

December 23, 1975

TO POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jill Fein, the CLUW fraction director in Houston, brought the following charge against Debby Leonard on December 14:

"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."

Attached is a statement presented by Debby Leonard to a trial body in Houston December 17. The trial body, consisting of the executive committee with the addition of Sas Scoggins and excluding Jill Fein, voted to censure Debby. The Houston branch voted to censure Debby at a meeting December 22.

Stu Singer, Houston organizer, says that Debby intends to appeal the decision of the branch.

National Office.

Houston, Texas
December 17, 1975

Statement by Debby Leonard to the Houston Trial Committee

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, ^{the} at 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 SWP'er 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 meeting where I played a leading role in fighting for adoption of the 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} ~~were~~ 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~~

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 ~~x~~ urge you to reconsider.

Deby Leonard