workers are dismissed, market demand is reduced further, and the economy falls into a depression.

For decades, the U.S. capitalist class has sought to delay or moderate the effects of these depressions by adding to total market demand through federal government deficit spending, most of it spent piling up ever more menacing weapons of war. During the period of the Reagan administration it resorted to that device to an unprecedented degree, with record deficits pushing the federal debt from \$914 billion in 1980 to \$2.58 trillion in 1988. This record level of deficit spending, along with an enormous expansion of corporate, financial and con-

sumer indebtedness, was required to sustain the so-called “record expansion.” But not only has the expansion proved unable to stem the worsening condition of the working class, the indebtedness used to sustain it will deepen the impact of future economic crises.

No fiscal or monetary manipulations can alter the basic causes of economic depressions. Future depressions will occur. When they do, the magnitude of the present deficits and the accrued debt will limit the ability of the capitalist political state to use more deficit spending to contain them.

Deficits can be financed only by inflating the money supply or increasing government debts. In large measure due to the extraordinary deficits of the Reagan years, the United States in the 1980s has gone from being the leading creditor nation in the world to the leading debtor nation in the world. At the same time, the federal government has been forced to inflate the currency to the point where prices are once again beginning to rise at an accelerating pace. In future depressions, therefore, the capitalist political state will be unable to cushion the impact of depression through deficit spending—at least not without creating equally devastating economic problems.

The growing level of bank, corporate and consumer indebtedness will likewise deepen the impact of future depressions. A chain reaction of defaults, bank and corporate failures, will add to unemployment, lower the demand for commodities and quicken the downward spiral of the economy.

All told, to boast of the triumph of capitalism, the capitalists and their political and media mouthpieces must pretend not to see the real condition of the working-class majority of society and must pretend not to see that we are on the edge of an economic catastrophe.

To prove that capitalism has triumphed over socialism, they would also have to demonstrate that the class struggle between the capitalist class and the working class has been reconciled or negated. Yet the evidence is everywhere that the class struggle is growing more intense.

Wage concessions or freezes, drives to speed up production, the displacement of labor with new machinery—these efforts to increase the rate of exploitation have hit workers in virtually every industry. And workers have struggled to resist, fighting determined battles to defend their wages and working conditions.

Meatpackers, cannery workers, airline workers, farmworkers, lumber workers, paper workers, teachers, railway workers, miners, hospital workers and hotel and restaurant workers are among those who have shown a militant spirit in strikes of the last few years. At the

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rank-and-file level, they have also shown a growing awareness that they have a common interest in supporting each other's struggles. In that development lies the beginnings of classconsciousness, and class-consciousness points squarely in the direction of socialism.

Workers have also sought to resist the mounting horrors of capitalism on the political field. Though most have not yet perceived that their real nemesis is capitalism, tens upon tens of thousands have protested against the effects of capitalism in efforts to resist the poisoning of the environment, U.S. intervention and militarism, hunger and homelessness, sexism, racism and other evils.

Sooner or later the combination of deepening crises, intensified struggle and the energetic efforts of socialists to educate their fellow workers will reveal the truth that socialism provides the only solution to capitalism's economic and political problems. It will become clearer that the reason *why* poverty and hardship exist in the middle of plenty, the reason *why* pollution, war, social strife and chaos grow worse, is that we live in a social system in which the means of production are privately owned and controlled by and for a small minority of people.

It will become clearer that the solution to these woes lies in placing the means of production under the ownership and control of all society, and placing the administration of the industries and the economy into the collective hands of the workers themselves, organized to control them democratically through their own socialist industrial unions.

Capitalism has not triumphed over socialism, nor has it proved to be a superior system. Its real battle with socialism has yet to be fought. And capitalism's own disintegration is increasingly demonstrating that it *must* give way to a higher, superior form of social organization—socialism—if the human race is to survive and flourish.

Fraternally submitted,  
[signed] RICHARD WHITNEY  
Delegate