

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 49, October 7, 1976

Present: Blackstock, Berman, Garza, D. Jenness, L. Jenness  
Jones, Lovell, Lund, Lyons, Miah, Seigle, Stapleton,  
Thomas

Guests: Benson, Morell

Chair: Blackstock

AGENDA: 1. United Mineworkers Convention  
2. National Committee Assignments  
3. Communist Party  
4. New Orleans  
5. Death Penalty  
6. Denver  
7. Subdrive  
8. Amadeo Richardson Campaign

1. UNITED MINeworkers CONVENTION  
(Heisler and Cole invited for this point)

Heisler reported on UMWA convention. (See coverage in October 22 Militant.) Heisler is beginning a speaking tour on the UMWA convention and on recent developments in the Steelworkers.

Discussion

2. NATIONAL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Miah reported. Willie Mae Reid and Omari Musa will be joining Militant editorial staff after elections. John Hawkins has agreed to transfer to New York to aid in national direction of Black work. Mac Warren and YSA National Chairperson Nan Bailey have agreed to transfer to Detroit. Maceo Dixon will be made available after the NCAR Convention to be Boston local organizer. Susan Lamont has agreed to transfer to New York for a national assignment.

Discussion

3. COMMUNIST PARTY

Lyons reported. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

4. NEW ORLEANS

Miah reported. (See attached.)

Motion: That the Political Committee take jurisdiction of these charges and refer them to the Control Commission, in accordance with Article VI, Section 1 of the party constitution.

Discussion

Carried.

Motion: To designate Malik Miah as the fifth member of the Control Commission.

Discussion

Carried.

5. DEATH PENALTY

Miah reported. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

6. DENVER

Stapleton reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

7. SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE

(McArthur invited for this point)

McArthur reported on progress in the Militant Subscription drive.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

8. AMADEO RICHARDSON CAMPAIGN

D. Jenness reported that Chelsea branch voted to approve recommendation from Branch Executive Committee not to extend critical support to Richardson campaign.

Discussion

Meeting adjourned

## REPORT ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Several recent contacts with leaders of the Communist Party indicate that there is a deep division in their ranks and in their leadership over their current sectarian stance towards our suit against government surveillance and harassment.

At the Wilmington 10 demonstration in North Carolina last month our comrades passed out copies of the Camejo open letter to Gus Hall asking him to retract his slander that the "SWP is the main staging area for the FBI" and urging the CP to support the suit. Most members of the CP and the Young Workers Liberation League who received copies of the letter did not defend Hall's statements. Many expressed disbelief that he made them, and expressed their support for the SWP and YSA suit.

Recently, a PRDF staff member contacted Simon Gerson, who heads the Hall-Tyner campaign committee. Gerson was quite friendly and expressed interest in the suit. He said that there is a debate in the CP about filing a similar suit.

In Philadelphia, at a recent local union-sponsored event that heard speeches from representatives of the SWP and CP, the Stalinist was asked why the CP didn't support the suit. He responded by saying that the CP is "revolutionary" and doesn't bother with lawyers and lawsuits. After the meeting, Claude Lightfoot, a national leader of the CP who was present at the event, privately told one of our comrades that he disagrees with this position. He said he is in favor of the suit.

In another incident, Frank Wilkinson, an attorney who has often been associated with the CP, told a staff member of PRDF that he can't understand why the CP doesn't support the SWP's suit and launch a similar suit of their own. He said he would raise this with the CP.

The CP is increasingly in an untenable position in refusing to support the suit because of the wide publicity and broad support it is receiving for its exposure of government crimes.

Many former CPers or people in their periphery who were themselves victims of the McCarthy witch-hunt are strong backers of the legal and political offensive that is turning the tables and placing the government in the dock.

Between now and November 2nd there will be many opportunities to leaflet CP and YWLL campaign events with the Camejo open letter to Gus Hall. (A copy of this letter is attached. It can be reproduced locally.) Now is also a good time to approach local leaders and members of the CP about becoming sponsors of the PRDF.

The CP was recently forced to reverse its stand on the SWP's right to be on the ballot. We hope now to force them to reverse their stand on the suit. This would strengthen the fight against government surveillance and harassment.

# An Open Letter to Gus Hall

*Presidential candidate of the Communist Party*

## from Peter Camejo

*Socialist Workers Party candidate for president*

Dear Friend:

I am writing about a serious matter involving the need for unity in the fight against government harassment and spying.

At a news conference in San Francisco August 5, you charged that documents obtained by the Socialist Workers party through its lawsuit against the government show that the SWP is a "staging area for the FBI."

Your accusation was broadcast that evening by radio station KYA in San Francisco. Announcer Larry Brownell reported, "Hall denied that he's trying to keep the SWP off the [California] ballot, but he also claimed that they're nothing but a front for the FBI."

The broadcast switched to a recording of your comments. "The Socialist Workers party has become for many years now the staging area for the FBI," you said. "And you know from the exposés it's obvious that the Socialist Workers party has become the *main* staging area for the FBI in the left movement in general."

At that same press conference, you also said, "The FBI is using the [SWP] suit for its own purposes. And not one shred of meaningful material has been produced by these revelations."

This last assertion is simply incredible. Well-known civil liberties attorney William Kunstler recently wrote that the SWP's suit "has breached the dam erected by J. Edgar Hoover that for decades hid the excesses of the bureau from the eyes of all of us. . . . In doing so, the SWP has made an incalculable contribution to the rights and liberties of all Americans whether they subscribe to its political principles or not.

"It is my fervent hope," Kunstler continued, "that the people of this country will understand the enormous debt which they owe to this courageous and inspirational party."

A recent issue of the Puerto Rican Socialist party's *Claridad* said that the SWP "has, to its credit, led the campaign of revelations against the FBI. . . ."

And even your own newspaper, the *Daily World*, recently noted the importance of the SWP's lawsuit. An article in the August 12 "U.S. at Midweek" column by Conrad Komorowski reported, "Exposures of FBI violations of the constitutional rights of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers party . . . have received publicity and been important in exposing FBI policies and practices."

A July 30 *Daily World* editorial also commented on the suit, adding, "This is the tip of an iceberg, nine-tenths of which is still hidden, including the entire story of the FBI's war against the Communist party, the Black liberation movement, and so on."

Yes, these revelations are just the tip of the iceberg. And that is exactly what is most dangerous about your charge that the SWP is a "staging area for the FBI."

The FBI uses infiltrators and informers against *every* progressive movement for social change: Black organizations, trade unions, the women's movement, antiwar groups, and political parties such as the CP and the SWP.

We hope that the FBI and other agencies will soon be forced to release their files on all these organizations, including the operations that have victimized your party and its supporters for so long.

The way to fight the FBI's disruption game is not to go around spreading false and slanderous charges against other political groups. What is needed is a united campaign by all victims of government harassment to expose and halt the dirty tricks that endanger the rights of all Americans.

Earlier this summer two articles in the *Daily World* smeared the efforts of the SWP and other small parties to get on the ballot. The authors of those statements—Matty Berkelhammer and Victor Perlo—later retracted these statements, supporting the ballot rights of all parties.

I urge you to join with hundreds of organizations and prominent defenders of civil liberties in endorsing the Political Rights Defense Fund, which is coordinating support for this massive lawsuit.

Among the fund's sponsors are many trade-union locals and groups such as the National Lawyers Guild, Operation PUSH, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, and the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression; activists such as Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Anne Braden, Frank Wilkinson, and Daniel Ellsberg; actors and entertainers such as Pete Seeger, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, John Randolph, and Jane Fonda; political figures such as Ronald Dellums, John Conyers, and Eugene McCarthy; and trade unionists such as César Chávez and Victor Reuther.

I hope that you will soon add your name to this growing list of endorsers.

In solidarity,

*Peter Camejo*  
Peter Camejo

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October 6, 1976

To: Political Committee of the SWP

We as members of the New Orleans Socialist Workers Party branch bring charges against Masheer Fardan for striking Gretta Biback on October 3. We recommend that the Political Committee take jurisdiction over this matter.

/s/ Pearl Chertov

/s/ Derrick Morrison

## Report on the Death Penalty

by Malik Miah, October 7, 1976

On October 4 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to reconsider its July 2 decision upholding the death penalty. The court lifted the stay that has been blocking states with prisoners on death row from executing them. According to the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, this decision could lead to the first execution within six to eight weeks in the states of Georgia, Texas, and Florida, whose death penalty laws were specifically upheld in the July ruling. (See October 15 Militant for more details.)

In Georgia, Texas, and Florida, the state governments have all indicated their intention to apply the new laws as soon as legally possible. It is also expected that some states that do not at present have capital punishment laws will enact new legislation to fit the court's guidelines. Louisiana, for example, has already rewritten its laws in order to railroad and execute young Blacks like Gary Tyler.

Thus, it is likely that in the next few weeks or even days, some state will announce who and when they intend to murder.

A broad-based movement is needed to respond to this barbaric attack on human life. Branches should attempt to organize or help initiate forums, rallies, picket lines, and demonstrations demanding an end to legalized murder. We should urge NAACP branches, Black community organizations, civil liberties groups, trade unions, women's organizations, student groups, and others to participate in this campaign. The last month of our election campaign can be used to expose capitalist injustice and explain why a nationwide protest movement is the only way to stay the hands of the government.

Increasing our educational campaign on capital punishment is also important because many people, including many Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos, have illusions that the death penalty will deter crime in their communities. Explaining the history of capital punishment and its relationship to capitalist justice will be one way to help cut through these illusions.

The National Student Coalition Against Racism is also stepping up its political and educational campaign against the death penalty. NSCAR has invited representatives of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and ACLU to speak and/or lead workshops at its November 19-21 conference.

Reports on anti-death-penalty activities should be sent to the National Office.