

REPORT BY CAROL MERRILL

I'm glad John clarified a few things. He clarified a few things about what has been going on in the exec in the process of this trial. He clarified some things about the past procedure in this kind of situation. The behavior of Dick and myself throughout our membership in both the party and the YSA has been characterized consistently by strict adherents to party discipline and norms in all spheres of activity. We've held positions of leadership in the YSA. We've led classes and we've been regular attenders and frequent contributors to discussion at meetings. Our signing of the document for the YSA discussion is in complete consistency with that, with our understanding of party norms and procedures, an understanding that has been reflected in our discipline and activity and functioning ever since we joined the Trotskyist movement.

The fact was borne out by the fact that following over two hours of intensive questioning, of which you've heard only a few excerpts, after two hours the trial body was unable to come to a decision by 3:00 in the morning. If our act of indiscipline, so-called, was so clear and obvious, how was it that the trial body could come to not decision? Exactly because there was no act of indiscipline in the first place. There was an act of political opposition.

This we want to make abundantly clear, because this is the heart of

the matter -- the political opposition, the political differences. It was a completely disciplined act of political differences, one accepted before in our movement on numerous occasions. You've just heard enumerated a few of those occasions. For example, the YSA convention last year. Again, I'll say, yes, Comrade Lauren Charous, for example, presented a complete counterline on the floor of a public convention. There were not charges then. Dick also spoke along the same lines at the convention and no charges there either.

What's happened is that some very important changes have occurred in the movement since that convention, which reflect changes that have occurred in the economic crisis and in the labor movement. The buildup of the crisis of capitalism took a more extreme form in 1971: strikes increase recession was embarked on by Nixon, the intensification of the class struggle broke out in our own party with the tendency formed around the document "For a Proletarian Orientation." The objective events stood on the side of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency so that it gained a large amount of support. Objective events continue to develop in favor of the workingclass tendency, although that particular tendency has been formally dissolved. The working class has emerged an extremely powerful force in the face of the attacks by the ruling class and this deepens further the crisis

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in our party. As long as the leadership refuses to take up any struggle in the working class, as long as it adapts to petty-bourgeois movements of the period of the boom, it's fighting against the current of history. But just as the petty-bourgeoisie will not automatically place its future in the hands of the working class, so the leadership will not simply admit it was wrong.

We see the necessity to turn to the working class. It takes a process of discussion and clarification and it takes some time. But there's been a tendency on the part of the leadership to avoid discussion. They do this because they find themselves in a politically weak position as the economic crisis deepens, and even more so, especially so, now on the eve of the devaluation of the dollar. The leadership will resort to all sorts of tactics to attempt to prevent the class struggle from breaking out in the ranks of the party. But they cannot do this through principled political fights, not through a principled political fight, because they're trying to work against history itself.

I wonder, comrades. I wonder about Comrade Lovell speaking at the educational conference. Perhaps charges ought to be taken up against him for stating that August 15 was a historical event for the working class.

The leadership must organizationally attempt to remove physically

any political expression, no matter how marginal or distorted, of the movement of the working class. That's the true nature of the expulsion of the CT, the Communist Tendency. The action against Tom Cagle, Ralph Levitt and other comrades who hold oppositional views. That's the nature of the action against us.

In adcepting the presentation of our views in the YSA, we decided that that was not as important as membership and good standing and functioning in the party. So, irrespective of the decision of the trial body, at which we said we would submit to party discipline as Comrade McCann verified, although we felt such discipline completely unwarranted, we continue to feel that way. We informed Comrade Wulp that we were withdrawing our names from the YSA document. Comrade Wulp told us it was too late, That the "irretrievable acts" had already been done, i.e., the presentation and summary of the document in the YSA, but that he would inform the exec that we told him. What about this comrades? If the leadership were really aiming to protect the discipline of the party, those presentation of which the Executive Committee was fully aware, could have been prevented, simply by instructing us not to give them. But, no. What the exec wanted was not to preserve the discipline of the party, but to preserve the party from opposition, from political opposition, so they sat on their hands, and the

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at a second meeting a while later, at which I suppose new evidence of the irretrievable acts was admitted to slap a charge of disloyalty on us, and recommend our expulsion. If our signing that document was undisciplined, the comrades of the national office of the YSA are party members, many of them, why didn't they do something about it? Why didn't they hold up the publication until we could be contacted? In fact, one of the things that convinced us that it was permissible to collaborate on that document was the fact that no one approached us in any way about it, that it was published, in fact put on sale in public, at least at the NPAC convention I saw that it was on sale. I mean, if we submitted something as a discussion bulletin or an article for The Militant that concerned some question of security, for instance, party members in the national office would just delete it, or contact us about it, that this shouldn't be published, and what the consequences would be, and then any action we took would be clearcut, by the way. The leadership could have held up the document, notified us that it meant a violation of norms, show us that it is our responsibility to function in a loyal, disciplined way. But the leadership has a responsibility to notify comrades if things are out of line, if the comrades are out of line with their activity. It has been done in the past.

But instead of this, the leadership helped us, so to speak, they allow us to commit an act which we didn't know was wrong, which they felt was wrong, and then this is used to set us up, to take action against us. Is this in keeping with party norms? We thought we were correct, that is, within the bounds of discipline. And the silence of the national office confirmed it. But then there are these charges, and more charges, and rumors and accusations going on and on around us, going on behind our backs all in a very factional way.

As a case in point, we had a discussion with party members to try to clarify some questions we had. This is driving back with Studie and Geb from the NPAC convention. We discussed things with them very frankly and quite openly, as party comrades, and then we find the discussions to be published in the YSA discussion bulletin. And worse, it's completely inaccurate and distorted. That's not the point. We discussed things with comrades, questions about which we're trying to get clarity, and that's one of the reasons that we discussed them, and then we find a transcript of our conversation, considerably distorted, about to be published. We don't have anything to hide. We didn't hide anything in that discussion. But it's used in a factional way against us. All this factional business with no one ever telling us exactly what to do, with us saying at every point we would

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submit to discipline, yes we'd be glad to submit to discipline. This was the opposite of what we wanted. We didn't want any of this factional business. And we did get worried. We got worried because it was being turned into a factional situation. So we went to the organizer and told him that, regardless of what the party said, what their decision was, said we would withdraw, we had withdrawn our names from the document and there's a letter in the mail, if not received, to the national office to that effect. We heard from the comrade who wrote the document and we didn't tell him why we were withdrawing our names because we didn't want to put the party in a position of being responsible in the eyes of a non-party comrade. When we signed the document in the first place, we did it only on the condition that there would be no criticisms of the Socialist Workers Party in it.

The comrades who are familiar with the document know that that's the case. We didn't want the document to be a factional tool. We wanted to start an educational discussion in the YSA, about the question of making a real effort to recruit working class youth, in particular Black and minority youth. Our mistake is that such a document is too early. The YSA needs to go through some more extended experiences and development in the context of the new situation after August 15. Then it will be ready to discuss these questions. At this point, we can see from the response in

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the YSA that it's too early and that , given the crisis in the party, the document is being made into a factional tool. It's being made into factional hay instead of being an educational tool.

We told Comrade Tom Peterson this, that the document shouldn't be posed as a counterresolution, that it was not promoting educational discussion in the YSA, and that we were withdrawing our names from it. We didn't mention anything about the party to him. That's where we stand on the document. We wanted an educational discussion in the YSA and questions, questions that we're sure will be discussed and eventually adopted by the YSA and the party, that is creating an unhealthy situation and the party leadership is using it to set us up. We don't feel that this is just because of us, that especially here in Boston where there are a number of comrades with oppositional views, it's an attempt to stomp out any kind of opposition. These questions, whether or not we're expelled or whatever, are going to come up, and louder and again and again and again, until the party deals with them. This is the revolutionary party and it is, in our opinion, going to deal with these questions. Party comrades must not tolerate this bureaucratic maneuvering, this organizational maneuvering. There's been a very sharp turn in the party since that convention in Oberlin. A number of expulsions and charges. This is not the way to deal with the turn in the



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objective situation.

There are very serious problems facing the party now. They'll only be solved through principled political discussion. We'll submit, as we said several times before, to party decisions regarding our functioning in the YSA, including speaking against our document, if necessary, although we wouldn't want to do that. If the leadership were to succeed in its campaign of factional maneuvers at this time, and we were to be expelled, we'll reapply for membership to the party. No zooming letters off to the International. Nothing like that. We'll function in the YSA as if we were party members and with the same discipline as party members would be, and we'll reapply for readmission to the party. We'll work to recruit as many healthy youth, especially Black and minority youth, to the YSA and the SWP.

This is not something we want to do, but we will do it in the event of our expulsion. It's clear that this whole procedure has been an unwarranted waste of time for the branch, which could have been avoided very simply, but instead it has been blown up into a factional, organizational battle in order to intimidate oppositional ideas in the party.

Comrades should vote against the recommendation of the trial body.

) Vote to drop the charges, to retain Dick and myself as members in good standing of the Socialist Workers Party.