

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....4 March 1968

Present: Full: Nelson, Turner, Robertson, Stoute(late), Henry(late)  
Alts: Small, Janacek, Ellens Staff: Gordon, Martin(late)

Absent: Alts: Glenn

Meeting convened 8:50 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
  2. General Information and Correspondence
  3. Peace and Freedom Party
    - a. Consequences of Albany NCNP Conference
    - b. Request for guidance from Kinder, Bay Area
  4. PB and National Office Functioning (cont.)
    - a. General Discussion
    - b. Glenn's letter of resignation
    - c. Security
  5. Press

1. Minutes: No change in situation; minutes are our highest priority job now. One problem has been rather heavy use of qualified N.O. personnel for more or less routine assignments in local work.

2. General Information and Correspondence:

- a. "Newsletter" of 17 Feb.: Contains weird response to story in Cliffite organ, International Socialism #39, Winter 1967-8. IS, in its rather decent obituary of Deutscher, mentioned that one of Deutscher's last political acts was that he invited the perpetrators of an alleged atrocity within the movement to his house, heard their side of the story, denounced it as an outrage and threw them out. Newsletter quoted the story, identified it as referring to Tate incident, called it a lie--then went into a mass of detail regarding the incident which more than confirms the IS account! Healyites are obviously relying on Cliffites' good nature and proletarian solidarity not to sue the Newsletter for libel in calling the writer a liar.
- b. S.o.L.: In two months of sales (excluding over-the-counter sales to comrades) we have taken in \$220, spent \$36. We have now placed a few additional ads to promote sales, and also have the list of previous S.o.L. subscribers. We should clear \$400-500 this year as a result of these promotional efforts; after that expect a small continuing trickle of orders.
- c. Military Rights: Are now several anti-war publications aimed at soldiers, The Bond and also Vietnam GI, which ex-ASOC member David Komatsu is associated with. Maury K. confirms that soldiers seem to agree with our characterization of The Bond as dangerously provocative. Letter from Gallatin D. to Seattle comrades catches correct tone for a soldiers' publication: to be political, not just a collection of gripes about army life. We have received first issue of Ft. Polk "GI Voice" edited by Doug Hainline.  
Disc: Stoute, Nelson, Janacek
- d. "New Rank & File": We had originally looked favorably upon Foxites' plans to start a project of this sort and had anticipated co-operation with this new labor newspaper. However, they are in a bloc with the Draperites; Stanley Weir is on the editorial board. He is presently involved in a big federal court case contesting frame-up firings by Bridges' longshore union; Weir's line in practice is that when dealing with corrupt or bureaucratic trade unions the proper tactic is to go to the courts and get the cops to lead the victimized workers back to their jobs. This use of bourgeois courts to police labor is class-collaborationist and ignores the real interest of "impartial" bourgeois democracy toward the unions: not democracy but phony "labor peace". As could be expected from this orientation, Weir's committee

has no interest in the rank and file in the union. As Fox is in bloc with these people on his paper, we cannot support it. Disc: Janacek, Ellens

Motion by Robertson: That we take a hostile attitude toward the "New Rank and Filer" for its class collaborationism in practice and that we look for the opportunity to explain why in our public press. Passed

- e. Committee to Aid the NLF-VN: Extremely cordial letter received from Teague, thanking us for our \$10 sent in solidarity with him against present frame-up.
- f. Ross: Comrade Ross' document, "Reflections on the Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Initiative" was presented to NYC local at meeting of 6 Feb, and was discussed and proposals in it voted on. Disc: Janacek, Nelson
- g. Crawford: Despite his having left Socialist Current and joined the Cliffites, he is still acting as correspondent to us. The Cliffites are actually as rotten ideologically as the Draperites but, working in Britain in a situation of much stronger proletarian consciousness as the objective terrain, they appear more susceptible to Trotskyist ideas and offer more of an opportunity for Marxists. A mitigating feature in Crawford's quitting S.C. may be their pamphlet on the Arab-Israeli conflict which came out prior to his departure. The pamphlet, which was put out by the group although giving the personal views of Sam Levy (their principal leader), had much analysis in common with our own but at the end jumped over to critical support to the Israeli side. One of Crawford's last public acts as an S.C. member was to differ with Levy's views in a subsequent issue of S.C., explicitly in favor of the revolutionary defeatist line of the S.L. Disc: Janacek, Ellens
- h. Spartacist South: Issue #1 has arrived at last.

### 3. Peace and Freedom Party:

- a. Consequences of Albany NCNP Conference: A group from the New York PFP Organizing Committee, run by the Draperites (ISC), went to the Albany, New York Conference of the National Committee for New Politics, presumably to make a big fight and split. Line was classless, third party position; PFP group intended to intervene with two items of propaganda, both aimed at third-party vs. third ticket issue, and proposed amendments to draft NCNP "Convention Call" relating to VN withdrawal, black power, Sen. McCarthy, etc. Two of our comrades attended Conference as observers, were permitted to attend PFP caucus which also included West Side CIPA delegation. Latter have been considering some type of affiliation with PFP group. NCNP Conference itself was attended by 200-250 people; CP evidently had control. CP also controlled "Black Caucus" of 15-20 people, which demanded 50% block vote on all questions, in accordance with Chicago NCNP decision. PFP group had the rug pulled out from under it, as entire NCNP made verbal concessions including willingness to set up third party, supposedly on model of Calif. and Pa. PFP's, called "Freedom and Peace Party". PL was represented at Conference, ended up with representation on NCNP committees along with PFP (ISC) representatives, although PL had originally been registered as "observers" to Conference and had previously maintained hostile line toward NCNP. PFP-ISC verbal line has been effectively co-opted by NCNP; the only tactic which could have prevented this would have been principled insistence on an explicitly labor party or socialist orientation as fundamental basis for any third party attempt. Results also bear out our analysis that in New York state, unlike Calif., there is no real base to try to build a party made up of radical petty-bourgeois elements deeply and entirely estranged from the Democratic Party. Disc: Gordon, Small, Gordon, Robertson, Janacek, Ellens
- b. Request for guidance from Kinder: Comrade Kinder has written us requesting advice on how to proceed after Calif. PFP convention in March. Question was raised of 1) taking our periphery into ACFIite Trade Unionists for a Labor

Party, or 2) setting up a separate labor-oriented organization.

Motion by Robertson: Regarding the questions raised by Comrade Kinder's letter of 10 Feb., received 25 Feb., the P.B. recommends: 1) Primarily, regarding the future of the PFP Labor Party Caucus, that we seek to persuade the rest of the caucus, should a rupture with the PFP take place, to become a Bay Area militant labor committee around a transitional program, able to build trade union caucuses, show a relevant public face, run for office if indicated. 2) Secondly, regarding TULP, we are fundamentally opposed to the existence of this organization as grossly sectarian, with its "We are building the labor party now" line, and at the same time grossly opportunist, with its five point "pure and simple" unionism program which deliberately excludes both the race question and the imperialist Vietnam war. Therefore, our tactics toward TULP, if any, should be to destroy it and pull a chunk of it into a militant labor committee as projected above. We do not wish at any point to take responsibility for the program and antics of TULP; even if we won the local chapter we would still be smeared with its national line. Passed  
Disc: Janacek, Stoute, Henry, Nelson, Janacek, Ellens, Gordon, Small, Robertson, Stoute, Robertson

4. PB and National Office Functioning (cont.):

- a. General: Presentation by Robertson: Wants to develop further the line of thought set forth in the 16 Oct. letter to Geoff, endorsed by the recent CC Plenum. Has felt that the PB for the past several months has been in some respects more of a hindrance than a help, collectively. Except for one full-time functionary, the PB members have such a small fraction of their time and life devoted to party leadership that the familiarity with the actual problems of the organization cannot help but be small and the sense of what is objectively possible and what is not is limited accordingly. Has felt in the PB a sense of impotence and a thrashing about. Again, must insist on the realization that we are not yet a stable propaganda group. Without a recognition of the limitations of our size and resources, one ends up with a sense of panic and a groping for solutions which ultimately resolves itself into exhortations to work better or harder, not a coming to grips with the problems and a sense of where the solutions lie. Certain weaknesses have begun to make themselves felt.

On the political side: On the one hand, a tendency to a too narrow "proletarian" outlook rather like the old Bulgarian "Narrow Socialists" and the 19th century Spanish Socialist Party. (It was no accident that the pre-Bolshevik Marxists in these two overwhelmingly peasant countries took refuge behind purist, sectarian shields.) The discussions we have had where this tendency seemed to be manifested to some extent were quite unsatisfactory, murky and unresolved. As Lenin pointed out, a Bolshevik is also a tribune of the people. The Espartaco comrades have seemed worried that we were becoming a critical wing of Guevarism and/or drifting toward conciliating the SWP. On the other hand, there has been a tendency to be too susceptible to certain forms of radical (not bourgeois) public opinion, which at one point took the form of wanting to side with Mao against the other wing of the Chinese bureaucracy. Politically, we counterpose to both these impulses a conception of how to orient in relation to various bureaucratic strata and sections of the masses peripheral to the proletariat: 1) in the event of a falling out between sections of a bureaucracy we make no critical support of either wing; we do not push pressure politics oriented to a left face of a bureaucracy; 2) at the same time, where such fissures exist or can be opened we intervene to exacerbate and exploit these from the point of view of the

independent revolutionary line and power of the proletariat. For example, as the proper exploitation of the Chinese situation we make demands from the standpoint of the proletariat: to subject the "thought of Mao" to the same allegedly free criticisms that the Maoists make of others, i.e. for real socialist democracy. This means in fact to break with the bureaucracy as such. As a parallel case, to the Guevarists' insistence on "moral production incentives" we demand that Castro be made responsible to the masses; no privileges for the bureaucracy, and that only then is there a basis for socialist incentives. In the context of the many-sided and world-wide split in the Stalinist bloc, communist unity against imperialism means the political revolution. These are the tools with which even a small combat-oriented Marxist organization can intervene. Our tactics are rooted in the united front line developed at the Third and Fourth Congresses of the C.I. (with a left reservation regarding the meaning and application of the "workers' and peasants' government" slogan as adopted by the Fourth Congress). Our position is embodied with great clarity and force in Trotsky's German line of 1929-33 and in his discussions with an SWP delegation in June 1940 (a document rescued from obscurity by the Cochranites in 1953 and printed as a pamphlet by the SLL under the title "Stalinism and Trotskyism in the U.S.A."). The limitations based on class lines of these tactics are well illustrated by J. P. Cannon's line on the Henry Wallace campaign--see SWP Internal Bulletin, Vol. X No. 2, April 1948 (available now as a YSA educational bulletin).

On the organizational side: Fundamental to our present situation is that we are not yet a stable propaganda group. We cannot try to function in accordance with norms which torture us. The amateur status of the PB is a serious weakness; note that despite the felt stranglehold which the paper infrequency and irregularity had over us, the PB was not close enough to the situation to see and propose a step which was possible in our situation: to try to get a full-time editor. Basically, aside from certain quantitative improvements we will only change our functioning through: 1) broadening our membership base and roots, 2) increasing our full-time and politically qualified functionaries, even if only to about three, 3) deepening the consciousness of individuals over time through the interactions of personal struggle involvement and Marxist education.

If there is any serious dispute on these political and organizational propositions (the inevitable and necessary incidental differences in application aside) then it may be necessary to constitute a characteristic tendency within the organization to combat disintegrative moods or currents.

Motion: To table discussion on this point and the rest of the agenda to a special meeting next week. Passed

Meeting adjourned 11:45 p.m.