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Letter from Larry Trainor and Steve Chase

July 1, 1969

Jack Barnes: Organizational Secretary
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrade Barnes:

Re: Comrade Linda Sheppard matter.

We are quite surprised at the conclusions drawn by the Administrative Committee and upon its recommendation, accepted by Political Committee. Just how Article II section 7 of the party constitution applies to this case is beyond our understanding. Possibly the Administrative Committee arrived at its decision from the interpretation of the first sentence, "The branch executive committee shall be elected by the membership of the branch and shall be subordinate to the branch membership." If so, we would appreciate an explanation of the Administrative Committee's reasoning on this point.

The background of the question raised by Com. Linda is as follows: the Plenum political report given by Comrade Trainor was received with a minimum of discussion and no disagreements were expressed by anyone and there was no questioning of the speaker (Com. Trainor). This indicates that there was no "tremendous amount of confusion in the branch on this question (SDS)." However, such a small fact could not stand in the way of Com. Linda to talk or seek to talk for the hundredth time on SDS, SMC and the antiwar movement etc. etc. ----. In her exceedingly modest way she admits that she is the only one in Boston that understands the party's line on these questions.

She states that "several comrades spoke to me the following weekend and indicated that they wanted to continue discussion of the Plenum report at the next meeting ----". Is she telling us that several comrades are so stupid that they approve a report and then reverse themselves a few days later? If they questioned or disagreed with the report wouldn't they have done so that night and requested continuation of discussion? Who and what agitated them enough to reverse themselves?

This kind of disruption is a pass-time with Com. Linda who time and again has tried to throw the branch in a turmoil by such methods. It is the duty of a responsible leadership (executive committee) to regulate the business meetings of the branch so that there is a minimum of disruption and that a calm and comradely atmosphere prevails at all times. As Article II Section 7 says in the last sentence, "It shall be the duty of the branch executive committee to direct the activities of the branch and to act with full powers for the branch between branch meetings." Does the first part of this sentence apply to the Sheppard affair? If not -- why not?

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It is interesting to note that six (6) weeks elapsed between the time of the "crime" and the letter writing to New York by Comrade Linda. What was going on in the meantime?

Regarding your anxiety about democratic rights of minorities in the Boston branch that you infer may be suppressed in one way or another. If you have any evidence -- outside of gossip -- will you please call it to our attention as we sure do wish to correct such an outrageous wrong.

Regarding the rights of an executive committee member of the party. We proceed on the fact that membership on the executive committee invokes a special discipline so as to assure smooth functioning of the committee, internally among its members and externally so as to put a responsible leadership to the body it is supposed to lead. To deny the right of a member or members to make a minority report is a very serious matter -- and we fully recognize that fact. At the same time to make a plaything out of the branch leadership and the branch is another matter. No leadership worthy of recognition can tolerate such a position.

If an executive committee member feels that a question is of such importance that the ranks must be informed or that the leadership of the committee is deeply wrong then that member, if denied the right to report to the ranks, should resign from the committee and go to the ranks. That is the Leninist position regarding such a minority in the leadership.

Comrade Linda Sheppard believes that by carrying on a continual campaign of disruption, she can bring matters to such a pitch that "New York will send someone in." She has "educated" innocent and new comrades (that she tries to latch on to) in this stupid concept.

Comradely,
s/Lawrence P. Trainor
s/Stephen Chase
Organizer - Boston Branch

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cc: Linda Sheppard