

## AGAINST EXPULSION OF THE LEFT FACTION AT THE CONVENTION

--Steering Committee of the Political Solutions Caucus

There are many rumors flying around the organization about the position of the Political Solutions Caucus toward expelling the Left Faction at the convention. All over the country, comrades have received calls informing them that the PSC now supports the expulsions--others have been told that we categorically oppose any expulsions at any time. Actually, neither of these is true. What follows is where we do stand and why.

### WHERE WE STAND.

When the PSC met in Detroit we took the following position: that we opposed expelling the Left Faction at the convention, that we would propose to the convention that an appeals board be elected there. This body would hear and decide on all charges raised against any individuals or groups for indiscipline, disloyal behavior, etc in the course of carrying out the decisions made at the convention. We called on the Left Faction to agree, following the convention, 1) to dissolve their faction, 2) to fully carry out the convention's decisions, 3) to forego any position on the EC, and 4) to agree to any EC appointed organizers, even in Left Faction dominated branches. The Left Faction agreed to all these points.

### POLITICAL EXPULSION: THE ROAD TO A SECT

The Majority Caucus resolution would expel the entire Left Faction on the grounds, first, of political incompatibility, and second, <sup>for</sup> acts of disloyalty, entrism, etc. However, the second area of charges could not apply to the entire membership of the Left Faction, many of whom are collaborating fully with the rest of the organization. Thus, the only basis for expelling the entire faction is the first, that is on political grounds.

When members of the Majority Caucus came to the PSC meeting in Detroit to explain the position of the Majority Caucus, they ~~made~~ <sup>it</sup> made this perfectly clear: that ~~it~~ was the ideas of the Left Faction that led many of their members to function as a disloyal opposition inside the IS and that those ideas are incompatible with membership in the IS. Yet, the ideas held by the Left Faction which make them ineligible for membership are at best incredibly vague and at worst an extremely narrow basis for expelling a group from the organization for its politics. The Left Faction proclaims its opposition to industrialization and industrial priorities. This is an important tactical difference. Is it grounds for expulsion as the Majority Caucus resolution for expulsion would imply? The Left Faction supports agitation, but not ~~not~~ mass work. Yet, precisely what is the difference between agitation and mass work? Can we conclude that on the basis of the Left Faction's support for agitation but opposition to mass work that their politics is so different from ours that they could not function as disciplined members?

We do not deny that on some occasions as eg. the RSL split, political differences may be so great as to make separate organizations an unavoidable outcome of a faction fight. But it is clear that in this case differences of such magnitude have not yet arisen. Indeed, we proclaim that the British IS is a fraternal organization of the US IS. Yet, the British IS supports the Left Faction's ~~not~~ proposed tactics and ~~strong~~ strategy for the US IS. In fact, many ~~x~~ of the Left Faction's ~~proposals~~ proposals undoubtedly originated with the British IS. Are we now saying that these tactical and strategic positions held by members of the ~~British~~ British IS which differ from those of the majority of the US IS would make these British ISers ineligible for membership in the US IS should they be in this country? More generally, do we refuse to admit anyone who is skeptical of industrialization, ~~a~~ priorities, and mass campaigns around the contracts but who agrees to work in disciplined fashion in carrying out the majority line? To do so would open the way for refusing to admit people or for expelling them on almost any grounds. For in that case, even the most minor differences could begin to be interpreted as "not wanting to build a workers combat organization in this period." This is the prescription for a sect, and a tiny one at that. One of the classic characteristics of a sect is to magnify any and all differences to the level of principle.

~~Comrades~~ Comrades, let's face facts. Two years ago the IS embarked on a course which, we were promised, would result in trebling our membership, building national rank and file movements in the basic industries, building a classwide rank and file movement, and so forth. Many comrades ~~presented~~ on all sides of this question knocked themselves out to make this come ~~to~~ true. But it didn't. Is it any wonder that so many of the comrades would try to locate the causes of this failure in the very policies the turn was based on? Do we then respond by kicking them out? What kind of confidence do we have in our politics which says that we have to make them the scapegoats for the failures of our perspectives? Comrades in the Majority Caucus, why do you think our perspectives failed? Don't you think the organization deserves to have a sober appraisal of these perspectives so that we can correct whatever errors we made? We believe the Left Faction makes the wrong analysis and that a good many of their own members would realize this over time and through common work. But to boot them out over their political differences is only to continue a political method which will condemn our group to continued depoliticization and therefore irrelevance. The IS will have to make many tactical veers and turns on the road to ~~becoming~~ becoming a workers party. There will have to be tactical retreats as well as forward advances. At some points, sections of the membership will organize for such turns in advance of the leadership. They may be right or ~~not~~ wrong, but this kind of organizing is necessary for the survival and growth of a revolutionary organization. It is an essential aspect of democratic centralism, accepted by all the organizations in our revolutionary tradition, that members have a right to organize around their political differences, up to and including the formation of factions. Of course we don't ~~encourage~~ encourage the formation of factions, but we must be absolutely clear about the right. The discussions that ensue from the presentation of different views inside the organization help the rank and file to develop their politics and to be able to better argue the line adopted. As Trotsky points out:

~~Without temporary~~

Without temporary ideological groupings, the ideological life of the party is unthinkable. Nobody has yet discovered any other procedure. And those ~~who~~ who have sought to discover it have only shown that their remedy was tantamount to strangling the ideological life of the party. Naturally, groupings as well as differences of opinion are an 'evil.'

~~But this evil~~ But this evil ~~constitutes~~ constitutes as necessary an integral part of the dialectic of party development as do toxins in the life of the human organism.

(Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch, 1967 Ed., pp. 57-58)

#### EXPULSION ON GROUNDS OF DISLOYAL ACTS AND ENTRISM

The only serious argument yet made for expulsion is that despite the fact that the political differences between the Left Faction and the rest of the organization are not sufficient grounds for their expulsion, the Left Faction is behaving in such a disruptive and disloyal manner that they are jeopardizing the work of the IS and must therefore be driven out. On a static level, this line seems entirely reasonable. Obviously, if the Left Faction comrades were systematically disrupting and sabotaging our work, no ~~matter~~ matter how minimal their formal ~~political~~ political differences, these are grounds for expulsion. The question is--and it is a tactical one--how to avoid a wholesale expulsion and at the same time guarantee that the work of the organization will continue, without disruption. Or, to put it another way, how to minimize our losses should expulsions become necessary because of indiscipline and disloyalty.

The Majority Caucus has not really asked itself these questions. In fact, it seems to be operating on the desire to maximize our losses. Faced with a delicate and difficult operation, the doctor chooses instead to kill the patient rather than be bothered. ~~The~~ The Left Faction is assumed to be operating almost everywhere as a separate disloyal organization. This is decidedly not ~~true~~ true in LA, Portland, Bloomington, and Indianapolis. In other places, like Boston, Atlanta, and Gary, Majority Caucus leaders have made clear their intention, early on, to drive Left Faction people ~~out~~ out of the organization. This leads ~~to~~ to more factionalism. That Left Faction comrades in a number of cities

have behaved irresponsibly and factionally is quite true. But it is not enough just show there has been disruption in order to justify immediate expulsion. One has to ~~do~~ look at the causes of it to see if another solution is possible. If we expel the Left Faction, we will have an organization of less than 200 people. There will also be a new competing organization with roughly the same politics as ours. Comrades would do well to investigate the means to prevent this situation.

But this requires that we take a critical look at our past. To read the EC's assessment, we made no serious errors. Of course, with such a view, the emergence of the Left Faction is completely implausible except as a mere creation of the British IS and/or the product of a clique operation. The fact that nearly a third of the IS actually chose to join this faction gets written off as a "middle-class revolt." The first rule for all self-perpetuating leaderships is that the best defense is a good offense. But these explanations are inadequate to actually explain the Left Faction and therefore to deal with it politically.

The Left Faction emerged at a time when it was becoming ~~xxx~~ increasingly apparent that our perspectives of 1975 were on the rocks. There was already a good deal of demoralization. The results of the 1976 Convention were inconclusive. While recruitment was slow, we were losing a number of industrialized members, particularly in auto. A number of comrades made commitments to start new branches in a number of cities, but found the going pretty rough ~~xxxxxx~~ where they did get jobs, if they could. With little or no roots in the shops and little back-up, mass work perspectives, while fine in theory, were next to impossible to implement. Privately, members of the EC conceded they were not sure how to go forward.

Into this ~~x~~ vacuum jumped the Left Faction, with the help of the British and Canadian IS. In doing so, the Left Faction was able to attract comrades with a host of grievances and problems: bad experiences with ~~xxx~~ industrialization, feelings of neglect for their work outside the priorities, difficulties in doing mass organizing in the priorities, dissatisfaction with leadership methods, etc., etc. Many of the leaders of the Left Faction had been among the most vehement supporters of the EC, its methods, its perspectives. There were in fact trained by the EC, especially in the conceptions of monolithic leadership and loyalty to the leadership. When they broke from this leadership politically, it was therefore natural that they would think initially of splitting from the organization. These were, after all, comrades who had been trained to regard all differences with extreme hostility. Trained in the idea that the leadership of the IS should constitute itself as a faction inside the organization, it was natural to develop a faction of your own once you go into opposition. Trained to regard even the slightest differences with the leadership in a factional ~~x~~ manner, these comrades naturally supposed that their tactical differences over ~~industrial~~ industrialization, priorities, etc. were enough grounds for forming a separate organization. At least this would appear to be the implications behind their initial document, ~~partic~~ particularly ~~xxx~~ its threat not to abide by any limit to the ~~disc~~ discussion. It was also natural that once the Left Faction leadership was convinced, in all likelihood by the British IS, that they didn't have the forces to form a separate organization, they would continue in the IS as an entrust or semi-entrust tendency, ~~xxx~~ semi-entrust because they were not about to inform their rank and file completely about their intentions, nor were they probably sure about what their intentions even were.

The question before the IS was (and is) how to deal with such a faction. Very clearly, what we had before us was a politically immature grouping. The great majority of its members had been in the IS only a few years. Its politics represented no fundamental break with that of the ~~major~~ majority. Its organizational "hardness" was a result of a combination of cliquism on the part of its leadership, the support of the British IS, and finally, the rigid posture of the EC, and by extension of the Majority Caucus, toward the entire Left Faction, membership and leadership included.

~~x~~ We know that factions tend to arise, especially when things aren't going well for an organization, either due to mistaken perspectives, objectively difficult situations, or a combination of both. Certainly ~~both~~ both applied to the IS at this time. The organization was not even close to reaching its stated objectives on 1975, due ~~to~~ both to unrealistic goals and expectations and difficult

circumstances. There was, in result, demoralization. In such circumstances, there is bound to be dissension and revolts. It is a real test of leadership to apply the correct tactics to the situation so as to minimize the loss to an organization. Here is what Trotsky had to say about situations like ours:

...From the standpoint of monolithism a factional struggle is an 'evil', but it is an unavoidable evil and, in any event, a far lesser evil than the prohibition of factions. True enough, attempts at the formation of factions lacking an adequate principled basis in consequence of political immaturity, personal ambition, careerism, etc. are frequently observable, especially in young parties. In all such cases it is the task of the leadership to expose, without recourse to police measures, the hollowness of these enterprises and in that way to discredit them before the party membership. Only in this way is it possible to create profound attachment for the party so that episodic conflicts, no matter how sharp, do not threaten its unity. The existence of factions, in the nature of things, provokes friction and involves an expenditure of energy, but this is the inevitable overhead expense of a democratic regime. A capable and authoritative leadership strives to reduce factional friction to a minimum. This is achieved by a correct policy tested by collective experience; by a loyal attitude toward the opposition, by the gradually increasing authority of the leadership... (emphasis added)

From WRITINGS OF LEON TROTSKY, 1938-9, 1st ed., pgs. 129-130.

Can any comrade honestly say that our leadership followed such a policy: of striving to "reduce factional friction to a minimum"; of taking a "loyal attitude toward the opposition," etc., etc. Can anyone doubt that the actual course taken was just the opposite, and quite in keeping with the factional and disloyal methods employed by the leadership toward any serious opposition in the IS. It is not enough to point to the extreme factionalism of sections of the Left Faction. One has to also look at the causes of this, both leading up to and subsequent to the formation of the faction, including the ~~attitude~~ attitude of the leadership.

What was that attitude? The first Majority Caucus meeting made it quite clear that the EC and its supporters, as well members of last years convention opposition, had already written off the entire Left Faction, almost a third of the ~~organization~~ organization, and were moving toward carrying out an expulsion, either before or at the special convention. This was barely three weeks after the Left Faction surfaced. First, the Majority Caucus voted to confine the ~~political~~ political discussion on the way forward for the IS to within the Majority Caucus when it was ~~precisely~~ such a discussion was need in the organization as a whole and especially with Left Faction members. Second, the Majority Caucus steering committee, dominated by EC members, immediately began, in its first bulletin, to characterize the Left Faction as entrism and clearly implied it was out to wreck the IS. In this manner, it began to lay the basis for an expulsion. ~~Third~~ Third, the EC proposed organizational solutions, that is, the notion of the four priority branches and the disciplined Central Committee residing in the Midwest, which could not have been better designed to convince the Left Faction that the EC (and the majority) was not prepared to make any substantial changes in its methods or perspectives, or to take seriously a political debate over the questions the Left Faction raised. Finally, there was virtually no discussion at the first ~~Majority~~ Majority Caucus meeting of how to win the Left Faction back into the mainstream of the organization.

This situation, of course, produced a greater polarization which in turn led to the Majority Caucus resolution to expel the whole faction. It makes little difference that the steering committee itself "only" ~~recommended~~ recommended expulsion of the leadership of the Left Faction on grounds of entrism. Either way, the way had been prepared for driving out the entire faction membership.

But if they are entrism and disloyal, at least the leadership, shouldn't they be driven out so as not to completely destroy the IS and its work? Wouldn't keeping them in do more harm than good?

The answer to this is not so simple, in light of the actual situation. Let us assume that the leadership is entrust. Does it follow that the faction should be expelled. We believe not, at ~~least~~ least not at this convention. First, the very notion of a group as entrust whose major differences ~~k~~ with the majority is over the tactics of industrialization and who want to substitute agitation for mass work is in itself ludicrous. That such a situation is even possible suggests that neither the Left Faction leadership nor the EC has the least notion of how ~~n~~ to preserve unity in an organization whose members have differences. For the EC, differences that threaten their control become grounds for expulsion; for the Left Faction leadership, anything that would preven them from organizing the ~~discuss~~ discussion in the IS on their terms is unacceptable. Both of this is merely unbridled factionalism and sectarianism. For any member to be caught up in either "great warring camp" is to be used as a tool in a factional power struggle which has little to do with building a workers organization. We are a group of under 300. With an expulsion, we will be under 200. We set tasks for ~~our~~ ourselves which require an organization of thousands. And yet we don't know how to even begin ~~k~~ to deal with differences in our group. Does anyone seriously ~~think~~ think the Left Faction could be a serious entrust group, that it has the cadre or the politica to carry out a successful entrust tactic. Most in the majority say that the Left Faction would not be ~~ax~~ viable group on its own. This is even more true inside the IS. Here, they would not continue in existence after the' convnetion, since they have agreed we should dissolve all factions after the convention, ~~k~~ and would have to agree to cease the debate in the branches on industrialization, priorities, and agitation. They would have to carry out the line in a situation where they would have to bend over backwards to prove to people they were disciplined members.

But the convention does give us one great opportunity: to end the faction fight by resolving the political issues which brought the faction fight into being, insisting that all minorities submit to the discipline of the majority, that all factions, caucuses, etc., be dissolved, and that all cases of disloyal behavior be dealt with aby an appeals board elected at the convention. Does anyone seriously think that after such a convention there would be many cases of such actions? Especially after all sides agreed to carry out the line totally and with out conditions?

Granted that many Left Faction members have committed acts that could be grounds for expulsions, comrades must realize that such excesses almost inevitably occur in the heat of a faction fight, especially in a situationn like the one we face. The fact is that there have been many excesses systematically carried out by sections of the IS leadership as part of their normal functioning which would not be tolerated in a healthy, democratic organization. They take the form of regular character assassination, excessive rudeness and abusiveness, abetting rumor-mongering, and "guilt" by association, denigration of the work of loyal comrades behind their back, doing hatchet jobs on opposition positions, in short, the ~~f~~ very sort of behavior appropriate to a cynical, internally-oriented sect dather than a self-confident, outward-oriented revolutionary organization. Viewed in this light, its hard to see how the EC can get too worked ~~u~~ up about the actions of some members of the Left Faction. In fact, the EC has systematically exaggerated the disruptive side of the conduct of Left Faction mebers and ignored th many Left Faction comrades who are loyally carrying out the work of the IS, ~~add~~ all to create the impression that ~~nx~~ any good conduct was just an exception and disloyal conduct the rule. This then becomes the grounds for expulsion of the whole group. But if you actually look at the whole situation, it is very uneven. While the faction operates at its worst in Gary and Louisville, members of the Left Faction function well in Indiannapolis, Portland, Blooming-ton, and Los ~~Angle~~ Angeles, at the ~~ka~~ least. In "The Functioning of the Left Faction, Glen admits that "...it is true that ~~nx~~ not all their rank and file are in on the real program of the faction." How many, Glen? Twenty? Forty? Sixty? Due to the fact that most of the comrades in the Left Faction are relatively new to the IS and to the "norms" of faction-fighting in the IS, wouldn't you predict that this number would be rather large? After all, as recently as January, the Majority Caucus steering committee itself congratulated the rank and file of the Left Faction for preventing a split due to ~~thex~~ their loyalty to the IS! Here is what they wrote:

...although many rank and file members of the "Left" Faction signed the document out of political agreement, they had never been through a faction fight and did not understand its dynamics. They had not intended to commit themselves to a group with a split perspective. The rank and file put a great deal of pressure of the "Left" Faction leadership to come out clearly against a split. The majority is glad for the loyalty of the Left Faction's ranks. (emphasis added) BULLETIN No. 6

We have no reason to believe that the rank and file of the Left Faction now has an entrism perspective, no matter what the intentions of their leadership. Yes, they identify with the faction, but this in no way "proves" disloyalty. The decisive question is: will every section of the IS carry out the line of the organization once the convention is over? We are prepared to assume they will, since they have all agreed, and that mass expulsions will be unnecessary. To assume the Left Faction cannot be a loyal, to assume an expulsion has to take place, is to assume that just about all faction fights must lead to splits and/or expulsions. As long as this assumption is made, the IS will be a constantly shrinking battleground for ever smaller and smaller leadership and anti-leadership factions, in which all the talk about becoming a "workers' combat organization" will be so much bluster. Unless the IS transforms its methods of internal functioning, we will not be able to keep workers in the organization for very long, or anyone else for that matter. The expulsion of the Left Faction will be just one more indication of our failure to break out of the "twilight world of the sects," despite our pretensions to the contrary.