

DISCUSSION

Paul Montauk: Comrades, there's a very simple issue at stake here and that is the right of the party to discipline a member of the party who consciously goes out and violates a decision of the party that was arrived at after a rather intensive and rather extensive discussion. That's precisely what occurred. The discussion that we had in this branch on trade-union activity particularly focused towards the motion of the exec of disengaging from this so-called caucus, this thing -- I don't know what it is. That's what happened. The whole picture that emerged is that to this very day, to this very moment, there are people in that plant that are not under the impression that Tom Cagle has disengaged from that caucus. He has never done so. Not only has he never done so, but he'd run on their slate. Not only has he run on their slate, but it's been put forth in at least, that we know of, three pieces of campaign literature that came out. Then he has all kinds of explanations. The whole thing keeps building and building and building and it keeps developing and developing and developing.

Just to give you an idea of the type of an argumentation that's been presented. Like Tom this very evening mentioned about a party that took place at my house where some of these contacts were invited. That party took place at least a year before the branch decision occurred and there was an attempt then to bring some of these people together when Frank Lovell came to town and meet them. And he met them and that was before the branch decision. We're talking about what happened after the branch decision. Last night at the exec, there was knowledge that the day before I had called Larry Gibson and asked him one simple question: do you happen to have a file of the newspaper, the Hot Wire? If you do I would like to know about it. Period. And he said "I'll look into it and if I do find it I'll call you back," Tom said that at the exec. He said that it was known yesterday that I had called Larry Gibson. Ralph sat right next to him, Ralph gets up now and says something about a month ago Montauk and thus mumbling guy over here starts about isn't it correct that some other comrades have been discussing internal activities? I mean, seriously. That's the way the thing has been run down from the very beginning. It's the basic right of this party to discipline a comrade after not just impetuously, not just superficially, not just impulsively, but after a very deep discussion and I would recommend the comrades to look into it for content. That's the issue here and I don't know what the hell Ralph is talking about. Any member of this branch who abides by discipline in the future has nothing to be concerned about. Nothing. There's no threat. There's no dire thing. Abide by party discipline, live in this party and we'll love you.

Ed diTullio: I couldn't present a motion to the branch last week because it was too late, so I sent this motion to the Executive Committee. I got no response. On September 23, Thursday, I also sent it to the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party asking for their support. I haven't heard.

This was the motion to the branch which gives my thinking on this: that the Executive Committee be instructed by the branch meeting to drop its charges against Comrade Cagle for alleged indiscipline in the course of his work in the United Action

and the United Auto Workers at the GM plant in Fremont. That the Executive Committee be instructed to use the time it has set aside for the trial of Comrade Cagle to begin instead the preparation of a proposal to the branch meeting on tasks and perspectives for the work of the trade-union fraction in the UAW in collaboration with all three members of that fraction, including Comrade Cagle, and by actively seeking direction from the national leadership of the party. (3) That this branch recognizes that weaknesses exhibited by Comrade Cagle in his UAW work are attributable largely, if not wholly, to the dilatory, abstentionist and confused policies of the branch itself in its trade-union work at Fremont, or rather the lack of such work, except on the individual initiative of a comrade there, with minimal or no direction from the Executive Committee. And especially: (a) the refusal of the Executive Committee to discuss, let alone propose, a policy for intervention during the weeks preceding the UAW strike last year despite Comrade Cagle's repeated requests so that he was on his own, the branch stumbling into a discussion on the very night the workers walked out with no policy. The attitude of the branch when the UAW bureaucracy cancelled all union membership meetings because of the militancy of a good number of the workers and the United Action Caucus of the UAW at Fremont, previously led by Comrade Cagle before he was ordered by the branch to disassociate himself during the strike, which he did, circulating a petition calling for regular meetings and were threatened with goons. I propose that we support the circulation of that petition. I was attacked for disrupting this branch meeting by Comrades Ralph Levitt and Allen Taplin, representing left- and right-centrism respectively, and the branch refused to discuss the motion or put it to a vote. See the attitude of the branch on the occasion of the first regular UAW local election at Fremont after the strike, when Comrade Cagle informed the Executive Committee that the UAC wanted him to be one of their candidates and the Executive Committee announced to the branch that they had instructed the comrade that he could not be a candidate and that there would be no discussion of the matter since the branch had already voted not to participate in the United Action Caucus strike intervention the previous fall.

When I proposed that the branch should have a specific policy for specific situation reported, discussed and voted on, that this was a concrete trade-union question for which we have a May 1968 plenum report on trade-union work for guidance, I was again charged with disrupting the meeting by Comrade Ralph, I'm sorry to say, and again the motion was not put to a vote.

In the light of the foregoing, any alleged indiscretion by Comrade Cagle is entirely secondary to, and would be the result of, the confusion, abstentionism and lack of correct trade-union policy that the record shows prevails among us.

Furthermore, the militant intervention in spirit and combativity of Comrade Cagle during the strike was in the best tradition of Trotskyism. As were his tactics, despite minor mistakes readily admitted by him, which were inevitable given the lack of active direction by both local and national leaderships. Charges would be more appropriate for furthering Bolshevism if the Executive Committee must have trials, if directed against the authors of false trade-union policy rather than against one of the

victims of them. A correct trade-union policy is a condition of membership in the Fourth International. As the program of the FI states: the refusal to formulate and practice would bring into question the right of the SWP to membership in the Fourth International. It is for this reason I move that charges be dropped and time be spent constructively by formulating a correct policy for our comrades in the UAW.

Fred Feldman: First of all on the question of evidence, I think we have to be very clear that the party has to protect itself and assure the carrying out of its line. That's the purpose of this proceeding. We do not have an intelligence service. We cannot follow Tom everywhere he goes. There are going to be situations where comrades will be working in situations where there are few or no other comrades. We have to be able to make a judgment on whether those comrades are carrying out the line of the party, and I think there is a very clear pattern here of Comrade Cagle not carrying out the line. This is not the Supreme Court of the United States. We don't have to consider this like Hugo Black vs. Potter Stewart or anything like that. We have to deal with the political question before us which is whether this party's line is being carried out by this comrade. That's what we have to consider here. We have to defend the party.

Now on Ralph's talk. I think something about the question of unity should be said. First of all, unity is not based on comrades being satisfied with the division of the Executive Committee or on comrades getting a veto power on who transfers into the branch, but on a common carrying out of the party line and branch decisions. The party presents a single face to the public before, during and after the pre-convention discussion. The party is united in action by definition. We don't need unity speeches. We don't need any unity speeches. They're degrading for the comrades who make them, and they're totally unnecessary if we are united in action, if we are carrying out the line of the party. For Ralph's talk about unity and his talk about democratic centralism to mean something Ralph has to support in action the right of the party to carry out a single line. Cagle has challenged the party's right and Ralph is backing him up in action, if not in words, and that's a serious turn of events. That's a serious turn of events which I myself didn't particularly expect until last night.

What Ralph is saying is that the defense of Cagle is equivalent to the defense of the rights of the tendency to exist in the party. That is what he is saying. The rights of the ideological tendency to exist in the party are equivalent with the defense of Cagle and an attack on Cagle is an attack on the right of the tendency to exist in the party. That raises the question of what does Ralph think the rights of the tendency are? What is he going to think they are in practice? Because Cagle's looking at what Ralph does, not at what he says. Cagle is seeing that Ralph defends him. Ralph gets up before the branch and says "This branch cannot act against Cagle." If it can't act against Cagle now, if it can't act against the current policy, why are we to assume that Ralph, at some point in the future, won't have another blazing speech about democratic centralism followed by a demand that the party not exercise its right to discipline a comrade?

Alan Wald: Despite all the other things that have been said, Comrade

Cagle is being charged with not withdrawing from the caucus because he allegedly collaborated with the caucus last spring during the elections. Therefore, the trial committee has to prove three things: first of all they have to prove that Comrade Cagle's lying when he says that his name was misused by the caucus; second, they have to prove that Comrade Ted Dennis is also lying in his letter to the branch when he confirms Tom Cagle's strategy to run as an independent candidate; three, they have to prove that Larry Gibson, the head of the caucus, is also lying in his statement when he says that he used Cagle's name without Cagle's permission.

The trial committee did not prove any of these things. They have campaign leaflets with Tom's name on them, but that is negated by the fact that Gibson swears that his name was put on without Tom Cagle's permission. They have statements from Nelson, Mary Henderson that Tom said over the telephone that he was running on the caucus program, but Tom claims that he said that he only agreed, that he agreed with the caucus but he was running as an independent. It sounds to me like there are two different interpretations on the meaning of that phone conversation, but it does not constitute proof. The only concrete proof that they could have produced could have been used, was a statement by Bill Keisle that he saw Comrade Cagle handing out campaign literature. If they had been able to prove this, my opinion would be quite different. But Keisle could not testify, and did not testify, that he saw Cagle handing out campaign literature, Keisle could not even identify what he saw Cagle handing out, what year this occurred (he wasn't sure which of the last three years it was [change of tape] we transcribe the interview with Comrade Keisle so that the membership of the branch could judge for themselves what this testimony meant, but the trial committee has refused to do so.

I don't have any kind of absolute faith that Comrade Cagle has acted in a totally disciplined manner. I don't think that any of the three comrades at the plant have acted in a totally disciplined manner. I think that all three are victims of years and years of mishandling of that situation, which has been handled outside the branch, and I think that policy's continuing. But I do know that Comrade Cagle did inform the caucus and the caucus leadership that he and the party were no longer involved, that they were severing relationships because I went to a party with Andrew Pulley last November where the members of the caucus were present and all they did was argue with us all evening about why the SWP had pulled Cagle out and why we were now opposed to the caucus. They're aware of that position. I think that Cagle did not disassociate himself forcefully enough. I think he was sloppy about it. I think he was incompetent about the way he pulled himself out, but we don't charge people with incompetence. We don't censure them for incompetence.

Last fall when Cagle spoke at that educational conference, I was in favor of censure. I voted for it because there was concrete proof. I think comrades should think very seriously in this case when they vote to censure a comrade without concrete proof. Things may not always be as they seem to be now and you're setting a very dangerous precedent. The only way that you can fairly judge comrades in the party, comrades who have different political views on questions, is through the use of concrete proof. It's not Perry Masonism. It's using material reality. If Cagle is consciously violating

discipline, then we'll be able to prove it through concrete acts which he commits in the material world.

Clifton DeBerry: Comrades, I think that what differentiates this case of Cagle, the discipline question, from all other things that happened in the past, is the fact that the Executive Committee discussed it and made a decision. This was not done in any other "irregularity" in that plant. What's at issue is a decision was made by the branch for Comrade Cagle to disassociate himself from that caucus, which he has not done. What I mean specifically is this: if in the literature it had gotten out without his knowledge, you write a letter, you notify the party Executive Committee that they have issued your name without your agreement and that you want to know from the Executive Committee what you can do in order to rectify that situation. He did not.

In the discussion last night I asked Comrade Cagle: what did you do to prevent your name from appearing on the ballot? He said "Nothing." Did he come and notify the Executive Committee? He did not. Additionally, after the Executive Committee stated to him to disassociate from the United Action Caucus, Comrade Cagle met with the comrades there and decided to run as an independent candidate without notifying the Executive Committee. If he is carrying out the mandate of the Executive Committee, it would seem to me that before he carried out any kind of action in relation to that situation, he would first notify or inform the Executive Committee.

When asked why didn't he do some of these things, in one instance he stated he didn't talk to the organizer because the organizer was hostile. It was not the organizer's decision. It was the Executive Committee's decision which demanded that he disassociate himself.

As to the question of the origin of this caucus, in the sense of Comrade Dobbs and Comrade Lovell getting involved: the party has a history of getting involved in caucuses. But it is not ordained that because we get involved in it that we are stuck with it from now for as long as it exists. But it is a very basic principle of the party that we do not engage in power struggles and that at all times we seek to disassociate in power struggles where, if the opportunity presents itself, we will put forth our basic line to differentiate ourselves from these other people.

Mike Tormey: There are a lot of new comrades in the branch. Some are young, haven't been in the movement for too long, others have been in for quite a while, but they seem to share one thing in common: they came out here, or were induced to come out here, to fight a jihad or holy war against the opposition, against the former minority -- the sectarian ogres. It's quite evident on the voting, even on secondary and third-rate organizational procedural motions, they vote in favor of the leadership as a bloc.

Now we come to a serious question about Comrade Cagle, which Cagle himself, I feel, is the cat's paw. Cagle isn't the real issue. The leadership has been totally unable to present any even prime face case against Cagle. They go back over a period of months before the preconvention discussion to rake up an issue that's been settled through our preconvention discussion and at the convention and they present a bill of attainder against Cagle where their star witness,

Comrade Keisle himself is unable or confused about the whole chain of events, who himself has been freelancing down there for years, who himself has been brought up on discipline three or four or five times during the course of his history. It's a circus. The real intent is a political attack. It's a political attack on the former dissidents in the party, using Cagle as a warning the way they're going to use the Communist Tendency as a warning to us to cease, desist, play dead, be good, etc. We don't need those kind of warnings. We don't accept those kind of warnings.

We think the decisions of the convention were wrong, theoretically, but we're going to carry them out. We're going to carry them out in a disciplined way and we've been carrying them out in a disciplined way. We don't need these kind of things.

The comrades that came here with the idea that they are carrying on some kind of a holy war against the former minority are doing a disservice (1) to themselves (2) to Cagle and (3) more seriously, to the party. The last thing the party can afford to do, or any revolutionary party can afford to do, is develop a membership of hand raisers, of people who don't think independently and come to a decision on the basis of facts and what not. A membership like that will be incapable of making any intervention into the working class of this country of playing any kind of a significant role in the revolutionary developments.

Allen Taplin: The principle that's involved here is the responsibility of comrades to carry out their political work under the direction of the party. There have been irregularities, as a number of comrades have said, in our work at Fremont for a number of years. But more or less a year ago, these irregularities, so-called, on the part of Tom Cagle took on a different pattern than they had in the previous nine years that he had mentioned that he had been in the party. That is, he began to put into effect a series of actions which I have become convinced are aimed to express a political line that was different than that of the majority of the party. We all know what that political line is, because we were at the convention and we followed the preconvention discussion. I think that's the only political explanation for the course of events that has developed over the past year which other comrades refuse to belittle, saying that they are not current.

The history of this is essential to what we have to decide to do today. Cagle is not being attacked in any way for his political ideas. We know that he expressed them fully in the preconvention discussion, but a while back the Executive Committee and the branch told Comrade Cagle "You will stop freelancing your political differences in action down at Fremont." The other comrades who were carrying out irregularities, perhaps, were not told to cease and desist those irregularities. Nobody in the branch felt that they were carrying out an incorrect political line. Cagle was told directly to sever his relations with the caucus. I think all the evidence in the trial body and what was reported here tonight showed that he did not carry out that action. He failed, in practice, to sever his relations with the caucus. He claims that he does, but it's obvious that the other leaders of that caucus don't know that he has severed his relations. I have come to the conclusion, on the basis of this evidence, that he did carry out this overt act, his failure to carry out the decisions of the Executive Committee, and

thereby violated this organizational principle of Bolshevism that comrades must carry out their political work under the direction of the party.

On what Ralph and Mike had to say: the reverse of this statement about the majority raising their hands is very obvious to everybody here tonight. You got a little taste of what we went through in the preconvention discussion. You saw all the comrades in the ex-minority raising their hands on a number of organizational questions. I don't believe that they have an organized minority tendency, just as there's no organized majority tendency, but the relations remain. The decisions of the convention don't create an automatic unity. The organized tendencies don't exist any more, but relations of mutual trust and confidence and respect in one another won't come back into existence overnight. They have to be recreated through work.

Bill Massey: One aspect of what Comrade Taplin just said is true. Unity does not come automatically, but it has to be brought about through work, and through conscious effort. That's why the trial of Cagle is an act against the unity and against the building of the party. This is an act, as was stated before, to intimidate comrades who in the past exercised their rights as members of the party to disagree with the majority and to try to win the majority over to their point of view. Well, they failed to win the majority over to their point of view. They have stated to the point of redundancy, and Comrade Feldman, when working with people like you I find it a need to state things to the point of redundancy so as to help you understand, that they are going to carry out the line of the party and since the convention, unless someone wants to get up and disagree, they have been carrying out and intend to go on carrying out and we intend to speak about the needs of unity and democratic centralism, and we intend to keep carrying out that line. You see, Comrade Feldman, you don't only mind the fact that we're talking about carrying out the line, it bothers you that we're carrying out the line. It bothers you because you would like to see, and that opinion is shared both by comrades here in this branch and comrades around the country, and specifically in the national office, that you would like to see us break the discipline of the party and you would encourage us by your provocations to break those so that you could throw us out of the party. Comrade, I've got news for you: if you're going to throw us out of this party, if you're going to throw us out of what we consider the revolutionary movement, you're going to have to revert to traditions other than those of the Trotskyist movement to do it, because we're not going to give you one iota, one centilla of a reason to throw us out of this party. This is our party and we're going to build this party as the party of the American revolution and the party that will lead the American working class and its allies to victory and any puny, contemptuous, intimidation of people who are still wet behind the ears, they have no merit at all. Those who vote for this, and those that vote for this without understanding all of the issues involved, do not only themselves a dishonor, that you do, but worse than that, you do the party a dishonor and you set traditions up in this party that are not in keeping with it. Those who are voting censure under these conditions wear them as a badge of honor knowing that the future will reclaim those errors and correct them.

John Studer: Disregarding the last speech, the relevance of which to the facts of this case I have yet to figure out, I think there's a

couple important things to go over. That is, there is a whole series of concrete events, concrete things that have taken place that clearly demonstrate a systematic conscious attempt to violate the discipline of our party. I think it would be very hard on the face of that evidence for any comrade to not realize there is a conscious violation of discipline involved here. I think no comrade should be cowed, if they feel confident in their decision, from voting however they feel on the basis of that confidence. At the same time, comrades should make sure they understand and feel confident about the vote that they cast.

But the key is two things that are involved here. There was an election that took place on June 8 and 9 of this year in the UAW local at Fremont. Tom was listed as an endorsed candidate of the United Action Caucus, did nothing to get that endorsement off. The party didn't find out about it until after the election had taken place. The branch had voted the previous September to have nothing to do with this caucus and to have all comrades disengage. The branch then had to revote that he disassociate his name from that caucus because he clearly wasn't doing it, which was a violation of our discipline. That vote took place sometime in the summer. This is September 27, three months after that event. Not one single disavowal of that candidacy has appeared. It's very simple. It's a conscious violation of the discipline of our party.

The second is that letter to Gibson. You know, if you think about that letter and what it states for a couple of minutes. A guy writes a letter sayind "Don't give Tom a hard time. We've been trying to be on our best honor because of his internal problems in your party where he's trying to turn around your political viewpoint." If that isn't a conscious effort -- explaining the political events inside our party to a nonmember to the point where that nonmember is attempting to come to campaign rallies and having people endorse our campaign to make it easier for Tom -- that's a very conscious violation of the discipline of our party. It's a very simple factual matter, as well as all the other events that have been gone through. There's no way to get around the facts. You can get up and talk about how it's not aimed at Tom, it's aimed at somebody in D.C., it has nothing to do with Tom, we've all got to unify, it's a wrong trial. In the trial body, Ralph said "I might have been for this trial six months ago, and I might be for it again in thirty days, it's the wrong trial at the wrong time." All these big pleas that do everything except deal with the facts. There's only one way they deal with the facts: that's the corpus dilecti argument. If we could bring in here somebody with 14 bullets that had a sign on it that said "I talked to Tom Cagle and he consciously decided to run in this thing, said it to me," then we'd have some kind of abstract proof. The whole list of events, the concrete things I went through before, is not a body with holes in it. That doesn't work.

In terms of unity, the only way we can have unity is on the basis of whenever someone violates the discipline of this party, they're brought up on it and warned on it. What's involved here is not a motion to expel anyone, from Tom to Ralph or anybody else. What's involved is to bring a comrade up and say that is improper functioning. You cannot violate the discipline of our party, that's what unity is about.

Lauren Charous: The question before the branch is not whether the

party has the right, nor whether the party can, clearly the party can, but whether, in fact, the party should censure Tom Cagle. That's the question. Whether it's wise, whether it's in keeping with the traditions of democratic centralism, whether it serves any purpose, whether it lays the purpose of democratic centralism to a purpose to build the party, or whether it serves no purpose whatsoever. There are two questions involved here. The first question is whether or not there has been a willful violation of discipline clearly proved. I do not feel, upon hearing the evidence, that it has been clearly proved, nor do I feel that it's been proved that it was a willful violation. I think there's a clear margin of doubt. Given that margin of doubt, and given the three months it was sitting around, the question is whether it is wise for the party to bring charges for something that happened in the past.

This is where the "should" comes up. The party can at any time invoke discipline. But will censuring have any effect on the conduct of Tom Cagle, or anyone else, in the future? That's the question. Fred is ridiculous if he thinks anyone in the branch is suddenly going to endorse willful breach of discipline in the future. I can assure you, Fred, as it was proved in the past last fall in the actions of many comrades, they felt that Tom should have been censured then, no one is going to endorse willful breach of discipline in the future. There's no problem about that, whether it's by Cagle or by you. I'll guarantee that there'll be censure, or there'll be whatever's appropriate for the breach of discipline. It doesn't affect the carrying out the line. It doesn't affect it at all. The main question is whether it's going to build the party or whether it will further divide this branch [change of tape] recreate all the old antagonisms, lay bare all the old breaches, not build that mutual confidence we need, and whether bringing up censure for something this old is worth this. Whether it's worth disrupting the building of the conference we're having this weekend and disrupting the branch meeting we're having tonight.

Unity in action, Comrade Fred, means more than just leafletting outside together in the morning. Unity in action means that you present a united front to the outside, that's agreed. But it also means the party does not hold vendettas for comrades for past or present ideological disputes. It means that minority comrades have all the rights in the party. It does mean, in fact, that if the execs are not fairly divided, that's important. That's important when you're talking about unity in action. Don't say that's unimportant. That's very important. When new members are encouraged, by means of slates, to vote for handpicked candidates to ensure a proper exec, when they don't have the knowledge to vote for an exec, that affects the functioning of the branch. It doesn't show unity in action, nor does it protect the rights of all members of the party, contrary to the traditions of Trotskyism to bend over backwards to bring the party together when past disputes are done. You don't bring up something that happened three or four months ago, if you want to lay the party out for the future work.