

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 18, February 6, 1976

Present: Barnes, Blackstock, Breitman, Garza, Gersh, D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Lund, Lyons, Seigle, Sheppard, Stapleton, Stone, Waters

Chair: Lyons

- AGENDA:
1. Debby Leonard Appeal
 2. Dallas Branch
 3. Antiracist Work
 4. Hard Times Conference
 5. Healy Smear Campaign
 6. World Movement
 7. Milwaukee Critical Support Proposal
 8. Districts, Locals, Branches
 9. Plenum Guests

1. DEBBY LEONARD APPEAL

D. Jenness reported on appeal by Debby Leonard of her censure by the Houston branch (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: The Political Committee rejects Comrade Debby Leonard's appeal of Jan. 13, 1976, and upholds the Dec. 21, 1975 decision of the Houston branch to "1) affirm the truth of the charge by Comrade Jill Fein against Comrade Debby Leonard; 2) repudiate Comrade Leonard's assertion that the charge is factionally motivated; and 3) to censure Comrade Leonard."

Carried.

2. DALLAS BRANCH

D. Jenness reported on request by five party members in Dallas that a branch be constituted in Dallas.

Discussion

Motion: That the Political Committee authorize the members in Dallas to constitute a party branch in that city.

Carried.

3. ANTIRACIST WORK

Sheppard reported on continuing escalation of racist activity in Boston and the need to continue national campaign of support to Black community there. He reported plans by NSCAR to hold its February 21 national steering committee meeting in Boston to map out an emergency response to this.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

4. HARD TIMES CONFERENCE

Stone reported (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

5. HEALY SMEAR CAMPAIGN

Waters reported.

The slanderous campaign opened by Healy against the SWP and those who have spoken out in a principled way against his lies and frame-ups has reached such grotesque proportions that we have no choice but to initiate a countercampaign in defense of the truth.

Among the first things we are obligated to do is talk with every person who can offer evidence on the nature of Healy's regime and the origins of his spy mania.

Discussion

Motion: To assign a committee of Jack Barnes, Joseph Hansen and Gus Horowitz to implement this and to empower them to coopt other SWP leaders as necessary.

Motion: To inform the United Secretariat of this decision.

Motions carried.

6. WORLD MOVEMENT

Barnes reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

7. MILWAUKEE CRITICAL SUPPORT PROPOSAL

D. Jenness reported on proposal by Milwaukee branch to give critical support to the Michael McGee campaign for Alderman from the first district of Milwaukee (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the proposal to give critical support to the Michael McGee campaign.

Carried.

8. DISTRICTS, LOCALS, BRANCHES

Barnes initiated discussion of structure and organization of Districts, Locals, and Branches in view of the new situation the party faces as it deepens the party turn and as prospects for recruitment and expansion of party activities grow.

Agreed: To send Political Committee members to visit branches to discuss our perspectives.

9. PLENUM GUESTS

Barnes moved to recommend to the National Committee that branch and local organizers be invited to the plenum on April 29-May 2.

Discussion

Carried.

Meeting Adjourned.

MATERIAL RELATED TO DEBBY LEONARD APPEAL

1. Charge by Jill Fein

December 14, 1975

I charge Comrade Debby Leonard with violating party discipline by not voting with the CLUW fraction at a meeting of Houston CLUW on December 3, 1975. This vote was on a line question concerning affirmative action.

Jill Fein
CLUW fraction director
Houston Branch

2. Minutes of Trial of Debby L. on charges brought before the Houston branch by Jill

17 Dec. 1975

Members of trial body present: Rick, Dan, Tom F.,
Becky, Stu, Jim, Pedro, Sas, Sara, Tom V.
Convened: 7:45 PM
Chair: Sara

1. Jill - Reads charge and explains the circumstances surrounding the alleged act of indiscipline cited in the charge.

Discussion - Dan, Jill, Pedro, Jill, Becky, Jill,
Dan, Jill, Tom V., Jill, Rick, Jill, Tom V., Jill,
Rick, Jill, Pedro, Jill, Becky, Jill, Pedro, Jill,
Dan, Jill, Rick, Jill.

2. Debby L. - Reads statement (attached).

Discussion: Dan, Debby, Tom F., Debby, Rick,
Debby, Sara, Debby, Becky, Debby, Tom F.,
Debby, Tom V., Debby, Becky, Debby, Pedro,
Debby, Stu, Debby, Dan, Debby, Pedro, Debby,
Tom F., Debby, Tom V., Debby, Stu, Debby,
Tom V., Debby, Tom F., Debby, Dan, Debby,
Stu, Debby, Tom V., Debby, Tom F., Debby,
Stu, Debby.

3. Diane - Reports on events at CLUW fraction meeting and CLUW meeting on December 3.

Discussion: Pedro, Diane, Jim, Diane, Dan, Diane,
Tom F., Diane, Pedro, Diane, Becky, Diane,
Tom F., Diane, Rick, Diane, Tom V., Diane, Sas,
Diane, Pedro, Diane, Tom F., Diane, Rick, Diane.

4. Discussion among trial body: Stu, Rick, Sara, Stu,
Tom F.

5. Jill. Discussion: Pedro, Jill, Tom V., Jill, Rick,
Jill, Tom F., Jill, Jim, Jill, Becky, Jill, Tom F.,
Jill, Stu, Jill, Pedro, Jill, Stu, Jill, Becky, Jill,
Dan, Jill, Tom F., Jill, Pedro, Jill, Tom F., Jill,
Stu, Jill, Rick, Jill, Tom F., Jill.

6. Diane. Discussion: Stu, Diane, Tom F., Diane.

7. Debby. Discussion: Becky, Debby, Tom F., Debby,
Tom V., Debby, Stu, Debby, Tom F., Debby,

Rick, Debby, Sara, Debby, Pedro, Debby, Tom F.,
Debby, Stu, Debby, Tom F., Debby, Stu, Debby,
Tom F., Debby.

8. Discussion among trial body:

Dan: Motion that she is guilty of charge (later withdrawn) Stu, Dan, Tom V., Pedro, Sara,
Tom V., Tom F., Tom V., Stu, Sara, Tom V.,
Tom F., Stu

Vote on Debby's motion that charges are disproportionate for the act: 0 for; 10 against.

Vote on Jill's motion that Debby did carry out an act of indiscipline: 10 for; 0 against.

Tom V: Motion to censure Debby L for the action described in the charge. Dan, Stu, Sara, Jim,
Pedro, Tom F., Pedro, Sara, Becky, Pedro,
Becky, Dan, Tom V., Stu.

Vote on motion to censure: 10 for; 0 against.

Stu: Motion to repudiate Debby's assertion that this charge is being made or that this action is being taken because she is a member of a minority faction; none of the evidence presented to this body supports this assertion. Vote on Stu's motion: 10 for; 0 against.

Dan: Motion that Tom V. report to the branch for the trial body. (There was no opposition to the motion.)

Rick, Jim, Dan, Jim, Stu, Dan, Jim, Rick, Tom V.,
Pedro, Stu, Tom F., Tom V., Sara, Jim, Sas, Dan,
Stu, Sara, Tom F., Tom V.,

Adjourned: 10:45 PM

s/ Tom Vernier

3. Statement by Debby Leonard to the Houston Trial Committee

Houston, Texas
December 17, 1975

Let me state right off that I made a stupid lapse by not raising my hand on the vote on the SWP's line on discriminatory layoffs at the Houston CLUW meeting of December 3, 1975, especially since I have voted for this position, despite my disagreement, at a number of other CLUW meetings. However, I view a formal charge and a trial as a very serious procedure in the SWP. To bring charges against me which, if I am found guilty, will result in, at the least, a formal censure, is totally out of line with my action at this one local CLUW meeting in the face of my consistent record of collaboration and implementation of the Party's line in CLUW.

In my 13 years in the Trotskyist movement, in my 11 years in the SWP, in 4 locals and branches I have never seen a comrade brought to trial on such a flimsy charge -- a fabrication, a charge which I don't accept as

a valid reason for a trial. There is no precedent for this method of operation! In any number of instances of this type of mistake of omission, not commission, comrades have been reprimanded by the head of the fraction, not brought up on charges.

During the period preceding and immediately following the December 3rd date in question, I have been in especially close collaboration with the National CLUW fraction. The SWP judged my participation in National CLUW significant enough, as the only SWPer elected to the National CLUW Steering Committee, and trustworthy enough, to partially subsidize my trip to Chicago for the CLUW National Steering Committee meeting of October 17-19. While at that meeting, I consulted by phone with the head of the National CLUW fraction and proposed necessary collaboration with other opponent groups present on an Alternate Agenda Proposal. That Alternate Agenda was the one proposed by the Houston CLUW Caucus, written largely by myself. At the National CLUW fraction meeting, in Chicago on November 2, right after the CLUW National Coordinating Committee where I played a leading role in fighting for adoption of the Houston Alternate Agenda, I proposed forming a caucus based on the Houston Alternate Agenda. This tactic was adopted by the Party, after discussion with the Political Committee.

During this whole period I have been in close contact with the head of the National CLUW fraction, who authorized me, at Party expense, to make phone calls to leading CLUW women around the country--which I have done--to build the Houston CLUW Caucus meeting at the CLUW National Convention in Detroit--which was a successful meeting.

Yet, during this period, I did not hear one word from Comrade Jill Fein, the head of the Houston CLUW fraction, about my behavior at the December 3rd Houston CLUW meeting. Nor did any comrade, locally or nationally, suggest, during this whole period, that I was violating discipline in any way. If Comrade Fein is serious about this charge, she has been remiss in not calling it to the attention of the head of the National CLUW fraction at the CLUW Convention December 5-7 in Detroit, where I was appointed a floor leader, a member of the National CLUW fraction steering committee and a member of the Houston Caucus Steering Committee. It is difficult to accept the serious nature of this charge in that light.

Comrades, I think this trial must be interpreted as a political victimization of myself, a loyal Party member for over 10 years, and that it must be seen as an attack based on my acknowledged support of the IMT. This is a party-wrecking operation and sets a dangerous precedent for the right of a loyal tendency to exist in

the SWP. I am opposed to Party-wrecking; I am opposed to this method of operation and I urge you to reconsider.

s/ Debby Leonard

4. Section from Houston Branch Minutes, Dec. 21, 1975

Socialist Workers Party Branch Meeting
Dec, 21, 1975
Convened at 7:01 PM
Chair: Pat

4. Report from Trial Body: Tom V.
 - A. Read SWP Constitution concerning the procedure to be followed.
 - B. Outlined the events and actions of the trial body.
Motion: Affirm the truth of the charge by Jill against Debby L.
Motion: Repudiate Debby's assertion that charge is factionally motivated.
Motion: To censure Debby L.
Discussion: Debby L., Ed, Debby V., Pat, Jane, Ed, Tom L., Debby L., Diane, Debby V., John S., Stu, Arturo, Debby L., Tom V.
Motion: Vote on these separately.
Motion: Vote by hand.
Vote on first motion: 34 for, 2 opposed, and no abstentions,
Vote on second motion: 34 for, 2 opposed, and no abstentions,
Vote on third motion: 34 for, 2 opposed, and no abstentions,
Approved.

5. Report to Houston Branch on Trial of Debby Leonard by Tom Vernier, Dec, 21, 1976

Last week the branch voted to set up a trial body to hear charges brought by Jill Fein against Debby Leonard. The body was set up according to the constitution of the party, Article VIII, Section 3, which was read at that time. I'll read it again:

"Section 3. Charges against any member shall be made in writing and the accused member shall be furnished with a copy in advance of the trial. Charges shall be filed and heard in the branch to which the member belongs, or in a higher body which may decide to act directly in the case. Charges filed before the branch shall be considered by the Branch Executive Committee (or a subcommittee elected by it) at a meeting to which the accused member is summoned. The Branch Executive Committee shall submit a recommendation to be acted upon by the membership of the branch. Charges considered by higher bodies of the Party shall, however, be acted upon by said bodies."

The trial body that we elected last week was composed of the branch executive committee plus Sas Scoggins. The trial body met on the 17th of December, and the members of the trial body who were present were Rick, Dan, Tom F., Becky, Stu, Jim, Pedro, Sas, Sara, and Tom V.

Present as witnesses at the trial were Jill, Debbie, and Diane.

The trial body discussed among themselves the charges that have been brought; they questioned the three witnesses about the charges; and we have reached a decision on a recommendation to bring before the branch tonight.

I want to make clear the procedure that we followed. After Jill decided to bring the charge before the branch, which is a very serious decision for a comrade to make, she talked to the organizer about taking this action. After discussing it with Stu they decided it would be a good idea to have an informal meeting with Debby, against whom the charges were being brought, and myself, who was acting organizer at the time the events took place that led to the charge, and Becky, who is head of the CLUW fraction which is involved with the charge.

We had this meeting just to try to get the facts straight, to see if there was disagreement about what the facts were. Perhaps it was just a confusion and we could avoid this serious step of having a trial. After the meeting the charges were brought to the executive committee who made the recommendation that was brought to the branch last week. The branch voted to set up a trial body, and the trial body has met, and we're bringing our recommendation in now.

I'll just read the charge again so that comrades know exactly what it says. "I charge Comrade Debby Leonard with violating party discipline by not voting with the CLUW fraction at a meeting of Houston CLUW on December 3, 1975. This vote was on a line question concerning affirmative action."

During the trial it became clear that there is no dispute at all over the immediate facts surrounding the charge. At the CLUW meeting that was held Dec. 3, there was a vote taken on the question of affirmative action. Essentially the vote was a question of either for our line or against it. Nobody disagrees with whether there was a vote called or not; and as the vote was taken Debby did not vote. There is also no dispute over that. So the job of the trial body was not to decide if the allegation specifically was true itself; it was to determine the context and to decide what, if any, action to take.

The first thing we attempted to decide was why this event took place, why Debby did not vote. The first possibility we considered was that she didn't know a vote was being taken. Sometimes that happens in meetings that are moving rapidly; a vote happens and you don't realize or know exactly what the motion is; you don't know if you're voting for or against the motion at once, so you don't vote.

That was not the case at this meeting. Both the discussion leading up to the vote and the vote itself were very clear, very slow and methodical. That doesn't provide an explanation for why Debby didn't vote.

The second reason we considered was that she didn't understand the importance of the vote and why it was necessary for comrades in our fraction to vote on this question. I'll go more into this later, but it was clear to us from Diane's testimony who participated in the fraction meeting and who was also at the meeting itself, and Jill who is the CLUW fraction head, that the discussion in the fraction before the CLUW meeting had focused almost entirely on the discussion and vote that were going to be taking place at the CLUW meeting the next weekend. The goal the fraction set for itself at this meeting was to have a political discussion on the issue of affirmative action and other issues, and if there was not much discussion against the position that our comrades put forward, if it looked like we could carry an authoritative vote putting Houston CLUW on record in favor of affirmative action, that we should do so. That's what we wanted to get out of the meeting, a good discussion and an authoritative vote. We didn't want to divide it, but if it looked like we could get a unanimous or almost-unanimous vote, that's what we wanted to do.

So it was an important vote.

Now, Debby submitted a statement to the trial body which I'm not going to read in its entirety although I'll quote from it several times. It's available if comrades want to read it.

Debby's explanation for this event is that, her phrase is, that she "made a stupid lapse" by not raising her hand for the vote. I may seem silly at first to inquire what a "stupid lapse" is, but we thought it was important, because it could make a difference between whether this action was conscious or not conscious, whether she was just thinking about something else or whether she decided not to vote on this vote; whether it was stupid because she should have been thinking about it or stupid because she was breaking discipline.

Debby would not define this phrase of "making a

stupid lapse" any further than that for the trial body. What the trial body was forced to conclude from the evidence we heard was that this withholding of a vote for a line question on which the SWP position is clear was a conscious act, one which Debby now regards as unwise, "stupid," but nonetheless a conscious act. This conclusion was agreed upon unanimously by the trial body.

In her statement which she submitted to the trial body, Debby takes the position that although the action on which she is brought up on charges for is correct, that formally bringing charges and having a trial over the issue is, in her words, "totally out of line." She also used the phrase in her testimony that it was "out of proportion" with what she had done. And she says later on in the statement that, "It is difficult to accept the serious nature of this charge."

I want to take up for a few minutes whether this procedure is totally out of line or not, whether or not it is making a mountain out of a molehill, or whether or not the branch faces a serious question that the branch is obligated to take up in the way we did take it up.

Number one, the question that's involved here relates to trade union work that the party is carrying out. While everyone would agree that whatever we're doing, whether it's selling the Militant or cleaning out the headquarters, or whatever we're doing, it's necessary to maintain a disciplined, serious attitude towards all our activity. At the same time, trade union work is one of the most difficult areas that the party is involved in. The opposition we face in the unions is very severe, and it is very tightly organized. It means that if a small group, which the SWP is, expects to make any gains inside the movement, we have to act as a unit; when the party makes a decision in order for that decision to be seriously implemented, we have to be able to utilize every single one of our forces to carry it out, and there can't be any hedging. Because if you slip just a little bit, it can be more than just a little slip in the end result. Little errors in a seemingly unimportant meeting can be magnified into large mistakes.

And also in the union movement tight organization is necessary because of the bureaucratic methods of the opposition. The bureaucrats are not just strong; they're also bureaucrats. They try to keep us from speaking at meetings. At the CLUW convention some of the comrades found this out for the first time in a very graphic way. They were physically prevented from speaking at microphones.

The party, of course, has always taken its work in the trade unions very seriously and considered the implementation of its line in the union movement much more important than the pride or opinions or anything

else regarding an individual member. The work of the party comes first. This is true not only of the union movement, but since this is what is involved here, it makes the problem more serious.

One example that I would refer comrades to for the party's attitude toward work in the unions and the discipline of individual members in relation to that work is the example that probably all of us studied shortly after we joined the SWP. It's cited in The History of American Trotskyism by James P. Cannon. It's the example of B. J. Fields who became the leader of a union struggle in New York. Now, I'm not citing this example to compare Debby to B. J. Fields or to say her action was similar. But the relation between the party and the implementation of its line and the individual who is responsible for carrying out the line is the same. I encourage comrades to reread that example.

B. J. Fields was a leader of a big strike in New York that was making headlines every day, and he was also a member of the SWP, and everyone knew it. Nonetheless, because he broke discipline the party held a trial and expelled him right in the middle of the strike for his actions. Cannon says that there were two reactions to that decision the party made. One was that the party was cutting itself off from this big strike and a potential new growth of the party. Cannon said that reaction wasn't important. The important reaction, a serious reaction, was that the Trotskyists mean business. If they say they are going to do something they mean it, and if somebody doesn't go along they don't just let it slide; they take some action.

Now, what was the point of this vote at the CLUW meeting on Dec. 3 of 1975? If it wasn't a very important vote then perhaps what we're doing now is totally out of line. However, it was an important vote. The political question that's involved, the one of affirmative action, is one that has been one of the central themes of the Militant and especially in our work in CLUW, fighting for adoption of a position on affirmative action.

The Houston Caucus in CLUW, which this was a meeting of on Dec. 3, became a sort of focal point for the opposition in CLUW to the bureaucrats. The role it was to play at the convention, which it was taking on in the weeks and days before the convention, made it an important group inside CLUW nationally, and what it did on any question, any decision it took, became all the more important because of that. So whether or not Houston CLUW went on record for or against affirmative action was an extremely important development for our party and one that we took great interest in.

One other thing about this particular meeting that

makes it so important, besides the political question, was who was there. It wasn't a very large meeting. I think there were twelve people there. There were political opponents there. At least one and maybe two members of the October League were there. Several lower level union officials were there, and there were independents whom we are trying to recruit. They were all there at this meeting. Every one of them knew who the SWP members there were, and they were watching. It was apparent to them that we were divided, that we didn't act as a unit at that meeting.

This Dec. 3 meeting was not just a routine meeting of CLUW in Houston. It was a special meeting that Jill thought it was necessary to call before the convention so that Houston CLUW could discuss this issue and take a position on it. That's why this meeting was called in the first place. The point of the meeting was to discuss affirmative action and take a position on it. This was the first time Houston CLUW voted on this question. There had never been a vote before. It was the first chance to stand up and say what our position was and vote on it.

The discussion that we've had inside the SWP on the question that was voted on at this meeting, the question of affirmative action, is one that is familiar to all of us here. We discussed it this summer in the Houston branch. In fact, we had a debate on this question during the discussion. Jill presented the position that is now the party's position, and Debby argued against that position, against our present line on affirmative action.

It's extremely important to make the point that Debby is entitled to have that opinion on the line of affirmative action. She doesn't have to agree with it; if she disagrees with it we encourage her to develop her disagreements, sharpen them, and try to convince the party she's right. However, no matter who you are, whether you have disagreements or not with the line that the party establishes, you have to carry out the line, regardless of your opinion of it. That's elementary democratic centralism.

Debby's functioning in relation to this line within CLUW has not been exemplary. But prior to the incident that is under discussion tonight Debby had not formally violated discipline. As I've said, Debby has her opinion on the line, but the fraction, the CLUW fraction, expressed another opinion, and that was the opinion that should have been implemented by everyone at that meeting.

The fraction's opinion was that a discussion on affirmative action, a vote taken on it, if it could be an authoritative vote, which it was, was that a special

meeting of CLUW should be called so that this discussion and vote could take place. That is the opinion of the fraction, and that's the opinion that should have been carried out by everyone. Debby did not carry it out.

Another aspect of this came up during the trial. I want to read the last paragraph of Debby's statement, which we think is extremely serious: "Comrades, I think this trial must be interpreted as a political victimization of myself, a loyal Party member for over ten years, and that it must be seen as an attack based on my acknowledged support of the IMT. This is a Party-wrecking operation and sets a dangerous precedent for the right of a loyal tendency to exist in the SWP. I am opposed to this method of operation and I urge you to reconsider."

We thought it was important to take this up. Was this trial a factional attack on a supporter of the IMT or not? The SWP has a long history of respect for comrades who hold minority opinions. As you read and study the history of the party you find example after example where we have bent over backwards to avoid placing organizational obstacles in the way of political discussion. The excessive patience of the Houston branch in particular could be cited as one of these examples, during our period here of dealing with the Internationalist Tendency in this branch, where blatant violations of discipline by members of the IT were overlooked by the branch in order to have a full political discussion.

Debby has been and of course will be able to continue to express her views inside the party. She certainly has done so up to this point, and nothing is going to be proposed that will limit that right in the future. The only way the party could limit the right of an individual to raise their disagreements during pre-convention discussion periods or other times decided by the party would be to expel them. As long as we have comrades inside the party we want them to have their own ideas and express them, whether they agree with everybody or not. That's not being brought into question by this trial.

The reason that this charge was brought, and the reason that the trial body took it seriously, is that this charge provides a very simple case of the application of democratic centralism. We have a very specific case of an act of indiscipline against the fraction that was carrying out the line established by the convention. This action, that is, not voting on a question that the party has a position on, has nothing to do with Debby's ideas or opinions. It has to do with what she did at a meeting or did not do at a meeting. At the same time we make it clear that minorities have rights inside the SWP.

We also have to reaffirm the rights of the majority and the responsibilities of a minority that go along with its rights. Very simply stated they are that when the majority makes a decision everyone carries it out. The majority has the right to see its line implemented. Individuals cannot make decisions which go against that principle, and if they do it has to be recognized.

The trial body wants to bring three motions before the branch which we ask you to vote in favor of:

The first motion is to affirm the truth of the charge that Jill has brought before the branch which I read previously. There was no dispute at all over the truth of the charge by anyone at all.

The second motion (I'll read this slowly) is to repudiate Debby's serious assertion that this charge is being made or that this action is being taken because she is a member of a minority faction. None of the evidence presented to the trial body supports this assertion. We want the branch to adopt these two motions.

The third motion that we bring before the branch is a motion to censure Debby Leonard for the action described in this charge. Let me explain what that means. First of all, let me say what it does not mean. A censure is not an attack on Debby Leonard. It is not an attack on her record of building the party. It's not an attack on the contributions she has made to party-building in general or CLUW work in particular; that's not in dispute.

A censure is not a restriction of rights inside the party, nor a restriction on activities inside or outside of the party. It's not a reduction in membership status. It's none of these things. It is a formal warning, an action of disapproval taken by the branch. The purpose of the action is to say in the strongest terms possible, that this kind of activity will not be tolerated.

The trial body discussed two things that we hope to achieve by taking this action. The first is to establish very clearly a norm that perhaps was in question. Do you vote on a question when you disagree with it? The answer we're suggesting is a very straight-forward, yes, you do. The party has a line, and when it comes to a vote, you vote for it.

The second thing we hoped to achieve is more positive. And that is that by calling this to the attention of the branch and taking action on it, we can start over again, wipe the slate clean and go forward to more productive, more collaborative, more fruitful work in CLUW and other areas that Comrade Leonard is assigned to.

6. Appeal from Debby Leonard to Political Committee

Houston, Texas
January 13, 1976

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
New York, N. Y.

Comrades,

This communication is in the form of an appeal of the formal censure recorded against me by the Houston SWP based on the enclosed charge by Comrade Jill Fein (which must be understood to mean that I did not raise my hand to vote at all at this meeting). My statement to the trial body, which met on December 17, is also enclosed, and I reaffirm that statement as the basis for my appeal.

The Houston SWP meeting of December 21 voted the formal censure. Comrade Tom Vernier put forward three separate motions on the question: 1) that the charge by Jill is correct; 2) to repudiate Debby's serious assertion that this charge is being made or that this action is being taken because she is a member of a minority faction; none of the evidence presented supports this assertion; 3) Debby should be censured.

All of these motions passed the Houston branch, after considerable discussion during which a number of questions were raised. However, the only votes against any of the motions were those of the two IMT supporters at the meeting.

I am appealing to the Political Committee to overturn this formal censure of me by the Houston branch, and to make a statement regarding motion 2. This motion raises some dangerous concepts, namely that I am a "member," not a "supporter," of the IMT, an international group, and that the IMT is a "faction," not a "tendency."

I am particularly concerned about motion 2, as well as my censure, because, in fact, I believe the charges, the trial and the formal censure to be factionally motivated on the part of the LTF. In fact, since the organization of the LTF and its assumption of every leadership post in the SWP, nationally and locally, the SWP has not been operating as a democratic centralist party with room for tendencies and factions to function but is, in effect, operating as a faction.

Despite my serious differences with the LTF over the past period, several of which were articulated in my contributions to the last SWP pre-Convention discussion, I have continually functioned in a loyal disciplined

manner. I have brought workers from my job and women from CLUW to a recent SWP Campaign function, have exposed them to the Militant and have brought women from my job to CLUW and to the December 1975 CLUW National Convention. I have carried out this activity without violating the SWP line on CLUW, with which I disagree. My record has compared most favorably with Houston LTF comrades in CLUW in this activity. Yet, soon after I announced my support of the IMT to the Houston Branch, over a year ago, I was removed as head of the Houston CLUW fraction. Since that time I have been criticized at Houston CLUW fraction meetings by the LTF head of the Houston CLUW fraction for my personal relationships with independent CLUW women; none of this criticism, which was upheld at the time by the Houston branch organizer, has stood the test of time or politics. However, because of this unjustified attack, and because of my differences with the SWP line on CLUW, I have discussed with the head of the Houston CLUW fraction and the Houston branch organizer my willingness to drop my national CLUW organizational assignments. However, this proposal was not acted on and I continued to play a major role in CLUW in collaboration with the SWP National CLUW fraction until the December 1975 CLUW National Convention. Only at that Convention, after consultation with the SWP National CLUW fraction head, did I reject nomination for National CLUW office.

With a record such as mine in the SWP and in CLUW, locally and nationally, I submit that an LTF comrade would have been reprimanded by the fraction head--not brought up on charges--for a single action such as the one I omitted to commit (I didn't vote at all) at the December 3rd Houston CLUW meeting. This meeting was not even attended by the Chairwoman of Houston CLUW nor several other Houston delegates to the National CLUW Convention; it was a small, not very decisive meeting and, as I understood it, the Houston CLUW fraction also saw it that way. But, because the SWP leadership, locally and nationally, is a faction, my alleged indiscipline was never even brought to my attention until the charges had been drawn up. Furthermore, in a most irregular procedure, I was summoned to an informal meeting of the Branch organizer, the CLUW fraction head and two other comrades, allegedly to discuss some questions about my CLUW work and only informed, at my insistence, at the end of the meeting, that I was being brought up on charges and would be tried.

I find this local trial and conviction, considering my overall record in CLUW and in the SWP, to be virtually unprecedented. To me it is an ominous sign as regards the ability of a loyal dissident tendency to play any role in the SWP--or even exist within the Party. I take a formal censure very seriously, as must any serious and loyal Party member, and, for this reason, and because

of the international implications inherent in my support to the IMT in the face of this censure, I am appealing to the Political Committee to reverse the Houston SWP's censure and make known its stand on motion 2.

Comradely,
s/ Debby Leonard

cc: Berta and Bob Langston
Ernest Mandel

7. Letter from Doug Jenness to Debby Leonard

14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y.
January 24, 1976

Debby Leonard
Houston Texas

Dear Comrade Leonard,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Jan. 13 to the Political Committee appealing your censure by the Houston branch.

Your appeal will be placed before the Political Committee at its next meeting.

We note that you sent copies of your letter to Berta and Bob Langston and Ernest Mandel, but none to the Houston branch.

We are forwarding a copy to the Houston organizer.

Comradely,
s/ Doug Jenness
SWP National Office

cc: Houston branch organizer

8. Letter from Doug Jenness to Houston Branch Organizer

14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y.
January 24, 1976

Stu Singer
Houston

Dear Comrade Singer,

Enclosed is a copy of comrade Debby Leonard's letter to the Political Committee appealing the decision of the majority of the Houston branch on Dec. 21 to censure her.

This means that the Political Committee now has:
1) Jill Fein's Dec. 14 statement bringing charges against Comrade Leonard;

2) the minutes of the trial body which met on Dec. 17 (including Comrade Leonard's statement to the trial body);

3) the minutes of the Dec. 21 Houston branch meeting where comrade Leonard was censured;

4) Comrade Leonard's Jan. 13 appeal to the Political Committee of the branch decision.

If there are any other material related to this matter, we'd appreciate receiving them immediately.

Comradely,
s/ Doug Jenness
SWP National Office

9. Letter from Houston Branch Organizer to Political Committee

Houston SWP
January 28, 1976

SWP Political Committee

Dear Comrades,

In regard to the censure of Comrade Debby Leonard by the Houston branch and her appeal of that censure, I would like to make the following points:

1. There was no disagreement by Comrade Debby Leonard or by any other comrade on the CLUW fraction about the facts of this case. Comrade Debby Leonard made this explicitly clear in her statement to the trial body: that the facts contained in the charge are correct.

2. In the course of the trial Comrade Debby Leonard herself made a very telling point about the significance of her participation in the CLUW vote in question. In her opinion, two of the independent CLUW activists who abstained on the vote would have voted with us if they had not been confused by Comrade

Debby Leonard, who is a recognized spokesperson for the SWP, not voting. Since this is the opinion of Comrade Debby Leonard herself, it weighs in favor of the branch decision to censure her for a serious violation of discipline.

3. It has never been reported to us that the IMT has a line on the question of what motions to raise in the Houston chapter of CLUW or whether or not comrades are required to vote in CLUW meetings according to decisions made by the fraction and the branch.

4. The effect of the trial and the motion to censure Comrade Debby Leonard is to reiterate and enforce the basic norms of functioning for members of a democratic-centralist party in a fraction working in an outside organization.

5. The Houston branch has never restricted Comrade Debby Leonard from expressing her political point of view about CLUW or any other topics, whether or not her point of view reflects the line of the IMT. During pre-convention discussion a special debate was organized to give Com. Debby Leonard extra time to present her view.

6. Comrade Debby Leonard has asserted that the charge and the censure were factionally motivated. The trial body took this assertion seriously. There was no evidence and no convincing argument made to substantiate this charge. A motion was passed by the trial body and by the branch indicating this.

Comradely,
s/ Stu Singer
Houston Branch Organizer

Report on Hard Times Conference

by Betsey Stone, February 6, 1976

The main group responsible for organizing the "Hard Times" conference of 2,000 in Chicago on Jan. 31-Feb. 1 was the Prarie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC). The PFOC is a group whose leadership consists of ex-SDSers who were on the Weatherpeople side of the 1969 SDS split but who did not go underground. These people now consider themselves to be "Marxist Leninists" and claim to have a goal of working with other socialist groups to create a "new communist party." They seem to have some disagreements with the CP and the Maoists, but exactly what the politics of their new party would be remain undefined.

Working along with the PFOC in organizing the conference was the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) and CASA. Youth Against War and Fascism and the Workers World Party also intervened heavily in the conference and helped to build it. Outside of the PFOC, the Marcyites, and the PSP, there was no group on the left which had large numbers of people present or played a big role.

The stated aim of the conference as projected by the Prarie Fire people was to "unite working people" to "work out a common program and campaign of action to fight back against the hard times." Of course, the conference did not achieve anything like this. The people who actually attended the conference were, in the main, radicals. They represented a spectrum of small left groups, underground papers, radical publishers, women's groups, tenants organizations, prisoner's groups, Black groups, etc. The resolutions passed by the conference also turned out, as one would expect, not to represent a program for how to fight hard times, but a hodge-podge of positions reflecting what the particular radicals at this conference could agree on.

A "Hard Times Bill of Rights" was presented for ratification, but it was decided that adoption of the document should be put off to some undetermined time due to the many criticisms and suggestions for changing it that came out of the workshops. The "Bill of Rights" was a watered-down variation of our "Bill of Rights for Working People" which left out, among other things, the right of Blacks to self-determination and our position on independent working class political action.

There was very little discussion at the conference of the 1976 elections, since this question would have divided the conference immediately. A representative of the National Black Assembly was allowed to speak toward the end of the conference and the People's Party presidential candidate Margarat Wright also spoke, but only after she ran down the aisle shouting that the conference organizers were refusing to let her, "a poor Black woman," have her say.

A whole number of action proposals and resolutions on other questions were passed. One of the actions being pushed by the conference organizers which has the potential for involving large numbers was the PSP-initiated July 4th demonstration in Philadelphia for a "bicentennial without colonies." Two other demonstrations of a more vague character were projected for April 15 and May 1, demanding "jobs for all" and the use of tax money for social services and not war. Another demonstration was called for November 1 which is to be in support of the five Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners.

A resolution calling for actions against imperialist intervention in Angola was also passed. The resolution included support for the MPLA's struggle against "the U.S., South Africa, and the neo-colonial forces of the FNLA and UNITA."

The conference also went on record in support of NOW's national ERA march slated for Springfield, Illinois, in May. We played an important role in getting this passed and had an opportunity to talk with many people at the conference about the ERA and the importance of joining this fight. Judi Rossi, a chairperson of UAW 152 Women's Committee in Chicago, and Marge Jindrick, co-chair of UAW Region 4 Women's Committee and a convenor of CLUW, were the two original sponsors of the ERA resolution.

Although it was clear that many of the groups present, including the PFOC, support the use of busing to desegregate the schools, this issue was not included among those voted on by the conference due, again, to the obvious disagreements on busing by conference participants and the lack of understanding of the conference organizers of the importance of this issue.

A Black caucus was formed which threatened to walk out of the conference if they were not allowed to present a series of speakers with their grievances. The caucus criticized the "Hard Times Bill of Rights" for not including a separate section with the demands of Black people and for not calling for self-determination for Blacks. Caucus speakers did not mention busing and the only concrete proposal for action in the written resolution submitted by the caucus was to support the "struggle for independence in the Cosh District of Mississippi as led by the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa."

The response of the predominantly white audience to the intervention of the Black caucus seemed to me to be a throw-back to the SDS of the 1960s. They clapped and cheered for the various criticisms, even when these criticisms contradicted each other, and seemed to be overcome with a great deal of liberal guilt. There was no dissent or discussion on the proposal on the Republic of New Africa and it seemed obvious that most of those present had very little involvement with or understanding of the Black struggle.

A national "Hard Times Board" played a role of a steering committee for the conference, and this same Board was elected to constitute itself as a continuations committee. The Board consists of a representative of Prarie Fire, the PSP, CASA, YAWF, the American Indian Movement, the Republic of New Africa, the Black Panther Party, Yvonne Golden of the San Francisco Black Teachers Caucus, Pete Kelly of the UAW United National Caucus, Jim Haughton of Fight Back in New York, Wilbur Huddoch of the United Black Workers, Maggie Kuhn of the Grey Panthers, and others.

A spectrum of "notables" spoke at the conference, including AIM leaders Vernon Bellecourt and a representative of the Nation of Islam. Irwin Silber of the Guardian appeared as part of a "tribunal" indicting capitalism where he was assigned the role of a "judge" who weighed evidence but said little. The Guardian did not seem to be involved in organizing the conference and has carried several articles critical of it.

Supporters of the SWP election campaign spoke in various workshops and passed out large quantities of the "Bill of Rights for Working People." We had a large literature table and sold \$80 of literature, about 75 Militants, and got 31 names of people on our mailing list.

There were only a few representatives of SCAR at the conference, which was unfortunate because I think with a larger intervention SCAR supporters could have helped educate people at the conference on the busing question and perhaps picked up a few more supporters for SCAR.

Given the openness of many participants at the conference to our ideas, not only on socialism but on other issues such as the ERA, I think we should continue to keep on top of what this "Hard Times" Board is doing, talking with those who come around their actions and participating in those actions such as July 4 in Philadelphia, that we can support.

MATERIAL RELATED TO MILWAUKEE CRITICAL SUPPORT PROPOSAL

February 3, 1976

Political Committee

Dear Comrades,

The Milwaukee Branch voted last night to recommend to the Political Committee that we give critical support to the campaign of Michael McGee for Alderman from the first district of Milwaukee. Enclosed are copies of the reports given to the branch by members of the E. C., as well as material on the campaign and tapes of the reports and Branch discussion. The vote in the Executive Committee was seven for critical support, one against, and one person not present to vote. During the discussion, however, this latter member expressed support for the position of critical support, and voted accordingly in the Branch. The vote in the Branch was 25 in favor of critical support, 2 opposed, one abstaining. The same vote was recorded on approval of the majority and minority reports given to the Branch.

The Michael McGee campaign is formally non-partisan, as are all municipal campaigns in Milwaukee. The Branch is in agreement that as far as we can determine this campaign is in fact independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. The dispute is over whether or not it is tactically wise given McGee's position on desegregation and busing. McGee and a member of his campaign have been quoted twice in recent papers in opposition to Judge Reynold's ruling for desegregation of Milwaukee schools. McGee spoke against this ruling in a meeting of a subcommittee of the school board held shortly after the decision.

We are presently working on a proposed statement by Bernie Senter to express our critical support, should you decide to approve it. The basic outline is given in my report. It would support and urge a vote for McGee on the basis of his independence, but would urge him to reverse his anti-busing position in the interests of advancing the struggle for Black liberation and a united defense against the racist offensive developing here. We also intend to invite McGee to speak at our campaign rally February 14.

Please contact me if there is any further information you need.

Comradely,
s/ Bob Schwarz
Milwaukee Branch

Leaflet for Michael McGee campaign:

LIBERATE YOUR MINDS IN '76
VOTE MICHAEL R. MCGEE ALDERMAN 1st DISTRICT
APRIL, 1976
"THE BALLOT OR THE BULLET"

Platform:

(1) UNEMPLOYMENT - We feel this is our number one enemy. It is said that Milwaukee has only 11.0% unemployment but in our community, the rate is somewhere near 48.9%! We feel meaningful jobs must be developed.

(2) HOUSING - We feel that slum and absentee landlords must be made to either fix up houses in our community or they should face criminal charges. When you look at the lives that are lost each year due to FIRES, something has to be done.

(3) DE-CENTRALIZATION OF SCHOOL BOARD - We believe that in order for our school problems to be solved, each community must take steps to become more involved. De-centralization would mean that instead of one school board, each cluster or district would have its own board, elected by that particular community with lots of student input.

(4) COMMUNITY CONTROL OF POLICE - Due to the history of the conflicts and problems that our community has faced with the present police system, it is only reasonable that we have our own police department. By this, we mean that each district police station will be controlled by the people that live within that particular district's boundaries, who will be elected at large from that community. These boards will be charged with (a) hiring, (b) firing, and (c) setting policy for each station. We feel this is truly the democratic process.

(5) COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS - We feel the city should provide, free of charge, health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but will also develop preventiv medical programs and that health care be taken to the people. A good example of this is the People's Free Health Center.

(6) TAXES MUST BE LOWERED - We believe that the poor grow poorer and the rich grow richer. We mean that taxes should be paid according to income and that large corporations must begin to pay their fair share.

(7) COMMUNITY WELFARE CENTERS - We feel that our welfare system must be reevaluated and new ways must be found to deal with this old problem. We believe that welfare centers in each district would be one step.

(8) SENIOR CITIZENS - Our elderly are often forgotten or shoved into senior citizen buildings like they are not alive. This process must be revised. We feel that senior citizens must be re-instituted into community life again.

(9) MORE RECREATIONAL AREAS - There is plenty of

vacant land in our communities which must be put to use as playgrounds, parks, and we must begin to build more places for youth to assemble in the inner city.

(10) CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM - Things such as inmate problems, unjust punishment for petty crimes, and warrants being issued for overnight parking, are just a few of the many issues that affect our daily lives. And also, we must begin to look at our juvenile justice system.

These are only ten issues that affect our daily lives. There are more. But these ten show that nothing or very little has been done to begin to solve them.

Biographical Sketch:

Name: Michael R. McGee
Born: 1950
Place: Corinth, Mississippi
Age: 25
Married: Wife: Pennee, Children: Michael, 6
Aries, 3; Jonathan,

Michael McGee was born in Corinth, Mississippi in 1950. He lived there 14 years and attended grade school and junior high school there. Michael McGee states, "When I went to school in the South, it was all Black. We were not allowed to go to white schools. We had all Black teachers who were from the community and knew us on a personal level. When we moved to Milwaukee, the schools had white teachers and students, and things became very impersonal. I think most of the basics I learned in the South, so when I came to Milwaukee, I was a little prepared, since little was taught and learned during one's stay in high school." Michael attended North Division and Rufus King High Schools. He graduated from the latter in 1968.

At the age of 18 years old, he entered the U. S. Army. He states, "That was the turning point in my life. The decision I had to make was between going to the Army or accepting one of the offers I had to attend college. I chose the Army because I felt school was just for programming your mind to be a part of this system. I wanted to learn more about the world."

And learn about the world he did. At age 18, he was sent to Vietnam. He served his 12 months there. McGee explains, "I knew we shouldn't have been in Vietnam, but it was too late by that time, I was there. From there all the brothers just learned and survived." McGee was honorably discharged in June of 1971. By this time, he was married and had a family. In '71, he worked with the Black veterans movement but wanted to learn more about other elements in our community. He has served as the Director and a board member of the People's Free Health Center for the past three years. He worked with the Milwaukee chapter of the Black Panther Party for 2-1/2 years and for the

last two years he has worked with the United Black Community Council. He is currently the United Black Community Council's Minister of Unity.

--Paid for by Citizens to Elect Michael McGee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

* * *

Leaflet for Michael McGee Campaign:

REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN 1976?
THERE IS ONLY ONE PARTY IN AMERIKKKA

As 1976 approaches, this is a question our Black community must answer. Do we vote, and if we do vote, which party will we vote with? The vote is just a tool to be used by the masses in our struggle for liberation. Like any tool, a vote must be controlled for us and not against us. In the 1972 election, only 25% of the registered voters turned out to vote. Now keep in mind that only 15% of the eligible voters are registered. So this means that we haven't even used 1/4 of our potential vote. But what happens is that the potential voter is turned off and wonders what good will his/her vote do. The vote is the basic element of power in this country. We must use the vote to its fullest power to heighten the antagonistic contradiction that exists between us, the poor and powerless against the few elite families that own the world.

As for which party, I feel America has just one party. The two-party system is just a divisive illusion created to fool us. If we look at history, we know that the Democrat and Republican Party has never fulfilled one promise made to the people. We have not received our 40 acres and a mule promised by the Republican Party for the wrongs heaped upon us by slavery, which is a 112-year-old debt! Nor have we received the new deal promised by the Democrats who are really Dixocrats.

What has happened is that we have little, if any, control of our lives. Day in and day out we are constantly bombarded with violence, negative images, lies, untruths, and deceived about ourselves and what our place is in this world. Our children, our future, are revolting because they don't see any light at this dark moment in history. Our minds have been lulled to sleep and we are not conscious of our strength. We let those negative images defeat us before we try. There are ones among us that see, our so-called leaders, who have helped deceive us. We must reverse this trend and develop positive images of ourselves. We should realize that we have human rights, rights that were granted us by the creator of all life. We are fools if we think the whole story of Watergate has been told or if the whole truth has been revealed. The H2O Gate goes back to George Washington and the very foundation of the U. S. A.

14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014
February 10, 1976

We must become independent. I know the system has made this a negative word. But we know it means doing for self. I do not accept either the Republican or Democratic Party--they are one. I am a grassroots representative that is responsible only to the people of our Black, poor, and oppressed communities. Now this doesn't mean that we have dropped out of the system because it's impossible to do that, but what we can accomplish by having an independent vote is change. In the sense that an independent voice only has to rely upon the people and not owing favors to outsiders. Also, a voice that speaks to our needs and desires and one that won't remain silent when the people's rights have been violated.

One thing we must not forget is the past. It tells us where we came from and gives us some positive direction for our future. Too many innocent people have been murdered, too much blood, sweat, and tears have been invested in us for us to turn back now when victory is so near. We all still have freedom on our minds. We don't want civil rights, we want human rights. The world is watching our struggles to be free here because the freedom of the whole human race depends on what actions we, the silent majority, take here! We the Black, poor and oppressed people of America are the backbone of the U. S. A., the source of its great power. It deceives us while it rapes the earth. We had better destroy this monster before it destroys the world.

While all of this destruction is occurring in the forms of police repression, hunger, disease, birth control, pollution, unemployment, etc., the super rich are playing games of who can own the world and who will be the next party in the White House. These few elite families already control the world collectively but the greed doesn't stop there. As we all know, there is only one winner. Is this the American dream--to kill the world? President Ford and all the other front men for this oppressive system had better beware because the power of the people awakened is far greater than a few families. These elected and other so-called representatives of the people are nothing but paid actors who perform for pay to keep us under the illusion that all is well.

We must unite as one force around our concrete problems or be crushed by the problems because we are too blind to see for ourselves and we who could see were afraid to say. Some of the non-violent tactics of the past such as the boycott, strike, rally, march, sit-in, and demonstrations are still useful tools that we can still use. Action speaks louder than words. So let our voice be heard in 1976 with a thrust for freedom and dignity so that we all can live as human beings should.

Liberate your mind in '76!

Michael McGee
8/75

Bob Schwarz
Milwaukee

Dear Bob,

The Political Committee on Feb. 6 approved the recommendation of the Milwaukee branch to extend critical support to Michael McGee for alderman from Milwaukee's first district in the Feb. 17 municipal election.

Both your report to the branch and George's minority report from the executive committee were made available to Political Committee members. We were pleased to see that the branch handled a disputed question in an objective and educational way. For many newer comrades in the branch whose main experience with disputed questions in the party or youth has been faction fights with the IT and their predecessors, your discussion showed that political disagreements need not lead to a heated or factional atmosphere.

We also noted that McGee's campaign was launched some months ago and that the branch would have benefitted more from its support of the McGee campaign if it had discussed it and made its recommendation to the Political Committee and sent an article or two into the Militant much earlier.

From your reports there appeared to be no disagreement over the question of principle--everyone agreed that McGee's campaign is at this stage in fact independent of the capitalist parties. From the evidence you sent us we agreed with this assessment.

Some of McGee's statements against the Democrats and Republicans are in fact quite strong, especially his August statement. We suggest that you point to these in quotes in your statements of support for McGee in order to help show that we are supporting this campaign to help educate about the need for a break with the capitalist parties.

We noticed that in some of McGee's literature his criticisms of his opponent centered primarily on his pro-Nixon activities and the criticism of the Democrats was barely mentioned. If McGee wins a place in the run-off you should watch his evolution closely and particularly his relationship between the Democratic party organizations. Just because we give critical support to a candidate at one stage of a campaign doesn't mean we can't withdraw it at another stage. In fact, we have done so before.

McGee doesn't have much of any program. His platform is just a list of a few immediate things the Black community needs.

Although it mentions the need for jobs and housing there are no concrete proposals for this. Absent is any reference to the necessary government funds for providing a massive jobs program and low-rent housing.

However, in public statements we don't need to single out these deficiencies for criticism but through the Senter campaign point to our concrete proposals for what is needed.

There is one programmatic point, however, which we must explain in statements of support for McGee--and that is his opposition to busing. This is a serious weakness in his campaign and you were correct to give a lot of attention to it in your discussion. When we extend critical support to independent Black candidates we do so in spite of many weaknesses and errors in their programs. However, sometimes a campaign that is genuinely independent of the capitalist parties and based in the community may have political positions that make it tactically unwise to support.

This was George's position in respect to the McGee campaign. He raised the question of whether the negative effects of McGee's position on busing outweigh any positive educational value about independent political action.

The Political Committee agreed that this was a danger. However, McGee is a long-time activist that has been involved in organizing significant struggles against racial oppression. He is not a Black stooge for the reactionaries who are opposing busing, but an advocate of Black control of Black schools (although this gets confused in his platform with his call for decentralization) who mistakenly counterposes community control to desegregation by busing. This position undoubtedly reflects contradictory feelings in the Black community about busing. However, it is a serious difference with us and one that we should allow no confusion on.

We think it is important to have a direct personal discussion with McGee and his key people immediately so he understands what our support means and doesn't mean and what we think on the busing question. It is very unlikely that he or those young people around have hardened or totally thought-out positions. There is no evidence of this in any of his literature. Even if he doesn't agree on busing it may be possible to convince him that it is an error to go to city council, etc., meetings with a position that is just used by the racists.

There are probably people in his organization or his campaign supporters who oppose busing but may be open to being convinced by our arguments, at least on this point.

You may be able to get McGee or some of the members of his organization to participate in the NSCAR meeting in Boston. Participating in such a national discussion and especially getting first-hand reports on the situation in Boston could help influence them.

Of course all of this points to the importance of the SWP campaign for mayor which is the most effective way of expressing our support for McGee while presenting all of our concrete programmatic ideas including our campaign in support of busing.

Comradely,

/s/

Doug Jenness
for the Political Committee