

## **RESOLUTION ON ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONING IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF SOCIALIST ACTION**

**Submitted to the Oct. 6, 2019, NC plenum by eight National Committee members and alternates. The resolution reflected the general views of the Permanent Revolution Faction in Socialist Action. Most of the signers were expelled from Socialist Action five days after the plenum.**

At this plenum, the National Committee must reject and correct the undemocratic functioning of the Political Committee. The conduct of the Majority Faction (MF), which leads and dominates the PC, has been entirely inappropriate for the proper functioning of a Leninist party.

The Majority Faction has broken with the democratic-centralist principles rigorously followed by the old Socialist Workers Party in its best days and adopted by Socialist Action at its founding. It has replaced authentic democratic centralist practice in the Political Committee with an alien methodology that replaces democratic discussion and decision-making with the predetermined decisions of the Majority Faction grouped around the National Secretary.

The signers of this document firmly believe that Socialist Action members have the task of constructing the nucleus of a mass revolutionary party, which can lead the working class and its allies in the struggle against the world's most powerful capitalist class. To accomplish this, we need to build a strong *combat* party, as SWP founder James P. Cannon liked to say, one that is capable of establishing stable roots in the working class and moving forward in a disciplined manner in accord with our revolutionary socialist program. But disciplined, united, and centralized action must rest on the solid base of a

well-informed and deeply involved membership, as well as a collaborative leadership that is responsible to the ranks and able to defend its policies to them.

Of course, we do not think that the party as a whole must be in perpetual discussion over programmatic issues, especially over such issues that have already been discussed and decided at the National Convention. As Cannon and other Socialist Workers Party leaders used to stress repeatedly, ours is a party of action, not a “discussion club.” However, we believe that the elected *leadership* must put itself in position to analyze key political events, both international and domestic, as they take place. This is a necessity in order to clarify the issues, firmly establish our orientation to them, and effectively direct, guide, and coordinate the party in action.

Unfortunately, the Political Committee’s responsibility in this regard has been systematically derailed by the National Secretary and the Majority Faction within it. The MF almost never permits the PC to engage in rounded discussions of key issues to determine our party positions and tasks. Instead, the real decisions are made in advance by the Majority Faction, while the Political Committee is merely expected to give a formal seal of approval to whatever the Majority Faction has already decided.

### **MF wields a hatchet on the newspaper**

Requests by comrades in the Permanent Revolution Faction to hold discussions in the PC on important international developments (Nicaragua, Venezuela, Iran, etc.) have continually been denied by National Secretary Jeff M. and his Majority Faction. PRF comrades in the Political Committee have argued for thoroughly prepared and researched reports, background readings in which all PC members could immerse themselves, and sufficient discussion to achieve clear (and hopefully, mutually agreed upon) conclusions.

Instead, PC “discussions,” to the very limited extent that they occurred at all, generally involved brief and hastily called “debates,” instigated by the Majority Faction, on the content of articles that were submitted to Socialist Action newspaper.

This happened, for example, after an article had been submitted by one Majority Faction member in late June 2019 on the use of chemical weapons in one town in Syria. The editor of the paper had rejected the article and referred it to the Political Committee for review because he believed that the article was based on pure speculation, without the use of credible factual sources. The editor was then directed to “debate” the writer on the question before the PC.

As it turned out, the writer did not show up for the meeting, but instead submitted a written polemic (arranged in advance with Jeff) that included a motion that specified in that in all future instances in which articles for one reason or another could not go to the PC for review, the National Secretary had the right to overrule the editor as to the content of the newspaper. As a matter of course, these motions were all duly approved by majority vote (i.e., the vote of the Majority Faction), and his article was ordered to go into the paper without any editing.

The editor of the newspaper, a member of the PRF, was admonished by the PC majority for “bringing up the settled question of Syria” as a factional maneuver. This disregarded the fact that he had been carrying out his proper duty as editor of the paper to research and question the writer’s unreliable sources for his article and to report his findings to the Political Committee.

Just weeks earlier, some National Committee members had requested an NC inquiry and discussion after the same writer wrote an article favoring Modern Monetary Theory, a non-Marxist point of view, and submitted it without consulting the

party leadership to *CounterPunch* magazine. But the Majority Faction in the Political Committee voted to table the issue indefinitely, thus stonewalling, seemingly forever, an NC discussion on this very serious matter.

SA members who are not members of the Majority Faction do not receive such favoritism. Lately, some comrades have even failed to get articles that they have written on topical developments into the pages of *Socialist Action* newspaper. The MF has charged that those articles in some way violate Socialist Action's "line" in regard to their topics, although the alleged "line" in every case appears to be one that was manufactured only recently by Jeff and his factional grouping as their perspectives evolve away from the historic positions of the Trotskyist movement.

At one meeting a month ago, for instance, in a sort of "Friday Night Massacre," Majority Faction PC members voted to reject outright two articles for publication (on China and Iran), ordered major deletions in an article on Kashmir, and postponed publication of an article on trans athletes in Connecticut, holding it back for *possible* printing in several months. The article on China was refused on the basis, expressed by one MF member, that it "said bad things about China."

That escapade followed by a few weeks the rejection of another article on Iran—which the Majority Faction reporter indicated had contained "a fundamentally different line" than Socialist Action had on the subject. In that case, the reporter gave evidence of what he believed was the "wrong line" of the article. He stated, for example, that it "blamed Iran's economic problems [in part] on the country's capitalists," whereas in his opinion, "Socialist Action puts full blame on the United States." The article, according to him, also wrongly "offered support to trade union" struggles in that country and "equivocated" on

which country had carried out the attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf.

In his summary, the reporter added the fact that one phrase in a single sentence referred to Iran's backing the Houthis in Yemen as "military adventurism," thus "countering Socialist Action's line" on the question. We should note, however, that Socialist Action has *never* had a discussion on Yemen. Moreover, none of the other "errors" that he listed run counter to our traditional revolutionary socialist line on those questions or our traditional method of reporting.

The MF also voted for Jeff M.'s motion to remove from our website an informational interview with an independent political candidate from another tendency, Ellie Hamrick, in Ohio. The latter article was kept out of our press for *three months*, until some of the content was out of date, after Jeff had rejected the simple procedure of adding the lines: "This article is for information only and does not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Action," which the editor had suggested at the beginning.

### **PC discussions: Not everyone can take part**

The usual procedure in political discussions, with few variations, is that after a member of the Majority Faction (almost always Jeff M.) gives their report, only one comrade will be permitted to speak "against" it, with one speaking in favor. With that arrangement, other comrades with comments or questions cannot get recognized to speak. Motions for a full discussion in which all PC members could participate, with adequate time to present their views, are generally denied. Then, as a matter of course, the Majority Faction will automatically vote to approve the predetermined "line" of their report. Any comments that succeed in getting to the floor, and put the conclusions of the report into question, are routinely derided and mocked.

One frequent excuse used to cut off the discussion or ban reports is the strange claim that the “Minority” is simply maneuvering to “re-open the Syria debate, which was settled at the National Convention.” This excuse has been reiterated in the Draft Political Resolution that Jeff has submitted to this plenum in an attempt to justify the lack of democratic discussion in the PC. Nevertheless, just *how* discussion of events in countries as diverse as Venezuela, Iran, or Kashmir might be “re-opening the Syria debate,” particularly when Syria has not been mentioned, is still not made clear.

Jeff does his best to explain his view that in regard to all these developments, the “Minority” has rejected self-determination for nations that are oppressed by imperialism. But a glance at documents that the PRF has submitted would confirm that there is no truth whatsoever to this claim.

Other excuses also come into play to deny Permanent Revolution Faction comrades the ability to speak in PC meetings. One egregious example took place recently when a PRF member gave a report on the struggle of postal workers in France, which contained a proposal that Socialist Action should help promote U.S. labor solidarity with the strikers and help raise financial aid for them. The discussion in the PC was generally positive toward the proposals until Jeff intervened to sum up the discussion with extended speaking time. Jeff rejected these proposals, stating that Socialist Action had already “done our part,” and that was sufficient. Jeff then moved to deny the reporter’s right to present a summary of the discussion or to put his proposals on the floor for a vote, and the Majority Faction duly approved Jeff’s undemocratic procedural motion.

When Jeff later sent out the minutes for that PC meeting, he was careful to rationalize his action in denying the summary and vote, stating that the report had been “for information

only.” This was a point that had never been made in the meeting itself; and it was obviously untrue since the reporter had made definite proposals for action.

By the next PC meeting, however, Jeff had abruptly changed his perspectives on the situation of the French strikers (he had in the meantime spoken to a French comrade about it). Jeff now placed similar proposals before the PC as if they were his own, stating that SA should conduct a special fund for the strikers. And the Majority Faction, which had followed Jeff’s lead in silencing the reporter at the earlier meeting, now obligingly reversed itself and approved the proposals!

### **Party campaigns are neglected**

The lack of meaningful political discussion in the leadership has consequences in many areas. Thus, for example, all national UNAC [United National Antiwar Coalition] work is conducted by Jeff alone, with almost no reports or accounting to the SA leadership—let alone to the membership of the party.

The facts show, moreover, that the misguided conduct of the Majority Faction in the PC has had a damaging effect on the party as a whole—reflected in a miseducated and dispirited membership and sluggishness in fulfilling party campaigns.

We see national committees—labor, Cuban discussion, climate work fraction, etc.—and national educational campaigns, which had been ambitiously launched, constantly falling by the wayside due to inactivity. Even the Mackler/Bradford Campaign committee rarely meets, and has never discussed the wording of how to present our program in brochures and the media.

It is likely that few comrades outside of the PC know that an alternative presidential candidate was proposed in the PC but rejected by the Majority Faction, with the reasoning, stated by one MF member, that the nominee was a member of the

“Minority” and thus would be unable to articulate the party position on Syria.

Subscription drives are put off for months on end, and then undertaken only in a half-hearted manner. And we note the indifference with which the Majority Faction on the PC has greeted the efforts of comrades in Connecticut to support the unionization drive of hotel workers.

But can we expect the party ranks to respond enthusiastically to such projects when there is little follow-up, coordination, or even interest displayed by the leadership? Or when the membership is kept in the dark about the nature of major discussions that are taking place among the leadership?

As we indicated above, in general, we do not advocate distributing the *detailed* content of discussions in the PC or NC to the membership, except perhaps in very unusual circumstances. If that were done, it could tend to hinder the ability of party leaders to freely express themselves or to change their minds on issues. But it would certainly be in order to distribute frequent internal information bulletins detailing the *general content* or direction of leadership discussions, and their perspectives on current political events or on party campaigns and interventions—as was Socialist Action’s practice in the past. We note also that although Fourth International reports are often mailed to FI sections, they are almost never distributed to the membership, and even the PC rarely gets to see them. This should change.

By the same token, when tendencies or factions are formed in leadership bodies, the membership should at least be informed of their existence and what they stand for. We are dismayed that Jeff, in several communications, has distorted our request that the SA National Office distribute the founding documents of the Permanent Revolution Tendency, denouncing the request as a demand to have the party constantly distribute

whatever statements the “Minority” might come up with. But we have never made that demand; we merely adhere to the belief that the process of keeping the membership informed—following the best practices of the old SWP—can be best ensured if members understand why and on what program those tendencies have been formed.

It is revealing but unfortunate that the Majority Faction has not even bothered to inform Socialist Action members of its *own* existence, what it stands for, and why MF members felt it was necessary to openly declare their faction.

Likewise, members have still not been sent the documents (majority and minority) that were submitted to the April National Committee plenum—at this writing, almost *six months ago!* Nor has the National Committee received the minutes of the plenum. Moreover, NC members are frequently denied seeing the minutes of PC meetings, or receive them weeks or months late.

We should remember that the April 2019 National Committee was delayed for months by the National Secretary, and it was then only called with about three weeks’ notice before the event. Jeff drafted a long Political Resolution for the plenum, with many new and controversial conclusions within it, and then submitted it to NC members barely two weeks before the plenum date—allowing very little time for anyone to consider it and respond.

A six-month literary discussion on the rights of trans people was authorized at the plenum, but the PC failed to determine a definitive termination date or to organize and set parameters for the discussion. This allowed the discussion to be diverted by one Majority Faction comrade in particular with repeated posts rejecting measures toward achieving full rights and liberation for trans people, and heaping scorn on trans comrades and trans people in general. Finally, after repeated

requests by comrades in the PRF, the PC decided that the trans discussion would end at an NC plenum called for Nov. 17.

The present “emergency” Oct. 6 plenum was called far more hastily. At the time of this writing, less than a week before the scheduled date for the plenum, the official call for the plenum and a proposed agenda have still not gone out to the National Committee. The Draft Political Resolutions will not be sent to non-PC National Committee members until a scant five days before the plenum. What does this show, if not disdain for the National Committee? Since all key decisions are made in closed-door session by the Majority Faction, and not by the NC as a whole, the MF has little concern whether the NC has been properly prepared for the snap plenum discussion.

### **Democracy broken at National Convention**

We should recall that members of the current Political Committee, and the National Committee, were chosen in a highly unorthodox manner from a slate provided by the then undeclared “majority” faction at Socialist Action’s October 2018 National Convention.

Leadership selection in our movement has traditionally taken place by means of a rank-and-file Nominations Commission, in which commission delegates are given time to rigorously discuss the qualifications of proposed candidates for the National Committee. The closed session of a Nominations Commission allows the delegates the space to speak freely to each other without pressure by the outgoing elected leadership. Then, the Nominations Commission delivers a detailed report of its findings and slate of nominations to the Convention delegates, explaining what it saw as the qualifications of nominees and other factors that led to its decisions.

This method was done away with at our 2018 Convention—just as it was in the 2016 Convention. Instead, the so-called

Nominations Commission was constructed as if it were a parity commission between the undeclared “Majority” faction and various comrades whom they considered to be in the “Minority” (NOTE: In reality, no organized oppositional tendency existed at that time). And instead of being a rank-and-file commission from all the branches, National Secretary Jeff M. placed himself and other outgoing NC members from the Twin Cities and SF Bay Area on the commission.

It is worth noting that the original proposed Convention agenda had dispensed with a Nominations Commission altogether, and that the distorted version of the NomCom was only proposed at the opening session of the Convention. The proposed commission, with three members from each of the three largest branches, was also not reflective of the party as a whole. The Duluth branch and at-large areas were left out.

Needless to say, the usual explanatory report by the commission to the assembled delegates was dispensed with; Jeff gave a report instead. What Jeff tried to motivate was the fact that the majority faction, at that point meeting privately but still undeclared, wished to award itself a two-thirds “working majority” in the National Committee—and later in the PC.

We should point out that James P. Cannon, in the midst of the extreme factional strife in the SWP in 1940, had urged that the Shachtmanite minority be given “proportional representation” on the incoming National Committee according to their expected vote in the upcoming Convention. But “proportional representation” was not good enough for the Socialist Action’s Majority Faction. They wanted nearly the whole hog, even though they had just won an extremely narrow majority of delegates on a single issue (the nature of the war in Syria).

In retrospect, we can see that Jeff was developing differences with our traditional Trotskyist program on topics far beyond

Syria, and he felt he needed a loyal grouping in the NC and PC of sufficient size to be able to outvote any comrades who raised questions. Following the Convention, Jeff's new political positions quickly rose to the surface, though still in an unclear manner, in regard to Nicaragua, Venezuela, Iran, and now Kashmir.

In describing the Convention itself, and the party discussion leading up to it, it will suffice here to state that Jeff and other Majority Faction comrades carried out a completely dishonest campaign against the Resolution on Syria [authored by a comrade who later joined the PRF]—systematically raising the “heat” of the discussion to a fever pitch. Their taunts and false charges even exceeded the despicable conduct they had displayed at our 2016 Convention concerning the same issue.

Jeff took every opportunity to distort the content of the Syria resolution's arguments while refusing to address the actual facts and conclusions that it presented. Jeff did not bother to submit to the Convention his own resolution on Syria, but merely asked delegates to approve the general line of some polemical documents he had penned during the course of the pre-convention discussion as well as several articles he had previously written.

Then, on Jeff's proposal, the Convention bundled the Syria reports and discussion into a catch-all agenda item called “a debate on all outstanding reports.” The author of the resolution was obligated to reduce the time allotted to his Syria report and summary in order to accommodate other subjects within that agenda point, which included a major report on Russia. The fact that Syria was shoehorned into a “supplementary” category was astonishing given the fact that the topic had by far received the most discussion during pre-convention discussion, Convention delegates were elected essentially

according to how they stood on the issue of Syria, and the National Committee was chosen on the same basis.

In a couple of instances, Convention delegations were chosen in very questionable circumstances. In New York City, the pre-determined "Majority" won a delegate when a totally inactive comrade, who has not been heard from since, was convinced to pay up his back dues. Another curious situation occurred with a two-person at-large unit in Oregon, which was divided on the Syria question. Jeff ruled that the comrade who agreed with his views on Syria should be a full delegate, since he was with the "Majority," while the other comrade got no vote at the Convention.

Two other international documents were submitted to the Convention. One, documenting the imperialist nature of Chinese capitalism, was accepted by Jeff during the course of the pre-convention discussion, suddenly reversing his previous position. The second document, on the imperialist nature of Russia, was rejected due to Jeff's objections. However, Jeff agreed to add a line to the Political Resolution that stated that Socialist Action believes Russia is imperialist. The Convention also approved Jeff's proposal that modifications should be made by committee to the paragraphs in the Russia resolution that had made reference to Syria and Ukraine. Now, a year later, no effort has been made to amend the Russia resolution and publish it, as the Convention ordered. Nor has the resolution on China been published, as the Convention likewise mandated.

### **Tasks for the Oct. 6 plenum**

It is evident that the Draft Political Resolution for the Oct. 6 plenum, written by Jeff, is aimed at raising the temperature of the political crisis in Socialist Action to the boiling point. Normally, the Political Resolution would attempt to refine the party program in light of current events, stir a vigorous and

constructive discussion, and unify the National Committee and the entire party in concerted action. But Jeff's document fails entirely in these objectives.

Jeff's DPR contains a package of false accusations against comrades who have expressed alarm at the political direction in which Jeff and his grouping appear to be heading. It works to line up Majority comrades against "straw-man" positions that the PRF does not hold and has never stated. It relies on malicious gossip and fibs—things that PRF comrades are alleged to have mentioned or done in the past, which only Jeff seems able to recall! This can only result in widening the divisions within the party while doing nothing to clarify the real *political* differences.

A National Secretary *should* attempt to build a collaborative team in the leadership of our party, looking to utilize the best qualities of all comrades who were elected to the leadership bodies. Instead, Jeff's DPR, as in other recent broadsides he has written, only diminishes comrades. His high-charged rhetoric seems to be intended to verbally banish the Permanent Revolution Faction comrades from any leadership role—or even, if it were possible, from the ranks of revolutionary socialists. He accuses the PRF of having discarded the principles of Trotskyism, arguing that the comrades have now placed themselves in the same corner as the "Shachtmanites" and "third campists" (i.e., petty bourgeois, centrist elements).

Of course, Jeff would be hard pressed to explain to anyone with an open mind his absurd proposition that comrades who have been in the leadership of Socialist Action for decades, loyally and energetically building its campaigns to this very minute, including the movement against the wars and interventions of U.S. imperialism, somehow don't really believe what they say and do, but have decided to turn their backs on our revolutionary principles.

Jeff's tirade even accuses the *Socialist Action* editor of *disloyalty*, raising outrageous charges to the effect that he knowingly and willfully posted articles on the SA website that countered Socialist Action's "line."

The rhetoric of the Draft Political Resolution and other recent communications from Jeff, in which he speaks of a "split," are particularly ominous. They suggest that he and the Majority Faction intend to either completely isolate the PRF within Socialist Action—removing them from productive party life—or to drive them out of the organization altogether.

Socialist Action now faces a deep crisis in its political orientation and in its organizational functioning. It is up to this plenum to stop further degeneration.

Organizational tasks before this plenum include the following: The National Committee must repudiate the destructive conduct of the Majority Faction in the Political Committee, as well as that of the National Secretary.

The National Committee must take action to ensure that the PC returns to the proper democratic-centralist procedures of a Leninist party, including full and regular discussions of topical political matters in the leadership. The ability of all PC members to speak their views must be guaranteed. We need a return to respectful comradely discourse instead of hearing a constant barrage of insults against comrades who question the evolving policies of the Majority Faction and who seek a return to our traditional revolutionary socialist principles.

The NC must demand that the National Secretary withdraw the charges he made in the DPR against the *Socialist Action* newspaper editor for alleged disloyal acts, and against another member of the PRF for alleged undisciplined functioning. The NC should recognize that Permanent Revolution Faction comrades are among the most active builders of our party, and have *never* been disloyal.

Without these changes, Socialist Action will remain virtually paralyzed in its ability to utilize the full experience of its leadership and membership in order to analyze and effectively respond to the key developments in world politics.