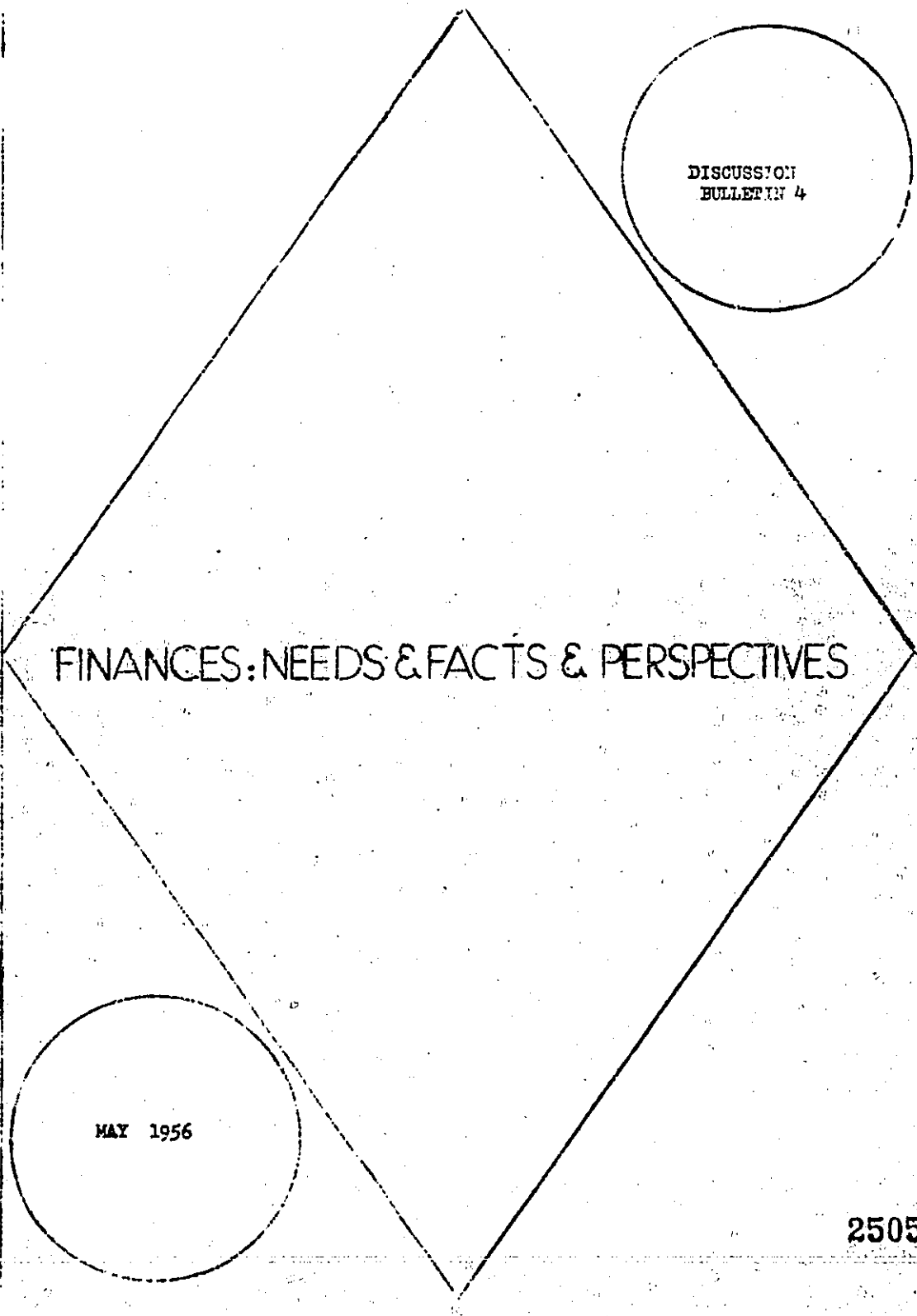


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FINANCES: NEEDS & FACTS & PERSPECTIVES

DISCUSSION
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FINANCES: NEEDS AND FACTS AND PERSPECTIVES

So indissoluble are the theory and practice of Marxism that a division of the one from the other would make a mockery of this doctrine of liberation. At our first Conference in the Spring of 1955 we kept sticking to the concrete. We were specific about what we wanted to do politically—the paper and the book. We were precise in detailing the finances needed to do this. All of us agreed that the absolute minimum to do what we wanted to do required a foundation fund of \$3,000.

We must now state categorically that this was not achieved. No serious attempt was made to bridge the gap between the \$1600 pledged and the \$3000 solemnly undertaken. Lest anyone put the blame of this on those few who left, it is necessary at once to set the record straight. Due to the correct political perspectives which anticipated these defections, each one was so isolated that he left alone, and left only after he had been compelled by the politics of the situation to pay the personal pledge. It is a truism in the movement that for each one in a political tendency confronted with a split who says: I go this way, and the other who says, No, I go that way, there are two who just go home. Nevertheless, our correct politics made even those who left the movement behave. As one worker put it, "If you are not willing to pay for the paper, don't tell me your political views." No, we cannot blame the people who left. The truth is we just didn't make it, or even openly recognize that we didn't, but just threw all responsibility on the centre.

Lest anyone thinks he can find "the culprit" by looking at the total contributions of each local committee, it is necessary to state at once that that would be misleading. For example, Los Angeles contributed the most, West Virginia the least. Yet the truth is, that, in relationship to the number of members and resources, Los Angeles is not the top of the list but the bottom; and West Virginia is not at the bottom but at the top. Or, to take another aspect of the problem, Detroit, which, unfortunately can hardly distinguish its local committee from the REB, is the best of all when it comes to what each individual gives, nevertheless its outward extension has been so poor in relation to its potentialities, that it would hardly be higher than the sporadic nature of the work in San Francisco.

No one can say what another "should" contribute. There is nothing obligatory in our organization other than the dollar weekly. Indeed for some that \$1 is a lot and the organization knows it and is grateful for it (or, if you are unemployed, is grateful for the 25¢ contribution weekly). But it is time to state unequivocally that the corrupting influence of Johnsonism—that is to say, that each looks to the needs of his or her personality without serious regard to the political needs of the organization—is still with us. This is not a generalization. It is a fact. Either it will be rooted out, or we do not deserve to be the inheritors and extenders of Marxism on American soil.

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I--The Strong and the Weak

The strong points are 1) that so few of us did keep the paper going regularly, that is on a bi-weekly basis, going for the period of our public promise of six months; 2) that we could take the defection of Nelson in our stride and, in fact, only after we had finished with him, were we able to put into practice what we preached as to the unity of theory and practice, or worker and intellectual; 3) that our worker-editor, though working on paper only after a full day in the shop, put the working class stamp on the paper that was indistinguishable from the independent revolutionary contributions of the Negroes in this historic period; and, finally, 4) that we were the ones who made available the first English translation of Lenin's PHILOSOPHIC NOTEBOOKS.

This has had its impact both nationally and internationally. While we had orders for the NOTEBOOKS from as different places as the Gold Coast and Massachusetts, England and Indiana, etc., and reprints from our paper, especially articles attacking the labor bureaucracy, in two different Italian papers were published abroad, we also had both monetary and, above all, articles contributed to our papers from places as far apart as Ireland and South Africa, as well as Alabama and Germany.

The weak points of our existence are the failure to move outward to any serious degree, the lack of subscriptions gotten by our own people, the isolation and lack of sense of having found the link with history, as is shown by the irregularity of the appearance of the paper. Above all, the attitude toward needs has been of a cavalier nature. As the financial secretary pointed out, "the thing that has been so discouraging is not only lack of money coming in, but almost total lack of response in discussion. You know how we in the REB discuss each report and how careful we are to present the facts and keep away from the agitation, well, when the situation was especially tight I wrote to Watkins and Sears. I got the money, but no discussion, and yet I had stressed that that is as important as the money."

Now the two--the strong and the weak--cannot be "combined", or, we'll end up, as Marx said of Proudhon: He wanted to be a synthesis. He ended by being a composite error. True synthesis is arrived at not by enumerating the contradictions, but resolving them. I do not doubt at all that when we are all together this summer we will meet the measure imposed on us by history. But the question is not history, but the assurance of the existence of the paper. Therein is the solution for no task, once approached concretely, is so great that it cannot be broken down into the routine assignments of people who take themselves serious because what they have to do is serious. Let us begin by facing the facts seriously.

II--The Facts

Here are the facts for the 13 months of our existence. (Actually our independent life didn't begin till April 1955 but the Johnsonites being what they are, we had to pay for the last issue of Correspondence even when we were nominally still together and had the prior accumulation of debt as they stood up not only us but Kenya)

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14 MONTHS REPORT--INCOME AND EXPENDITURES

	<u>INCOME</u> <u>Regular Monthly*</u>	<u>EXPENSES</u>	
		<u>Regular</u>	<u>Loan repayment</u>
March	90.50	385.42	120.
April	417.36	378.11	275.
May	1108.25	371.26	110.
June	761.29	775.44	105.
July	546.80	1029.48	60.
August	351.25	618.20	45.
September	376.00	772.07	65.
October	476.50	853.52	72.24
November	437.50	647.54	72.24
December	452.50	669.15	72.50
January	559.95	747.16	47.50
February	403.20	605.45	92.00
March	309.79	501.38	67.50
April	586.56	491.12	1203.98
	<u>5805.74</u>	<u>8845.30</u>	

*Include the specials on the original fund as well as such things as rummage sales, subs, etc.

1203.98 Loan Repayments Total
10,049.28

Special:
tour 364.00
Sale Equipment 135.00
499.00

TOTAL EXPENSES: 10,049.28
TOTAL INCOME: 9,959.74
DEFICIT 889.54
Plus Printing 494.00
Bill
TOTAL DEFICIT* 583.54

TOTAL DIRECT INCOME \$7304.74
LOANS 2655.00
TOTAL INCOME 9959.74

This does not account for the loans outstanding in each local which is being repaid locally.

All the loans incurred since we have been independent are not only being repaid regularly and in time but, contrary to the period of Johnsonism, our credit is good. At the same time, however, not all the local contributions come to the centre because of this method of local repayment responsibility. Moreover, not alone was the organization relieved of responsibility for book because of outside aid, but fully 20 per cent of it was "contributed" to the paper, that is to say, I made a loan of it the possibility of repayment of which at this point I cannot see.

As Rorty put it at the REB discussion: "We have talked about the totality and inter-relatedness of our work, but, as the attitude toward the use of the funds for the book shows, the local committees have yet to practice that total sense of responsibility. I doubt we can come out beyond issue #17 until we actually are altogether and act seriously to accept this special fund responsibility."

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We certainly cannot continue to live the way we've lived this past year. The tension at the centre is a result of the lack of urgency on the part of the locals. As the editor put it, "I don't care how much material comes in. Without money there can be no paper. I'm wondering what does it take to make some see. So far as I am concerned not to provide for a national chairman is a total disgrace." The reference was not to any actual financial obligations, but to a political recognition of responsibility, the recognition that O'Brien is relieving the organization of that duty. No one can live more cheaply than we have compelled our organizational secretary to live, and that will have to stop in some measure at least. We have not even had any petty cash allowance either for a routine promotional or for any extra technical help whatever even for such periods as conventions. No organization has ever run as cheaply as we have run ours, but we must see to it that that much is assured; and that we know that the paper can come out for a year. We ^{can} not live under the pressure of not knowing whether the next issue will ever come out. We will not be taken seriously. What is more, we will not deserve to be taken seriously unless we here and now get down to the tasks and see to it that, once we reappear after the convention we will be here to stay.

III—The Future

We ourselves must assure our future. We are the ones who have created this universal form for the impulses flowing from the objective movement for a new society. The objective forces for the new society will recognize that as, in part, they already have if we prove we have the staying power. To assure our existence for a year, the REB therefore proposes the establishment of a SPECIAL FUND OF FIVE THOUSAND (\$5,000.)

1) To assure this, it is necessary that each one of us make a special contribution of \$200. By each one, I do not mean each couple, but each person. Naturally there will be some who cannot raise that special sum over and above regular contributions. I most certainly expect no such sum from Stallworth or new people. But anyone who has been around must now stand up and be measured as to his or her political seriousness and ingenuity in literally creating sources of income for the maintenance of the paper.

Half of this sum must be in the center by August 30th, and the other half by September 30th.

2) That we do not go to press until half of the total sum, that is to say, \$2,500, is at the center. We cannot play with this at all. For example, at the same time as the first issue goes to press, we must also begin a serious, systematic, sustained program of promotion. This must not be considered narrowly as an "advertising campaign", but as a necessary supplement to our own serious spreading of the paper. There is no substitute whatever for legwork where legwork is by people who are living exponents of Marxism. There is no substitute for sub campaigns, factory distributions, neighborhood distributions, individual contactings, etc. But once that is the basis, then a supplementary promotional campaign is invaluable, and for that we must have money. We must have a backlog of material for at least two issues of the paper before we go to press with the first. We must know we are coming out for 6 months without a single extra public appeal.

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3) That as of July 15th we pay the organizational secretary \$60 a week and that another \$10 a week be available for petty cash. This is the only change we make in budget. At the same time we must be prepared to meet a rise in publication. It is a lucky accident that we get the printing done for \$200 an issue as the lowest quotation was \$250; we may not be so lucky the period following the summer as there has been a rise in all printing costs, and we cannot be in a position where because we have only allowed for \$200, the rise to \$250 would create a financial crisis. Here is the safest and minimum bi-weekly budget to allow for:

EACH ISSUE OF PAPER

Printing	\$250	
Postage	25	
Rent	30	
Salary	120	
Legal	10	
Utilities	10	
Office Supplies	5	
Petty cash	10	
	<u>\$460</u>	or \$920. a month.

4) Above everything, the most important thing remains getting the money in every week. Not only is no special fund a substitute for the regular weekly contribution, but a small organization like ours of necessity lives from hand to mouth and the weekly contribution helps both it and makes it possible for a worker to meet his contribution. There have been occasions where money was collected but not sent in. We couldn't pay the salary, nor meet the rent; we had to spend extra money for special deliveries and, in one case, a telegram. Just as we keep the strictest accounting and control of every cent received and spent, and give each member a full accounting monthly, so it is necessary that such strict accounting start from below. There is no way of transmitting urgency except through personal feeling of politics.

The way in which we will meet the problem of finances will be the proof, the only proof there is of any theory, of the principles we stand for. If it is true that every generation must reinterpret Marxism for itself, it is even truer that every individual who comes to the movement must translate these principles for himself in a way in which there is no separation between his life as he lives it and his life as he thinks it and wills it as the seeds for the future. If what the party meant in 1903, NEWS & LETTERS means in 1956, then we cannot absolve ourselves from the responsibility of being that part of the objective movement which has made itself conscious of its own destiny.

The decision is up to the membership meeting en masse and the friends on the outside who are willing to come and participate with us in making this critical decision about the continued life of the paper.

--Weaver

May 1, 1956