

# *The 'New Union Party'*

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A DOCUMENTARY REVIEW OF ITS ORIGINS, 1968-1978



## **1. FROM REPORT OF KARL HECK, NEC MEMBER REGION 6, TO THE NEC IN SESSION, OCT. 14-18, 1977**

### **SECTION MINNEAPOLIS**

During my absence from Section Minneapolis due to my employment as a field worker for the national organization from June through October in 1976, some of the members of Section Minneapolis had developed close ties with a local group called the New Unionists. Two of the group were former members of the party. One, Earl Balfour, was expelled in 1968. The other, Jeffrey Miller, resigned and joined the group of members who were expelled during the 1968 disruption. Both Balfour and Miller were at that time declared disrupters.

The progressive changes initiated at the 29th National Convention, and the seeming agreement with those changes by the members of the New Unionist group, resulted in the section admitting to membership five new members—all affiliated with the New Unionist. The five joined under the condition that if one was rejected for membership, none would join. This was a cause for concern. Some of the members were apprehensive but voted in favor of admitting all five. The decision was made in good faith and it was hoped we would have a more effective organization.

Our trust was soon shamelessly betrayed and our hidden fears and apprehensions proved to be fully justified. It soon became apparent that the same people who met with the new members before they were admitted to the party were still meeting in secret without the section's knowledge. As it developed, the new members were able to "take in" some of our older comrades, creating distrust of the National Office and in general to raise organizational havoc.

All the members of the NEC are aware of the efforts made at the 30th National Convention to resolve the situation. The section did comply with the directives of the convention and it appeared as though reason might prevail.

But this hope was soon dispelled. Miller continued to pursue his unorganizational activities by obtaining and circulating among his own select audience a taped interview which Nick Simon had made with members of Section Santa Clara County who had abruptly quit their jobs at the National Office last spring.

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The National Office was informed of Miller's actions and the NEC Subcommittee instructed him to explain his conduct and to send the tapes to the National Office. Miller contended the tapes were his own personal property. Section Minneapolis directed Miller to have a copy of the tape made at the section's expense and send it to the National Office. Instead of complying with the decision of the NEC Subcommittee and the section, Miller (and seven others) resigned from the party under the pretense that the party is "undemocratic."<sup>1</sup>

The arrogance of these individuals in placing themselves above the organization, refusing to abide by majority decision and then, in turn, charging the SLP to be undemocratic is indeed amazing. A considerable amount of the party's time and money was exhausted by this group in addition to hampering the work of the section.

Tom Dooley, who initially belonged to the New Unionists, remained in the party although he still maintains fraternal relations with that group.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Click to read "New Unionists' Letter of Resignation," or go to page 19.]

<sup>2</sup> [Mr. Dooley resigned from membership in the SLP in November 1977 and re-affiliated himself with the "New Unionists."]

## **2. 30TH (1977) NATIONAL CONVENTION DOCUMENTS**

### **FROM REPORT OF THE NATIONAL SECRETARY**

Everyone is somewhat familiar . . . with the case of the *New Unionist* put out by Section Minneapolis. Though it was granted permission to continue publication and circulation within its former limits while the NEC reviewed the matter, Section Minneapolis has refused to supply certain information requested by the NEC. In fact, since March it has simply ignored several letters regarding the *New Unionist* and its unauthorized circulation among the sections. Its sole response to the National Secretary's letters of March 15 and March 23 was as follows:

“This is to acknowledge receipt of your letters dated March 15 and March 23, both pertaining to our *New Unionist* publication.”

In an effort to assess the situation, NEC member Bruce Cozzini met with the section in a special meeting. Comrade Cozzini's report of that meeting submitted under date of May 5 said that among the complaints of the section's members were that the National Secretary “jumps on people,” the tone of his letters to the section was “harsh,” that some were suspicious of the NEC's request for information about the *New Unionist*; that some doubted that the national office could be trusted to convey information from Minneapolis to other sections through the *SLP Newsletter* without “official arguments” presumably in order to negate or condemn them or suppress their consideration, and that the constitution did not prevent a section from circulating its proposals around the Party and bypassing the national office.

Yet while these are apparently the section's views, the only report of the meeting made to the national office was on the back of its March activity report received May 9, which reads:

“Bruce Cozzini, Regional NEC member, visited Minneapolis section for discussion on the *New Unionist* paper and submittal of resolutions for the National SLP convention. Much discussion took place.”

That was the extent of the section's response. It has not supplied the information requested by the NEC, nor has it responded to letters regarding its circulation of the *New Unionist* and its proposed convention resolutions outside regular Party channels.

## FROM REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATE OF ORGANIZATION

On June 30, 1976, Section Minneapolis requested from the National Office the addresses of all section organizers of the Party for the purpose as later stated, of reducing isolation of the sections from each other, and of providing a means of exchanging agitational materials between them. The request was referred to the NEC which, at its August 1976 session, approved it, with the requirement that any copies of Section Minneapolis mailings to other sections be also sent to the National Office.

Subsequent to this NEC approval of its request, Section Minneapolis admitted to membership several applicants who had previously constituted a group called The New Unionists that put out a monthly publication called the *New Unionist*.

In joining the SLP, these new members expressed the wish to continue publication of the *New Unionist* under the auspices of Section Minneapolis. The section concurred, and in a letter to the National Office dated January 6, 1977 requested permission to do this, stipulating that the *New Unionist* would be a local publication giving its attention to local events and issues, while at the same time promoting local SLP activities, Party literature and the *Weekly People*. To avoid a lapse in the prior circulation of the *New Unionist* the section asked for early action on the requested permission.

The matter was submitted to the Jan. 27 meeting of the NEC Subcommittee, where it was decided to refer the section's request to the NEC itself. However, in recognition of the desirability of maintaining continuity of publication of the *New Unionist*, the Subcommittee granted Section Minneapolis a temporary authorization to publish it, pending a final decision by the NEC on the matter.

To aid the NEC in its deliberation of the question, Section Minneapolis was asked to supply the following material and information:

1. Ten copies each of at least three back issues of the *New Unionist*.
2. The mailing list to which the publication was to be circulated.
3. The number of copies in each issue and the average cost of publishing and circulating same.

The section was also asked to supply 15 copies of all forthcoming issues for the use of the NEC and the National Office files.

There ensued thereafter, the following organizationally improper actions on the

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part of Section Minneapolis:

1. The March 1 mailing of the *New Unionist* to all SLP sections with a cover letter which was not sent to the National Office as required by the NEC.

2. A refusal to supply the mailing list on the stated ground that the NEC did not need either this list or the publication/ mailing costs to make its decision. (March 7 letter to the National Office.)

3. A failure, in substance, to reply to the National Office's letters of March 15 and 23 dealing with these matters, the latter of which letters repeated the request for the mailing list.

4. The sending of several resolutions adopted by the section to all Party sections for their consideration prior to this national convention in disregard of the constitutionally provided procedures governing such matters.

At a special meeting on April 9 called to enable NEC member Bruce Cozzini to take up the foregoing actions with Section Minneapolis, a number of statements were made by section members which indicated distrust of the National office and the NEC, and expressed doubt that the established channels of communication would fairly transmit their views to the general membership, or if those views would be transmitted at all.

From the NEC member's report of the special meeting, and from testimony given by Section Minneapolis members before your Committee on State of organization, it appears that the section's improper actions stemmed from the above mentioned distrust, a distrust which we of the committee believe to have been wholly unwarranted.

We therefore recommend that this national convention instruct Section Minneapolis to:

1. Acknowledge the organizational impropriety of its actions cited in the foregoing.

2. Supply to the National Office and NEC without further delay the mailing list and other requested information relating to the *New Unionist*.

3. Reply substantially to all correspondence received from the National office, and comply promptly with any requests made therein.

4. Use in the future in the manner prescribed, those procedures and channels of internal communication provided by the Party.

[signed] STEPHEN EMERY,  
R.E. MASSI,

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BRUCE COZZINI,  
JULIUS LEVIN,  
ALAN KARP, chairperson

On motion, the report was adopted and the recommendations concurred in.

### **3. POST-CONVENTION DOCUMENTS**

#### **TO SECTION MINNEAPOLIS, JUNE 15, 1977**

Lila Holmdahl Section Minneapolis

Dear Comrade Holmdahl

This is to inform Section Minneapolis formally that the Party's 30th National Convention held recently in Chicago considered the question of the *New Unionist* and other matters that had been the subjects of correspondence between the National Office and the section in the months preceding the convention.

The actions taken by the convention are summarized in the enclosed copies of the letter addressed to the members of the section and the Report of the Convention's Committee on State of Organization.

It is requested that you call a special meeting of the section as soon as possible for the reasons summarized in the last three paragraphs of the enclosed letter to the section members.

Fraternaly yours,  
[Signed] NATHAN KARP  
National Secretary

P.S. Incidentally, I recently received only two copies of the latest issue of the *New Unionist*. At your earliest convenience, please send me 13 additional copies so that I can supply one to each NEC member.

#### **TO THE MEMBERS OF SECTION MINNEAPOLIS, JUNE 15, 1977**

Dear Comrades:

The party's 30th National Convention that met recently for five days in Chicago, considered the question of the continued publication of the *New Unionist*, the section's action in circularizing all SLP sections with its proposed convention resolutions and amendments to the Party's Constitution and related matters. Because of the overlapping nature of these matters, two convention committees were involved in their consideration—the Committee on Party Press and Literature,

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to which the general question of the continued publication of the *New Unionist* was referred; and the Committee on State of Organization to which the procedural and other organizational questions that arose were referred.

Copies of all relevant correspondence (and other documents) that passed between the National Office and the NEC; the National Office and the section; the National Office and the NEC member from Region No. 6, as well as copies of the *New Unionist*, were made available to the two committees. In addition, the Committee on State of Organization held extensive discussions in open committee sessions with the National Secretary and several members of Section Minneapolis who were present during the convention.

After careful consideration of all the facts and testimony the committees rendered their reports (separately). The report of the Committee on Party Press and Literature, which consisted of Comrades Frank Girard (Michigan) Chairperson; John Sarkisian (Michigan); Jean Steiner (California); Vito De Lisi (Florida) and Robert Burns (Ohio) ; follows:

“Report of the Committee on Party Press and Literature On the continued publication of the *New Unionist*.

“Your committee recommends that Section Minneapolis continue to publish the *New Unionist* on the present basis until such time as the NEC grants it official status subject to the provisions of Article XI of the Party’s Constitution and the following guidelines:

“A. The *New Unionist* is primarily a local publication until such time as the NEC sees fit to broaden its scope.

“B. Fifteen copies of each issue are to be sent to the National Office for the NEC and the files.

“C. The *New Unionist* mailing list is to be furnished to the National Office.

“D. Section Minneapolis is to furnish promptly any information the National Office requests.”

This report was unanimously adopted and its recommendations concurred in.

The lengthier report of the Committee on State of Organization, which consisted of Comrades Alan Karp (California), Chairperson; Robert Massi (New York); Stephen Emery (California); Jules Levin (New Jersey) and Bruce Cozzini (Wisconsin); is enclosed.

This committee’s report was also unanimously adopted and its recommendations concurred in.

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Accordingly, the Section Organizer is being requested to call a special meeting of Section Minneapolis, as soon as possible, which every member is urged to attend so that the section can take steps to comply with the guidelines and instructions of the Party's National Convention which are clearly spelled out in items "A," "B," "C," and "D" of the report of the Convention's Committee on Party Press and Literature; and recommendations "1," "2," "3" and "4" of the report of the Convention's Committee on State of Organization.

There is no doubt that Section Minneapolis' strongest desire is to advance the cause of Socialism. The same is true of the National Office. A prompt settling of the matters dealt with in this letter will make it possible for both to cooperate fully and fraternally in doing so.

I would add that in general everyone is enthusiastic about the potential for effective agitation that the *New Unionist* holds and is anxious to see the matter of its publication and scope resolved as quickly as possible so that the potential can be fully realized.

Fraternally yours,  
[Signed] NATHAN KARP  
National Secretary

### **FROM SECTION MINNEAPOLIS, SPECIAL MEETING, JUNE 27, 1977**

Section Minneapolis met at Grace Lutheran Church, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Comrades Bo and Lila Holmdahl, Taylor, Feagler, Miller, Carney, Donaker, Hudgens, Peters, Heck, Rodich, Slakey, Christian. Also present was Com. Bruce Cozzini of Milwaukee, Wis., NEC representative. Absent were Comrades Braatz, Danelius, Erickson, Earl and Vivian Balfour, Osborne, Peterson.

Dick Taylor, Chairman, Jane Christian, recording secretary.

Purpose of meeting was to consider letter of June 15 from National Secretary Nathan Karp which included reports of Committee on Party Press and Literature and Committee on State of Organization. The report of the Committee on Party Press and Literature regarding the *New Unionist* was considered first.

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Motion by Heck that Section Minneapolis concur with guideline A of June 15 letter as follows: The *New Unionist* is primarily a local publication until such time as the NEC sees fit to broaden its scope. Motion seconded and carried unanimously.

Motion by Heck that Section Minneapolis concur with guideline B of June 15 letter as follows: Fifteen copies of each issue are to be sent to the National Office for the NEC and the files. Motion seconded and carried unanimously.

Motion made by Heck that Section Minneapolis concur with guideline C of June 15 letter as follows: The *New Unionist* mailing list is to be furnished to the National Office. Motion seconded and carried unanimously.

Motion by Heck to concur with guideline D of June 15 letter as follows: Section Minneapolis is to furnish promptly any information the national office requests. Motion seconded and carried unanimously.

Motion by Heck that Section Minneapolis comply with requests of Committee on State of Organization as follows:

We therefore recommend that this national convention instruct Section Minneapolis to:

1. Acknowledge the organizational impropriety of its action cited in the foregoing.
2. Supply to the National Office and NEC without further delay the mailing list and other requested information relating to the *New Unionist*.
3. Reply substantially to all correspondence received from the National Office, and comply promptly with any requests made therein.
4. Use in the future, in the manner prescribed, those procedures and channels of internal communication provided by the Party. Motion seconded.

Amendment to motion by Heck that Section Mpls. point out that our actions were not intended improprieties but were actions intended to stimulate discussion and results. Motion to amend seconded and failed. 6 yes. 7 no.

Motion by Carney that Sec. Mpls. in future will follow operating procedure as laid down by national convention in points 2, 3 and 4, but does not concur in point 1. Motion seconded and carried 7 yes, 3 no.

Com. Cozzini asked that Section Minneapolis offer justification for rejection of Recommendation No. 1.

Motion by Bo Holmdahl to reconsider last motion rejecting recommendation No. 1 and accepting 2, 3, and 4. Motion seconded and carried unanimously.

Second vote taken on Com. Carney's motion. Motion defeated.

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Motion by Miller that Section Minneapolis concur in Item 1 of the Committee on State of Organization report with reservation that Section Minneapolis believes actions cited in report were unconventional rather than improper. Seconded. Carried 11 yes, 1 no.

Motion by Miller that Section Minneapolis concur in points 2, 3, and 4. Motion seconded and carried unanimously.

Motion by Lila Holmdahl to adjourn 11:05 p.m.

[Signed] JANE CHRISTIAN

Recording Secretary

### **REPORT OF BRUCE COZZINI, NEC MEMBER REGION 6, ON MEETING OF SECTION MINNEAPOLIS, HELD JUNE 27, 1977**

The meeting was called to order at about 7:45 p.m. to discuss the *New Unionist* and the matters concerning Section Minneapolis from the 1977 convention. The majority of the section was there, with exception of Comrades Balfour and Comrade Dooley.

Comrade Dick Taylor was elected chairman.

The report of the Committee on Party Press and Literature from the 1977 convention was taken up first. Parts A, B, C, D of the report were taken up seriatim and concurred in with very little discussion and essentially no opposition.

The report of the Committee on State of the Organization was then considered. Comrade Heck moved approval of the report in toto. Comrade Carney made a substitute motion that parts 2, 3, and 4 be concurred in, but not part 1, which dealt with acknowledgment of the impropriety of the section's actions.

Comrade Heck moved to amend the concurrence with Part 1 of the report to express that the intent of the *New Unionist* mailing and the mailing of the resolutions had simply been to inform the members, and that no breach of organizational conduct was meant. The amendment was defeated.

During the discussion I pointed out that the motives of the section had not been impugned, but only the actions and that nobody was being asked to recant views, but merely to acknowledge procedural errors. I also commented on the illogic of rejecting point 1, but accepting points 2, 3, and 4 which arose from 1. To my

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surprise, the substitute motion passed.

I then asked the members how they would account for a rejection of the convention's action short of defiance, and stated that some very convincing explanation would have to be forthcoming. At this point one of those who had voted for the substitute motion moved reconsideration. This was passed, and the substitute motion defeated. It was then moved to concur in the convention's recommendation, but to qualify acceptance of (1) by the statement that the section did not feel it had acted improperly but only "unconventionally." This was passed.

The meeting adjourned shortly after 10:00 p.m.

During the discussion in the latter part of the meeting Comrade Heck brought up the matter of a tape being circulated by Comrade Miller, but the matter was ruled out of order to the discussion at hand. I was not able to discuss the matter with Comrade Heck or Miller after the meeting, but did learn from Comrade Taylor when he drove me to the airport the next day that a tape made by the former WEEKLY PEOPLE and N.O. employees had been sent by N. Simon to Comrade Miller and that he was circulating it. Comrade Taylor indicated that the tape portrayed those making it in a poor light. Further discussion was limited by the departure time of my plane.

I wish to express appreciation to Comrades Holmdahl for their hospitality and to Comrade Taylor for driving me to the airport.

Fraternally submitted,  
[Signed] BRUCE COZZINI  
NEC Region No. 6

### **FROM SECTION MINNEAPOLIS, JULY 2, 1977**

Dear Comrade Karp:

We held our special meeting Monday night, the 27th of June, on the *New Unionist* situation and the final outcome was to comply with decisions made at the National Convention and the mailing list of the *New Unionist* publication is forwarded herewith to the NEC. In order to expedite the situation, we are enclosing a copy of the minutes of this special meeting before approval has been made by Section Minneapolis.

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Now that Section Minneapolis has decided to comply with the NEC's regulations, will it be permissible to mail the next copy of the *New Unionist* to all of the SLP sections?

Fraternally Yours,  
[Signed] LILA HOLMDAHL  
Organizer, Sec. Minneapolis

### **TO SECTION MINNEAPOLIS, JULY 8, 1977**

Lila Holmdahl Section Minneapolis

Dear Comrade Holmdahl:

Your letter of July 2 and the enclosed minutes of the section's special meeting on June 27 were presented to the NEC Subcommittee at its regular meeting held last night.

The NEC Subcommittee was pleased to note that the section complied with and/or concurred in the findings and instructions of the 30th National Convention as conveyed in the National Office letter of June 15.

As for the one "reservation" expressing the section's belief that its actions as cited by the convention's Committee on State of Organization "were unconventional rather than improper," the NEC Subcommittee recognized that the section is entitled to its belief so long as the section recognizes that the convention's ruling—and not what it "believes"—is to govern its actions henceforth. The NEC Subcommittee understands the section's acceptance of the convention's guidelines and instructions to mean just that.

I also acknowledge receipt of the mailing list of the *New Unionist*.

The NEC Subcommittee granted the section permission to send a copy of each issue of the *New Unionist* to each SLP section. That is an extension of the Subcommittee's temporary permission to publish it. It, of course, remains for the NEC to render its final decision regarding the official status of the *New Unionist*.

By instruction of the NEC Subcommittee.

Fraternally yours,  
[Signed] NATHAN KARP  
National Secretary.

**TO JEFF MILLER, JULY 8, 1977**

Dear Comrade Miller:

It has come to the attention of the National Office and the NEC Subcommittee from several sources that—

1. Mike Ballard, Ken Ellis and Bud VanRyn (still Party members), who abruptly quit their jobs at national headquarters, made a tape recording dealing with Party matters with Nick Simon (expelled from the SLP ten years ago).

2. Simon sent you that tape recording, or a copy of it, and you have circulated it among, or played it for, members of Section Minneapolis.

By instruction of the NEC Subcommittee, you are hereby directed to promptly send the tape recording referred to above to the National Office together with an explanation of (a) why you failed to do so of your own volition promptly upon receipt of same; (b) why to date you have not seen fit even to inform the National Office or its executive bodies of the tape recording's existence, and (c) why you have "circulated" it as you have.

Fraternaly yours,  
[Signed] NATHAN KARP  
National Secretary.

cc: Section Minneapolis

**FROM JEFF MILLER, JULY 16, 1977**

Dear Comrade Karp:

The tapes to which you refer in your letter of July 8, are my personal communication. The NEC Subcommittee has no authority to demand them, nor do I have any organizational responsibility to turn them over, nor had I any responsibility to inform the National Office of their existence. I am shocked and disturbed that the NEC Subcommittee would seek to overstep its legitimate authority by making such a directive.

Nevertheless, it is certainly my desire to serve the interest of complete intraParty communication. I shall therefore make these tapes available to the

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National Office as a voluntary act at such time as Comrades Ballard, Ellis, and VanRyn are given the full opportunity to present their case re their resignations from the *Weekly People* and National Office to the membership of the Party.

If this proper organizational procedure had been conducted in the first place, there would have been no need for members of the Party to go outside Party channels of communication to secure this necessary information. I am confident that you and the NEC Subcommittee will agree that correction of this breach of organizational procedure is overdue, and will proceed accordingly.

Fraternally yours,

[Signed] JEFF MILLER

cc: Section Minneapolis

### **TO JEFF MILLER, JULY 21, 1977**

Dear Comrade Miller:

I have received your letter of July 16. That letter is not responsive to the NEC Subcommittee's request of July 8. Moreover, it constitutes not only a breach of Party procedure, but also a violation of the rights of several SLP members and at least one section.

The tapes in question are not simply your "personal communication." They are a product of internal Party affairs which you yourself consider "necessary information" for Party members and which you have selectively circulated among members of your choice. To contend they are a "personal communication" outside organizational jurisdiction is disingenuous to say the least. By what authority have you arrogated to yourself the right to decide who shall and who shall not hear the "necessary information" even within your own section?

The interview is the act of three former staff members, who are still members of the SLP, and who remain under the jurisdiction of Section Santa Clara. Your failure to notify that section of their action and to supply it with copies of the tapes (while routinely informing the National Office) is a violation of Section Santa Clara's elementary right to jurisdiction over its members. It is a serious violation of both the section's authority and the rights of those members discussed on the tape.

For someone who has been extremely vocal about the rights of individual

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members and sections, your disregard for Party norms in this instance is striking. By way of analogy, would you seriously contend that if members of your section, Minneapolis, were to send tapes about Jeff Miller to a member of Santa Clara County, they would be “personal communications” carrying no obligation to inform your section and supply a copy?

As for your conditions for supplying the tapes, they are both gratuitous and arrogant in the extreme.

How did you conclude that Comrades Ballard, Ellis and VanRyn were not “given the full opportunity to present their case re their resignations” to the Party membership?

All of these three members quit of their own accord. Two walked out without any notice at all after they were repeatedly asked to stay on and had agreed to do so. Each had the full opportunity to present whatever documents they wanted to their section, the NEC Subcommittee and the NEC. (And though it really is no legitimate concern of yours, it is significant that Section Santa Clara County gave Ellis the opportunity to make “his case” repeatedly—holding at least two special meetings on his behalf, electing a special committee to meet with him on his concerns, and allowing him to monopolize a good portion of a membership study class over a six-month period with his protestations that Party literature was a collection of “lies,” that De Leon was not a Marxist, that Stalin was, etc., etc. Only after nearly a year when the section finally voted 12-1 to move on to new subject matter and not let Ellis choose the content of the study class any longer, did Ellis cry “censorship” and walk out. Up until the day he reversed himself for the third time in a ten-day period and quit, I myself was in the midst of discussions with him about the possibility of submitting his documents to Party bodies. )

With regard to Ballard and VanRyn, as members of the editorial staff they were in a position to prepare a complete report for submission to the convention. They were told so explicitly by the rest of the staff and myself. They were also free to go to the Subcommittee at any time and in fact refused to do so during their entire employment despite the suggestion of other staff members.

IT WAS THESE MEMBERS WHO MADE NO EFFORT TO PRESENT THEIR CASE THROUGH PARTY CHANNELS, perhaps for good reason. Their conduct was an act of sabotage that came as close to destroying the SLP as anything in recent years. The only way they could make a case was to deliberately circumvent those comrades who knew them and the facts involved, and hope that some member

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with an apparent ax to grind would take up their cause and spread unanswered charges. Unfortunately, with the help of an expelled member, whom they sought out, they seem to have found what they were looking for.

I again ask how you arrived at the conclusion that these members—who made no effort to use the procedures available to them—were blocked from access to Party channels? What evidence do you have that they tried to make a case and were stopped? Where is the support for your charge?

Your letter states, “If this proper organizational procedure had been conducted in the first place, there would have been no need for members of the Party to go outside Party channels of communication to secure this necessary information.”

This suggests that you consider yourself the arbiter of what constitutes “proper organizational procedure.” Yet you were present when the 1977 convention, voting on Section Minneapolis’s request for a “commission of inquiry” into the resignations, voted overwhelmingly in open session not to conduct such a special investigation.

Are you contending that you as an individual have the right to ignore the convention’s vote and conduct your own individual investigation outside proper Party channels? Are you contending that a member is not obligated to abide by the majority decisions of an open convention? Is this Party democracy?

Even if you wanted to initiate an override of the convention’s decision, that would require a referendum initiated through the section. Or have you so little concern for democratic majority rule that you feel justified in conducting your own individual activities regardless of organizational decisions openly arrived at by a delegated convention?

Who is it who is overstepping “legitimate authority” here Comrade Miller? Who is showing disregard for the rights of the membership?

Last, but by no means least, if you felt so emphatically that the convention’s decision was wrong, and that it would be necessary for members to conduct their own investigation, why when you appeared before the State of Organization Committee (with a considerable audience of Party members from around the country present) did you fail to even mention the matter? The committee went to great lengths to find a basis for the apparent antagonism between members of Section Minneapolis including yourself and the national organization. It asked repeatedly whether there were sources of disagreement aside from the *New Unionist* matter. Yet you said nothing about an issue on which you claim to feel so strongly that you justify circumventing Party procedure.

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Nor can I forego the observation that your apparent sympathy for individuals who literally tried to bring the Party down constitutes a slap in the face to members who stood by the organization and helped save it from collapse. For you to repay their actions by secretly circulating charges against them is demoralizing and offensive to say the least.

I might add, too, that while I as National Secretary presented a case of sorts in the April 14 letter {?}, the other members of the headquarters staff have not presented their case to date. Now you would apparently deny them the right to respond to the version of those who left and who consciously refused to face them before any Party authority.

In sending a copy of this letter to Section Minneapolis, I am asking the section to note that your rash action has deliberately reopened contention just as it seemed that the section and the national organization had resolved their difficulties and were on their way to cooperating in building an active SLP in Minnesota.

With this letter, I'm again asking for your prompt compliance with the NEC Subcommittee's request for the tapes and for an explicit recognition of the improprieties involved. Should you retain your original position, the Subcommittee will consider seeking disciplinary action through the appropriate party channels to resolve the matter.

Aside from that, there would seem to be no need for any further correspondence. We cannot allow the section to be tied up for months in what is a tangential matter to the party's activities. I am quite sure, however, that you will find that the membership's sense of organizational integrity remains intact and will learn that the SLP does not carry on its affairs through the private circulation of taped allegations.

Fraternally yours,  
[Signed] NATHAN KARP  
National Secretary.

## **NEW UNIONISTS' LETTER OF RESIGNATION, AUGUST 16, 1977**

Dear Comrades:

It has become clear to us that the Socialist Labor Party is not organized as a revolutionary socialist organization. It is not a democratic organization, with

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authority flowing from the bottom up, but a bureaucratic authoritarian organization wherein all decisions involving major policy and organizational questions are made by the National Office.

The sections, through which all members can directly participate, do not originate discussion and action on the major questions facing the party, as would be the case in a democratic organization. The national bodies—the National Convention, the NEC and the NEC Subcommittee—therefore do not reflect in their acts the thought of the membership as expressed through intra- and inter-section discussion and debate, but rather reflect the thought of the National Office. These bodies act only to rubber stamp the basic viewpoints and prior actions taken by the National Office (and the *Weekly People*, which has been functioning unconstitutionally under the domination of the N.O.), or to routinely approve all requests for organizational action or policy change made by the National Office.

When sections have attempted to initiate discussion among themselves on the important matters facing the party, the party executive has prohibited the sections (and individuals) from continuing such discussions, thereby revealing that the lack of democratic decision-making within the party is by conscious and deliberate design of the executive. When sections have attempted to circulate for discussion their proposals for the National Convention prior to the Convention, they have been prohibited from doing so by the N.O.-NEC Subcommittee, thereby maintaining the National Office's monopoly over inner-party information, and thereby safeguarding its manipulatory control over the Convention's proceedings and decisions.

To further ensure its bureaucratic control over the party, the National Office has shut off access to the *Weekly People*, including the non-editorial Letters-to-the-People column, to members who disagree with certain current policy. It has censored articles for the *SLP Newsletter*. It has arbitrarily demanded that members turn over to it personal communications, without even having confirmed knowledge of the content of such communications. It has attempted to force members to recant their positions on organizational policy, forcing principled comrades to resign from the party. In regard, to at least Section Minneapolis, it has gained information about the section and its members through unorganizational channels, specifically, an informant, Karl Heck.

In view of this complete bureaucratic domination over the party, we have concluded that there exists no reasonable hope for the party evolving into a genuine socialist organization, which would truly uphold the De Leonist slogan, "The

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Principle and the Organization are One.” We have decided that to remain true to our socialist convictions, we must carry forth in an organization other than the SLP.

For the reasons herein stated, we hereby resign from the Socialist Labor Party. However, should conditions within the party change as to disallow our reasons for resignation, we would not hesitate to apply for reinstatement. Yours for the Socialist Revolution,

[Signed] BO HOLMDAHL,  
LILA HOLMDAHL,  
JERRY FEAGLER,  
JEFF MILLER,  
DICK TAYLOR,  
EARL BALFOUR,  
VIVIAN BALFOUR,  
SANDRA CARNEY

### **GENERAL LETTER TO THE SUBDIVISIONS AND MEMBERS OF THE SLP, AUGUST 26, 1977**

Dear Comrades:

From information reaching the National Office, it is apparent that a group of members who have resigned from Section Minneapolis have appropriated the section mailing list and are using it to circulate their letter of resignation.

A detailed response to the document seems unnecessary at this point since it deals in unsubstantiated generalities. Significantly the members who resigned apparently were unable to point to a single concrete instance where their organizational rights have been violated. Those present at the recent national convention may also recall that two of the resigning members were given considerable opportunity to express their views before convention committees in front of a sizable audience of Party members. Neither raised any of the charges they now offer as reasons for leaving.

A full report and all related documents and correspondence will be submitted to the NEC at its forthcoming session and will be made available to the membership

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through the published proceedings of that session. The purpose of this letter is to briefly report those developments in Section Minneapolis that directly led to the resignations.

As the 30th convention proceedings indicate, the convention thoroughly investigated several matters involving Section Minneapolis, particularly those relating to the publication of the *New Unionist*. After meeting with section members, it issued several guidelines and instructions.

Following the convention, at a special section meeting attended by NEC member Bruce Cozzini, Section Minneapolis unanimously agreed with the convention findings and complied with its instructions, with one "reservation." The section stated its belief that its former actions cited by the convention as unorganizational "were unconventional rather than improper." In the Party's overall interest, no issue was made over this distinction and the section's response was accepted in good faith.

As soon as this long drawn-out matter seemed to be resolved, however, a new development took place. The National Office learned that one of the Minneapolis members, Jeff Miller, was circulating tapes to selected members of his section. The tapes consisted of an interview conducted by Nick Simon (expelled from the Party 10 years ago) with three of the former national headquarters employees who abruptly quit last spring. The three were Michael Ballard, Ken Ellis and Bud VanRyn, still Party members and still under the jurisdiction of Section Santa Clara County. We learned of the tapes from several sources, including Simon himself.

At its meeting of July 7, the NEC Subcommittee passed a motion instructing Miller to send the tapes to the National Office. Miller's response was that the tapes were his "personal communication" and he was under no obligation to forward them. He then declared that he would make the tapes available "at such time as Comrades Ballard, Ellis and VanRyn are given the full opportunity to present their case re their resignations...to the membership of the Party."

The National Office responded with a detailed letter, explaining that contrary to Miller's assertion, the three members had had every opportunity to present their case to the section, to the NEC and to the convention and had been told so explicitly. It was they who made no effort to make a case to the membership, quitting abruptly and choosing instead to seek out Simon.

Miller was further informed that the three members involved were under the jurisdiction of their section and that his refusal to supply the tape was a violation of

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that section's elementary organizational rights, not to mention a violation of the rights of those members discussed on the tape. The letter concluded by again asking for prompt compliance with the Subcommittee's request and pointing out that Miller had needlessly sown dissension just when the situation with Section Minneapolis appeared resolved.

Copies of the correspondence with Miller went to his section. At its July 19 meeting, Section Minneapolis passed a motion instructing Miller to make copies of the tapes at its expense and forward them to the National Office. It was also understood that a special meeting of the section would be held so ALL the members of Section Minneapolis could hear the tapes. Despite his democratic pretensions, Miller never complied with the majority decision of his section and the organizer never called the special meeting. (There was, however, one "special meeting" held on August 5, a meeting to which only a selected minority of section members were invited.)

When the next regular section meeting was held on August 16, Bo Holmdahl presented the joint letter of resignation and the resignations were accepted by the section majority. In a matter of days, the National Office began to receive word from sections and members throughout the country that they were receiving the Minneapolis document.

As stated, a full report and related documents will appear in the proceedings of the coming NEC session. I am confident, however, that the above is adequate for the Party membership to put these matters in perspective and judge them properly.

Fraternally yours,  
[Signed] NATHAN KARP  
National Secretary