

March 29, 1974

To PC Members

Dear Comrades,

The attached memorandum was prepared by Joan Newbigging. It is a rough transcript of a discussion that Joan and Gary Porter, representing the ISA Political Bureau, had with Ross Dowson and Jim Mitchell, representing the Labour Party Tendency members who left the ISA/ISO.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

report on discussion between ross and jim and joan and gary.

February 19th, 1974. 1 pm

gary explained that we had heard indirectly that a number of LPT comrades were planning to split from the league tonight, and that we had come to ask ross about this.

ross : they had ~~we~~ held a tendency meeting last sunday; the discussion got round to the question ~~what the lpt is doing~~ what the lpt is doing and where the lsa is going. there were about 21 comrades at the meeting.

then one comrade announced that he was going to quit - and appealed to others to do so as well; they would not be breaking with the fourth international; but they should set up another organization.

another meeting was called on monday night to discuss this. the comrades who attended were those who wanted to quit.

a document was drawn up - a statement of resignation and was signed by 15 or 16 comrades.

ross listed off some of the names: gord, rozi, harry, sabena, gus, julie. ross. jim. linda. alice. ellie. wayne. dale. pat. abie.

they saw no perspective remaining in the lsa.

the lsa had ~~degenerated~~ deteriorated, degenerated into a sect.

it had moved away from all the basic political positions it had previously held/.

he thought relations could be better if the lpt comrades were outside.

they had not set up a faction, they did not want to take on the leadership; it would be best to handle the situation by getting out.

their statement would motivate this.

they would set up another organization - the socialist educational association; by the fall they may publish a journal.

they will hold another meeting on thursday.

it was not easy for ross to leave.

gary'; he (gary) would only leave the lsa if he had concluded that it could not be reformed as trotsky had concluded that the cp could not be reformed in 1933.

ross ; comrades have attempted to reform the lsa - impossible to do so because of the intense factionalism.

the leadership had become a sect. - it was not open to an exchange of views - surely dennis had told us this, he ~~we~~ had agreed on this at one time.

no one was writing off the lsa or considering it to be non-trotskyist.

probably on the basis of further experiences there will be a coming together of various elements - the lambertistes, rmg, lsa etc

us is there anything we can do to halt the split?

2. disc. with ross and jim.

ross; the discussion on the ndp at the plenum was clear - we were rejecting the established position of the league. dick's contribution on the ~~text~~ 1970 document was absolutely clear on this.

why did ernie and verne react the way they did? because they recognized this.

at the plenum the leadership said clearly that ~~it~~ an ndp govt. is a bourgeois govt.

then there's the question of canadian nationalism - you've dumped the '68 document/

ross; is that a position of the lpt? canadian nationalism?

ross; no.... er... it's all in the resignation statement. there's no possibility of remaining in the lsa. the publication of the dowson/young exchange was ludicrous.

ross; there's not only been a political degeneration in the league - the same trend is evident in relation to organizational matters.

the hierarchical structure has become hardened throughout the league.

there's been an artificial elevation of the concept of the party - totally out of bounds of the reality of canadian trotskyism today/

east branch meetings were a complete waste of his time, an organizational degeneration parallel to the political degeneration has taken place.

joan; why have you made this decision to leave the fourth international? surprised at the clam, matter of fact approach to this massive decision.

ross; calm - yes, ~~it's~~ calm now. but things weren't always calm.

lists a series of provocations - he has faced all these provocations over the years.

convinced he can contribute nothing to the league.

you (that's us) should make a sociological analysis of what's been happening, of what went wrong in the league.

you must do this if you hold there's been something rotten going on for years/

you've had the concept that you're starting a new, that you've had to start from the beginning

- you've attacked the documents

- you've said that you didn't know anything - refers to contribution by joan at ~~the~~ last plenum and previous plenums.

you say you didn't know our positions - but I (ross) had a clear idea what they were.

jim- on their relationship to the fourth international.

I am the fourth international.

the first task of a supporter of the fourth international is to build a viable party here.

right now the league is outside the radicalization.

you've proved it by demanding all comrades sell labor challenge at street corners.

3.. disc. with ross and jim

ross; it's impossible to discuss in the lsa - the atmosphere prohibits it/

jim I'm not interested in destroying the lsa.
we concluded that there was nothing to gain by building a faction;
(idea developed it would be impossible to make any headway -
they want to start work - want to start building something -
on y place they can do this is outside league)
~~it~~ lpters were faced with two alternatives - get out of lsa
or cease being a ~~xxx~~ revolutionary.

ross; the present leadership is a clique.
the pc meetings are a farce - no discussions take ~~place~~ place
there; there's complete cabinet solidarity between members
of the leadership.

the line of the movement hasn't been changed at leadership
meetings - it's been changed in the press.
you people ~~ax~~ state that an ndp government is a bourgeois
govt/

you say- let's discuss politics- but what do you do?
-you publish the young/dowson exchange....(idea developed
..what a stupid move at this time..ammunition to the mmf)
-you did not publish the lpt document until 3 weeks
after the plenum/
-you did not publish roos's views on canadian unionsim
and the womens ministry - his views were suppressed.
- then you publish the extemperaneous statements by ross

jim; you have a crude view of democratic centralism (gives
example __ john s in recruiting linda told her that demonratic
centralism meant certain nodies made decisions, the members
did not have to bother themselves with these questions and
could get down to work)
(expalins his view on the insecurity of the present leadership
- not have enough confidence in itself to circulate ross;s
views and therefore ~~xxxx~~ suppresses them.

joan anything we can do to halt the split?

ross he has resigned
there's nothing to discuss.the experience of the last 2 years
is conclusive/

gary explains how we were in fight together against the mmf
attempts to destory the lsa. would it help if some of the
leaders of the ltf came up and spoke with him?

ross no, you should have concluded that when I didn't go down
to speak with joe hansen/
(spoke about a letter at the time of oberlin when he had
challenged the leadership they had dumped the 1970 document)
(explains how we dumped the ndp orientation through the ltf
in the riddell/young contribution - he assumes the ltf
leaders agree with the positions in that document)
explains how toni foster has quit the img - she states the
anadian section has degenerated...

- 4 disc with ross and jim

joan how do they see their relationship to the fourth international and the ltf?

jim the problem is to build the party in canada right now the f.i. has little to do with his work

ross corrects jim's statement - he means in his day to day practical work

ross doesn't know what the f.i. is right now. big changes taking place.

within the f.i. today he identifies most with the ltf

- especially their position on latin america

- but disagrees with the attack on the ligue communiste on popular frontism, and with the statements in the ltf political resolution on labor parties.

gary do they consider we have violated any principles of trotskyism?

ross no. you are sectarian.

the biggest principle is to build the party

in canada that means to break the hold of reformism

over the working class

(the thought isn't entirely concluded - but the ideas is

clear - that our incorrect position on the ndp prevents

us from doing this - therefore we are violating the principle)//

jim if transitional politics is a principle - you have violated the method of transitional politics.

you have not violated any class principles - like walking through a picket line etc

but you have violated the precepts of transitional politics.

(he goes on to explain the degree of factionalism - lpters are called scum - even gary, who ~~has~~ has often cut across this factionalism, is unable to control it)

ross corrects jim on this point. gary is able to cool things down....

gary this split ~~is~~ is different from the rct split - here we are losing some of the historic cadre.

jim a de facto ~~situation~~/situation.

when Gary presented a list of membership problems to the east branch executive, over half the list were lpt members.

we have the responsibility to hold the cadre together - this cannot be done in the league.

us! how do you intend to proceed?

ross do not intend to come to the branch meeting tonight. are working on resignation statement - will submit it in a couple of hours.

(explains how they intended to bring the statement to the ~~next~~)

5... disc with ross and jim

headquarters; they had just made the decision last night = intended to inform us right away)/

joan ross had written the document on the organizational character of the lsa/lso. what does he have to say about that document now.

ross he agrees with all the concepts that were outlined in that document. but they do not apply to the league. you ~~(xxx)~~ (directed x to us) have developed an alien concept of the party - the idea that the league was more than the nucleus. the lsa is no longer the indispensable nucleus of the mass revolutionary party of the future/

jim that nucleus is now divided (amongst various groups - the rmg, the league, etc etc) (we don't want to fight with you people; this is the best solution all round; we will continue to work together ; we're not out to smash each other; we don't want to draw recruits away from the league etc etc)

ross (explains how the two organizations will be posed against one another by their very existence regardless of what ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ people might wish)

gary on the basis of what they have said so far he can only conclude that this is an unprincipled split.

ross in his opinion the split does not involve ~~xxx~~ the fundamental doctrine of trotskyism. sometimes he has been accused of not being a dialectician. it is you that are not dialecticians. i am a dialectician. it's too late to do anything about the split. there's no point to any lfters coming up. this decision was not taken hastily.

gary would they be prepared to meet again when john and art came back.

ross he would not object/
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~.

jim
we are not opponents/

ross
we are and are not opponents/
- not in the same way as the CP and the reformists
- within the framework of the trotskyist current/

jim
we would be ~~xxxx~~ stupid to try and smash each other.

joan
are some of the lpters not leaving. could they give us a list of those people/

6... disc with ross and jim

ross charlie not at monday meeting.; they can't remember all the names; they've still to contact some people; they will give us the resignation statement signed by those leaving.

gary is there nothing we can do to stop the split.

ross no. the comrades have made up their minds. nothing would make them reverse their views. it would be possible to hold a meeting and you could address it but that would be counterproductive.

joan why now.

ross this week, next week, next month.... what's the difference.

the decision was made by the comrades as individuals / the discussion on monday night was explosive - the discontent of the comrades surprised him.

notes written out by joan.