

MINORITY REPORT BY RALPH LEVITT

I want to begin by saying a few words to some of the new comrades, of whom we have many here in the branch, that there's a presumption here that a good many of you are not familiar with the background on this case and the situation. Many of you haven't seen the documents and many of you will be in a very difficult position to vote on it. We want to state the party's attitude which is there's no compulsion for comrades to vote on a question which they are not in possession of all the facts. Of course, that's not saying you can't. If a comrade feels that he or she has made a decision, has made up their mind on this question, go ahead. But there's a presumption here that quite a few comrades really don't know too much about the situation. It's quite involved and there's quite a background on it. I was reminded myself of the fact that Comrade Cagle's been on the production line in the auto industry since I was in the third grade and he began the production line before some of the comrades in this branch were born. That doesn't mean we can't judge him. He has no credentials that make him stand above the party. I voted to expel Comrade Swabeck who had been a member of the revolutionary movement since before the first world war and had been flogged in a Rumanian prison, been in the party for forty years. No one stands above the party, but the comrades should keep in mind that here's a comrade who has played this role for a long time.

Let me make something clear on this question of democratic centralism. There is no disagreement. The minority report from the trial committee, which I am presenting, takes no issue with the question of democratic centralism. There's no issue here. We're entirely in favor of the carrying out of the policy of democratic centralism, and I hope there's no one in this branch who opposes such a policy, of not violating either convention or branch decision. I myself can't remember ever voting against on a question of discipline. This is the first time. I've voted in favor of censure for Comrade Cagle last year, along with Comrades Wald and Graumann, and two other comrades voted for expulsion, including our vice presidential candidate. I felt that what had taken place at the time was a very serious violation. But Comrade Cagle apologized to the branch and apparently the thing was left aside. Comrade Cagle had acted out of poor judgment.

This question of democratic centralism is essential for our party. You can't build a party without it. If you build something with less than centralism, if you don't have one face to the public, you're not a party -- you're some kind of a shit pile. You don't deserve to enter the field of politics. I was a member of one of those groups -- the Young Peoples Socialist League. They claimed to be the most democratic organization in the world and I found myself expelled so fast when I wanted to support the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, I didn't know whether I was coming or going. I was out before I ever knew what hit me. Our party has a policy of unity in action after we decide on our different opinions and test them out in action. So there is no question of a violation of democratic centralism here. It won't be permitted.

Comrade Blackstock said that to not vote for a censure of Comrade Cagle would give the green light for lack of discipline

in this branch and the green light to violation of discipline in the future and I want to contradict that right now and issue a statement here on behalf of myself, and I think I can speak for the entire branch, that although we have had some problems in the past, in the coming period there is going to be no violation of our public face in the party. We're going to be the most centralized branch in the entire country. We're the biggest and one of the strongest and there's going to be no violations. No comrade better have in their mind, whether they were in the majority before or the minority before, whether they be Cagle or Blackstock, myself or Massey, anybody, that there's going to be any violation of democratic centralism in this branch. That is to say, don't assume that you're going to be censured first, then suspended and then expelled. We're going to be very harsh in this branch on the question of violation of democratic centralism and on that question there could be agreement. But there's something else at issue here, and here is the key thing that comrades have to decide on.

Democratic centralism is not an abstraction. The policies of discipline, the procedures and so on, are not an abstraction that float in the air above the party and its tasks. Democratic centralism is a means of building the party, and the enforcement of discipline is a means of building the party and they only are useful to the extent that they help to build the party.

If we were to throw charges for some of the things that we had said to each other, or even here on the branch floor, we could have a series of trials. I myself, when I joined the YSA, was lined up on the Robertson question before I was even in the party. One of the first things that happened when I joined the YSA was lining up on the question. I assume that the comrade who did it, did it incorrectly, was sincere. We don't run around flying off at the mouth with charges. We use democratic centralism to build the party and discipline is only useful in this way. In this case, you have to take each particular case, each particular circumstance. This circumstance, at the beginning of a whole new period in our branch life, at a time when we've left behind us a divisive period, the preconvention discussion and so on, to begin this period in which our biggest task is to bring together a branch and branch leadership that can fight together and maximize our outside possibilities, to begin in this way is to take democratic centralism and make a farce out of it and use it, not to build the party, but to disunify and to partially destroy the possibilities on the outside, in our outside work. We'll issue that warning now: there'll be no violations of democratic centralism in this party and the comrades can be straight on that and they can quote me if I ever do anything wrong, and I have no intention of doing so. I don't think anybody else does and I don't think Comrade Cagle does.

Now on this question of evidence: I'd like to go into it in some length. All of the evidence proved to me one thing last night as I sat at that trial for four and a half hours. It proved one thing to me: that there have been irregularities going on at Fremont for at least five years and if we're going to vote that there have been irregularities, confusion, poor conduct, lack of understanding of party norms, and so on, I'll vote for that with both hands and the leadership of this branch partially

takes responsibility. Comrade Keisle informed us, last night at the Executive Committee, that without consulting the branch, the Socialist Workers Party branch, he left the United Action Caucus long before the decision was ever made because he disagreed with it. It was party policy to be in there and he left it because he couldn't agree with it. That's the kind of discipline, that's the kind of procedure that went on out there, but the evidence did not prove this: the evidence does not prove, and did not prove, that Comrade Cagle willfully violated the democratic decision making of the party. It may have proved that he didn't go about severing it the way we wanted him to, but he severed his relationship, cut loose from this caucus which he was deeply identified with, and which was very difficult for him to do, and the evidence only points to irregularities and so on. As far as a picture in Peoples World, standing in front of a banner, didn't prove a god-damn thing. I've had my picture in HUAC minutes. I'm not therefore a member of the House on Un-American Activities. We don't care what the Peoples World prints on their front page. They could print a picture of a toilet, it doesn't mean a damn thing.

Now we get to the serious part of the question that we're facing here. This Cagle thing does not stand by itself. And we speak with deadly seriousness on this. It stands along with a series of actions that have taken place in the last few weeks, that have been very very ominous for the future of the branch. The slates, the attempt to bring charges against myself in the exec, which was not reported to the branch, the transfer of the forty new comrades, the attack on Cagle, none of which by itself is particularly unusual. But all of which add up to me to the recreation of a factional atmosphere in this branch. I don't think the majority faction from the last convention has dissolved itself. I think that the majority faction is still in existence and operating as a faction against dissidents and former dissidents, members of ideological minorities in this party. The party gave no mandate for the continuation of a majority faction. The comrades should reconsider their behavior on this course. The majority is not to act as a faction, either. They're to carry out the decisions of the convention and not to act in a factional atmosphere, and that's what all of this is building up to.

Let me say this: if this is intended, and I think very strongly that it is, it's my opinion and I think that a number of comrades do, if this is intended as a warning to the people who have played a dissident role in this branch in the past period, who have expressed differences and so on, if this is intended as a warning that you people better keep your mouths shut in the branch, you better go curl up somewhere in some corner and that you're not full-fledged members of the party, if all of this trial procedure is intended that way, and if it was issued in New York, like I think it was, I'm going to have this answer to it: take that set of procedures, take all of that and all those intentions, and return them to the sender. You're not going to scare anyone with this type of procedure. You're speaking about comrades who entered the party because they weren't afraid of the capitalist class. We're not afraid of the capitalist class. We joined the party to fight that class with its jails, bullets, guns and so on, and I'll be god-damned

if we're afraid of trial procedures and so on, and most particularly, unfair trial procedures, bills of attainders over events that took place in the past. That's not the way to build the party.

The final thing I want to say is this: once again to make an appeal, and we're going very far down the road now in a difficult situation. We have had a long history of disunity in this branch. This type of an atmosphere must not be recreated and it's the branch leadership that must take full responsibility on this issue and right down the line ever since the end of this convention, the branch leadership takes responsibility for the trials, the charges, the slates and the entire set of activities which amount to a refusal to dissolve their majority faction. Don't do it, comrades. It can lead to a long and debilitating and terrible period for the branch. We want to fight together to carry out the line of the party and to build the party and to introduce socialist ideas into the broader mass movements in which we are participants.

Let's vote against this motion of the Executive Committee majority and vote not to censure Comrade Cagle.