

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....4 November 1968

Present: Full: Robertson, Nelson Alts: Small, Seymour
 Staff: Gordon Other: Joel S. (NYC Org.)
Absent: Full: Cunningham, Henry, Turner(susp.)
 Staff: Rogers, Martin
Meeting convened 8:45 p.m.

Special Agenda:

1. Supplemental General Information and Correspondence
2. Personnel and Organization
3. Cleveland Conference
4. National Conference Preparations
5. YSA Convention
6. Press

Motion: To permit Comrade Charlotte G. to remain within earshot of the meeting. Passed

1. Supplemental General Information and Correspondence:

- a. Wallace pamphlet: Bay Area Labor Party Committee pamphlet on Wallace included recommendation that workers should vote for SWP candidates, over the objections of G. Pamphlet was essentially directed to white workers, showed some distance from the plight of the Negroes.
- b. Crawford: Latest letter reported Kay Ellens had inquired for materials of C.L.R. James (J.R. Johnson). He replied to her that the SL had already predicted she was off on a Johnson-Forrest kick.
- c. Germany: Non-committal letter received from V. He says it is hard to judge faction fight from a distance--will try to send us his views later.
- d. New York Times: Sunday magazine section of 3 Nov. article entitled "Private Schools for Black Children" contained excellent analysis of the essentially insoluble problems of the ghetto schools.
- e. SWP leaflet: New York SL has produced "What's Happened to the SWP?", written by Small.
- f. Ellens: Ellens and Stoute payed a brief visit to D.C. to urge Maedee to leave the SL. Stoute characterized the SL as "racist". Their super-proletarianism continues unabated--they criticized Maedee for her alleged life of luxury, represented by a \$100-a-month apartment.

2. Personnel and Organization:

- a. Turner: Not having heard from Turner since last PB, Robertson phoned him, was informed that Turner has sent in his resignation. We will defer action until resignation is received.
- b. PB meetings: We will cut back frequency of meetings to monthly as a minimum, with more frequent ones as needed. The reason is that it takes the bulk of two days of working time of the National Chairman and PB Secretary to get one set of minutes produced. This leads to substantial delays. The needs of the comrades around the country will be served better by less frequent PB meetings and more frequent minutes mailings.
- c. G.I. Voice: Since the loss of Hainline, plans for the soldiers organ have not come to fruition. Gallatin has not been func-

tioning regularly; Maury K. was mentioned in the Guardian as a distributor of Vietnam G.I.; we have not heard from Howie B. We have lost Hainline's considerable initiative and talents and a pool of soldiers experienced in our organization and political line. With our remaining resources of 3--Gallatin, a young ex-soldier in Phila. with other personal responsibilities, and a fairly new member in NYC--we do not have the ability to produce a national printed organ directed at soldiers unless it is handled essentially by the N.O. However, this arena is our most promising potential arena of mass work. Therefore, we encourage our friends in the Army to produce local "G.I. Voice" publications and to encourage personal correspondence with interested soldiers in connection with these efforts.

d. Personal Habits: Disc: Seymour, Nelson, Joel S., Seymour, Gordon, Robertson, Small, Nelson, Joel S., Robertson

Motion: In the light of the shift to the right in the U.S. and anticipated difficulties after the election, to direct our National Organizational Secretary to issue a circular shortly, cautioning our locals, members and sympathizers to be particularly scrupulous in protecting the organization against personal conduct which might make the organization vulnerable to action by the authorities, harassment by vigilantes or public embarrassment, in keeping with and in the light of our general policy that comrades' personal conduct is not the concern of the organization unless personal practices become grossly incompatible with political functioning or impinge strongly on the organization by placing it in jeopardy.

Passed

3. Cleveland Conference: Foxite conference of trade unionists will be held Thanksgiving weekend. Our Bay Area local has written them for confirmation of conference arrangements; Detroit has been notified. Comrade Henry has volunteered to write a position paper on the relation between the trade unions and the Negro question. Our delegates should be Nelson and Small from NYC, Kinder from the Bay Area, Steve S. from Chicago, Bill and Kat from Detroit. The Foxites will want to be soft on (1) government intervention in the unions and (2) the primacy of class over the race question. Lots of anti-SLers will be there, including Dave Adrian, Marcusites, Wohlforthites. Against the latter we should use the Adrian-Gilman split out of the CLP in favor of the use of the courts against the bureaucrats and Healy's advocacy and defense of this practice of using cops and courts in International Correspondence. The comrades attending the conference should also take advantage of the opportunity to spend an evening discussing SL internal affairs. Disc: Seymour, Robertson, Nelson, Seymour

4. National Conference Preparations:

a. Perspectives: The proposal is to postpone the Conference to some time between Easter to following the end of school, but to produce a draft of the main Resolution well in advance to stimulate pre-Conference discussion.

Presentation by Robertson: We are a sub-propaganda group. Our strong point is a consistent, correct, sophisticated, attractive political line, but we must make it accessible, get it around through propaganda which must be: (1) political, (2) accessible--frequent and energetically pursued, (3) strongly directed and aimed toward the people we can have an impact on. We need to maintain some exemplary mass work as a demonstration of what we say and so we will know what we are talking about. We must particularly orient our efforts toward (1) NYC: the Marcusites, who are a loose group which is heterogeneous and has grown fast, (2) nationally: the SWP-YSA, which will find itself at an impasse, especially through its overwhelming orientation to the now-defunct anti-war movement and the inability to continue the successes it had come to expect from such centrist maneuvering--under such unfavorable conditions, most of the SWP-YSA will move right or out of politics, with a small fraction moving left, (3) internationally: the British state-caps (Cliff group), who have grown much too fast and where our propaganda is read with interest and considered seriously.

For the first two years of our existence, things went better than expected and our efforts seemed to pay off, sometimes even easily. We tripled our size. In the past two years, things have not gone well--often our correct efforts and hard work did not bring results. This is self-perpetuating through demoralization and a tendency for comrades to do their work in a perfunctory manner because they don't feel anything will work any more. The country is moving right (although this is by no means rock bottom) and under such conditions we begin to get every imaginable deviation, from Ellensism to Scientology. As Roger A. put it when he resigned "The old answers may be right, but they don't satisfy us any more." The tendency is to look for "new" answers which may be wrong but seem "new" even if refuted before 1848. An organization which depends on consciousness cannot provide the Wohlforthite-type fake sense of security of an authoritarian assurance that the people on top have all the answers and the crisis of capitalism is just around the corner. But with conscious comrades we can get years' more serious devotion than fake lefts who burn out and disillusion good people.

The rapid growth we experienced originally had inherent drawbacks which have now matured: the expectation of continual success and resulting sense of dismay when we run into problems, high membership turnover, unassimilated (and sometimes unassimilable) people. We have a quickly-formed cadre with less than superlative human material--and this includes the leadership. During the first year of our downturn, our size was about constant and our turnover was generally a net gain in quality, but we weren't growing. This past year we have actually shrunk in size and had a deep split--numerically not very large, but deep, including about six CC members.

If we go ahead to a Conference now, it will be hard to make it more than a perfunctory one, with inadequate preparation. We

have been in a faction fight for a year and it has now evaporated--this means a different kind of conference requiring a different kind of preparation. In the interim, we should get out the main Resolution for discussion--our old "Tasks and Perspectives" document including its amendments from the Founding Conference, updated in the light of (1) internal factional experience and (2) the change of terrain in the country. We need a shorter, more tightly focused list of priorities. A postponed Conference would allow us to immediately concentrate on finishing catching up with the minutes, getting a SPARTACIST out, making a tour to the South. This seems a more rational allocation of our forces and finances. However, this should be discussed with the comrades around the country, as there may be un-obvious but nonetheless real reasons for an immediate Conference--i.e., a widespread feeling that one is immediately and urgently needed.

Motion: To discuss postponement of the Conference now, tabling decision to next meeting. Passed

Disc: Joel S., Seymour, Gordon, Nelson, Small, Robertson

- b. Status of Documents: We are fairly well caught up except for back minutes and 3 documents: (1) Proletarian vs. Petty-Bourgeois Politics of 21 August signed by Kay E., Jerry E., Shirley S., Marion S.; (2) The Internal Struggle Continues of 7 October by Turner; (3) Ideology and Practice of 21 October by Turner. These are all very long. It is strongly suggested that we not produce these ourselves because (1) we have no obligation to do so, as the authors have resigned; (2) Ellens has produced hers and is sending it around, and Turner is likely to do the same; (3) there is very little new or interesting in these documents; (4) we would like to see the comrades who still have documents in preparation include quotes of interesting and/or characteristic sections of these Minority documents in their own documents.

Motion: To put together factional material in several internal bulletins, with enough copies to be circulated rather heavily among sympathizers and friendly interested parties, in view of the educational value. Passed

5. YSA Conference: YSA is holding an "open" National Convention in Chicago over Thanksgiving. This is especially important for us now in view of the acute crisis they face. We need to intervene with leaflets, Marxist Bulletin sale, contacting. It unfortunately conflicts with the Foxite Conference in Detroit.

6. Press:

Motion: To table this point to next meeting.

Passed

Meeting adjourned 12:15 a.m.