

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 17, April 20, 1979

Present: Barnes, Britton, Clark, Horowitz, Jaquith, D. Jenness, Kramer, Lyons, Morell, Ring, Sedwick, Seigle, Waters

Guests: Miah, Sheppard

Chair: Barnes

- AGENDA:
1. American Agriculture and the Working Farmer
  2. Party Suit
  3. Wohlforth Correspondence
  4. Leadership and Election of Political Committee
  5. National Steel Fraction Meeting and Newport News
  6. Convention Call
  7. Plenum Schedule and Rules
  8. Canadian Convention

1. AMERICAN AGRICULTURE AND THE WORKING FARMER  
(Hart and Staggs invited for this point.)

D. Jenness reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the general line of the report for presentation to the plenum.

Carried.

2. PARTY SUIT  
(Rudenstein invited for this point.)

Seigle reported on recent developments in suit.

Discussion

3. WOHLFORTH CORRESPONDENCE

Seigle reported on proposed reply to letter from Wohlforth.  
(See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the proposed reply.

Carried.

(over)

4. LEADERSHIP AND ELECTION OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Waters reported on proposals for plenum on incoming Political Committee. 1) That the Political Committee consist of sixteen members, including one to be selected by the YSA National Executive Committee. 2) That the following fifteen regular members of the National Committee resident in New York/New Jersey able to meet on call be nominated: Barnes, Britton, Clark, Dixon, Hawkins, Horowitz, Jaquith, D. Jenness, Kramer, Lyons, Morell, Ring, Seigle, Stone, Waters.

Discussion

Motion: To approve report for presentation to the plenum.

Carried.

5. NATIONAL STEEL FRACTION MEETING AND NEWPORT NEWS

(Cole and Musa invited for this point.)

Lyons reported on national steel fraction in Chicago April 14-15 and on support activities for Newport News strikers.

Discussion

6. CONVENTION CALL

Barnes reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the Convention Call for presentation to the plenum. (See attached.)

Carried.

7. PLENUM SCHEDULE AND RULES

Barnes reported.

D. Jenness reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the schedule and rules. (See attached.)

Carried.

8. CANADIAN CONVENTION

(Baron, Baumann, and Pérez invited for this point.)

Sheppard reported.

Discussion

Meeting adjourned.

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March 31, 1979

To the Political Committee:

Dear Comrades,

I request further clarification as to the meaning of Larry Seigle's letter of March 16th to David Keil which has been endorsed by the Political Committee.

It has been a norm in our party since its origins for discussion contributions to be submitted from time to time by groups of comrades as well as by individual comrades. This has been the case in every pre-convention discussion in my memory including the last one. Such joint contributions have also been made to district and local conventions around the country over the past two years.

Obviously a discussion contribution so submitted must first be circulated among the comrades of like views, editorial or political changes made, and general agreement reached prior to submission to discussion bulletins.

It would be a great mistake to view such a natural process as factional or even tendency formation. The record of such contributions illustrates that in most cases these contributions simply reflect episodic agreement of two or more comrades on a question the comrades do not even feel require a tendency formation not to mention faction. Succeeding discussion periods reveal different groups of comrades writing on different issues. This is to me a healthy normal process in the internal life of a democratic Centralist organization.

Is Larry Seigle and the Political Committee suggesting that this well established practice in our party is now illegal and subject to disciplinary action?

I have reread the 1965 resolution on organization which Comrade Seigle quotes. The section in question is a description of a permanent factional organization. But there is a huge difference between the literary collaboration of comrades on discussion material and a permanent factional organization.

The case of Keil appears to me to be very clear unless Political Committee comrades possess information I do not have. I have not received material from or even seen or heard from this comrade since I left New York City almost two years ago. So if, in the interim, he has organized a permanent faction which is disrupting work in the New York area I would have no knowledge of it. If this is the case then Comrade Seigle should produce the evidence to support this accusation and not simply accuse the comrade of a normal activity he has engaged in from time to time for many years and which other comrades also engage in.

Keil has held a different position on Cuba for at least five years and has written material for discussion bulletins on this in the last two pre-convention periods. No doubt in the course of

This

A long period of time one or two or more individual comrades have come to share his viewpoint in general. With a pre-convention period coming up it seems to be politically necessary for Keil to solicit the opinions of these comrades prior to submitting material for discussion. To act in any other way would be politically irresponsible on his part.

We must also note that the National Committee Plenum voted unanimously on Tuesday, December 19th to hold a literary discussion on Cuba prior to the pre-convention discussion period. This discussion was formally opened by the Political Committee on February 23rd. Again it would be natural and correct for comrades in the ranks interested in this question to begin work and collaboration on literary contributions following the Plenum.

I think this matter will appear clearer if we reassert the basic principles of democratic centralism. If I state them incorrectly I would appreciate the comrades of the Political Committee correcting me. Under conditions where a difference of opinion exists in the party, the majority views holds all rights as far as the party's line and activity to the external world is concerned. The majority view is what appears in the press and directs the concrete work of the party. All comrades, no matter what their views, must assist the party in carrying out this line.

However, internal<sup>ly</sup> the situation is different. The majority has the obligation to organize the internal discussion process within the framework and norms of the party in an objective manner and the minority has the obligation to conduct the presentation of its views within that framework. But the Majority~~s~~ has no additional rights as an ideological tendency which the minority does not also have. The two or more tendencies are equal before the party membership to compete for the views of that membership.

Let us now look concretely at the present situation. A division has taken place at the December 16-19, 1978 National Committee Plenum. There is now a distinct majority opinion on the nature of Cuba and two opposing minority opinions. The minority opinions are held by three full members of the NC and one alternate.

Since December 19th, the majority must conduct itself by the exact same set of rules that the minorities conduct themselves.

Concretely, if Comrade Keil is in violation of party organizational rules in circulating a discussion article to like-minded comrades, then the majority comrades in West St. will be in violation of party organizational rules, should they circulate among themselves a document, for example, answering the minority positions put forward at the plenum.

Of course, in my opinion, neither Keil nor the party leadership comrades (if they are also circulating discussion material), would be in violation of party rules. They would simply be acting

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as responsible political people getting ideas of co-thinkers on a political position prior to submission of a document to the whole party.

Let me raise two examples where I believe the majority comrades have not used their best judgement over the past period. I believe, as I have previously written to the center, that the comrades did not use their best judgement in holding internal classes on Cuba which presented only the viewpoint of the majority on the question. Such classes tend to unfairly line up the rank and file prior to a discussion on all views and thus interfere with the democratic processes.

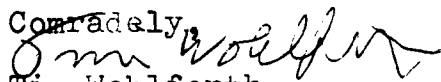
Of course I realize that if minority comrades also presented their views in such classes then there would be a tendency for the classes to become like pre-convention discussion. That is why it would have been better judgement not to hold the classes at all. This was the decision we took in relation to classes on the recent history of the Fourth International two years ago when there were a number of former IT members in the party.

Secondly, I believe that the Political Committee has not used the best judgement in carrying out the decision of the Plenum to hold a literary discussion on Cuba and other matters. The Political Committee did not formally open this discussion until February 23rd. That is a gap of two months. Tomorrow is April 1st and the first Cuba discussion bulletin has yet to appear. That is a gap of over three months. I submitted my contribution to that discussion on January 28th.

The net result of this inactivity in carry out leadership responsibilities in organizing a literary discussion is that no such discussion will take place. It will dovetail the pre-convention period.

I would appreciate very much hearing the Political Committee's views on these matters.

Comradely,

  
Tim Wohlforth

Full Member, National Committee

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
April 21, 1979

Tim Wohlforth  
San Francisco

Dear Tim,

On April 20, the Political Committee discussed your letter raising questions about what we had told Dave Keil concerning his circulation of documents outside of party channels.

I would like to respond to one question you pose: There are no accusations against Comrade Keil based on information not in the letter. We called to his attention a violation of our procedures and organizational norms. We have no reason to think he has violated these procedures since then. There are no charges of any kind against him.

I hope to be able to discuss with you at the plenum next week the more general points you raise.

In any case, as soon as possible after the plenum, we will send you a letter outlining the thinking of the PC on the various points you raise in your letter concerning the Keil matter.

Comradely,



Larry Seigle

Proposed Plenum Schedule (April 28-May 2, 1979)

Saturday, April 28

- 9:30 - 9:45 Organization of Plenum (1/4 hour)
- 9:45 - 11:00 World Political Report, Political Committee Reporter (1 1/4 hours)
- 11:00 - 12:15 World Political Report, United Secretariat Majority Reporter (1 1/4 hours)
- 12:15 - 1:45 Lunch (1 1/2 hours)
- 1:45 - 5:45 Discussion (4 hours)
- 5:45 - 6:15 Summaries (1/2 hour)

Sunday, April 29

- 9:30 - 10:30 1980 Presidential Ticket and Labor Party Campaign (1 hour)
- 10:30 - 1:00 Discussion (2 1/2 hours)
- 1:00 - 2:30 Lunch (1 1/2 hours)
- 2:30 - 2:45 Summary (1/4 hour)
- 2:45 - 4:00 Political Resolution Report (1 1/4 hours)
- 4:00 - 5:30 Discussion (4 hours total)
- 5:30 - 6:30 Dinner (served at plenum site) (1 hour)
- 6:30 - 9:00 Discussion, continued (2 1/2 hours)
- 9:00 - 9:15 Summary (1/4 hour)

Monday, April 30

- 9:30 - 10:45 Youth Report (1 1/4 hours)
- 10:45 - 12:45 Discussion (3 hours total)
- 12:45 - 2:15 Lunch (1 1/2 hours)
- 2:15 - 3:15 Discussion, continued (1 hour)
- 3:15 - 3:30 Summary (1/4 hour)
- 3:30 - 4:45 Organization and Labor Report (1 1/4 hours)
- 4:45 - 7:15 Discussion (4 hours total)

(over)



Proposed Plenum Schedule/2

Tuesday, May 1

- 9:30 - 11:00 Discussion, continued (1 1/2 hours)  
11:00 - 11:15 Summary (1/4 hour)  
11:15 - 12:15 Gay Liberation (1 hour)  
12:15 - 1:45 Lunch (1 1/2 hours)  
1:45 - 4:15 Discussion (2 1/2 hours)  
4:15 - 4:30 Summary (1/4 hour)  
4:30 - 5:30 American Agriculture and the Working Farmer (1 hour)  
5:30 - 6:30 Dinner (served at plenum site) (1 hour)  
6:30 - 8:30 Discussion (2 hours)  
8:30 - 8:45 Summary (1/4 hour)

Wednesday, May 2

- 9:30 - 10:45 Leadership and Election of Political Committee (1 1/4 hours)  
10:45 - 12:45 Discussion (3 hours total)  
12:45 - 2:15 Lunch (1 1/2 hours)  
2:15 - 3:15 Discussion, continued (1 hour)  
3:15 - 3:30 Summary (1/4 hour)  
3:30 - 4:45 World Movement Report (1 1/4 hours)  
4:45 - 6:45 Discussion (2 hours)  
6:45 - 7:00 Summary (1/4 hour)  
7:00 - 7:30 Convention Call (1/2 hour)

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## ORGANIZATION OF THE PLENUM

Motion: To approve the following procedural recommendations:

1. That in cases of procedural disputes, discussion be limited to two speakers, one for and one against, and that each speaker be limited to two minutes.
2. That general discussion be limited to eight minutes per speaker and that no one speak twice until all who wish to speak have already done so.
3. That the Presiding Committee consist of: Barnes, Horowitz, D. Jenness, Lyons, Miah, Sedwick, Seigle, Sheppard, Waters, Zimmermann.
4. To designate Bombaro, Murphy, Robohm, and Roche as secretaries.
5. To invite as observers: Control Commission members, heads of national departments, members of the YSA National Executive Committee, district organizers, local organizers, branch organizers, and special guests.
6. To give voice to all organizers during discussion of the Youth Report and to refer to Presiding Committee proposal for other points to which organizers will have voice.

Motion: To approve the following agenda:

1. Organization of the Plenum
2. World Political Report
3. 1980 Presidential Ticket and Labor Party Campaign
4. Political Resolution
5. Youth Report
6. Organization and Labor Report
7. Gay Liberation
8. American Agriculture and the Working Farmer
9. Leadership and Election of Political Committee
10. World Movement Report
11. Convention Call

# Call for the Thirtieth National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party

May 2, 1979

## TO DISTRICTS, LOCALS, BRANCHES, AND MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Pursuant to the provisions of the party constitution, the National Committee hereby calls the Thirtieth National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party to convene in Ohio at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 5 and continue through seven days (August 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1979).

### AGENDA

The National Committee proposes the following agenda for the convention:

- World Congress Resolutions
- World Congress Women's Liberation Resolution
- Cuba
- Political Resolution
- Political Reports
- Organization and Trade-Union Reports
- Youth Report
- World Movement
- Election of National Committee

### PRECONVENTION DISCUSSION

The party preconvention discussion is formally opened May 2, 1979. The *Discussion Bulletin* is open for all party members and provisional members on the subjects listed in the agenda or others which they may wish to present for the consideration of the party. As authorized by the party constitution, the Political Committee has set a deadline of the last business mail of July 20, 1979, for acceptance of preconvention discussion articles for the bulletin.

Branch membership meetings shall be arranged for discussion of the various subjects on the agenda. Our traditional provisions and safeguards for the adequate and free presentation of all points of view shall govern all discussion.

### CONVENTION ASSESSMENT

As authorized by the party constitution, a convention assessment of \$18.00 per member is hereby levied, the payment of which is obligatory for every member not totally unemployed. This assessment is also requested from provisional members who are not totally unemployed.

### BASIS OF REPRESENTATION

1. Representation from the branches shall be as follows: One delegate for the first 12 members or less, and one additional delegate for each 12 additional members or major fraction thereof (6 or more constituting a major fraction).

2. Delegates are to be elected by branches in accordance with the actual number of members in good standing who have been admitted to the party prior to July 22, 1979, and who have paid their convention assessment, as certified by the branch executive committee on the day of voting.

3. Branches organized after May 7, 1979, except for those constituted through a division or consolidation of existing branches, are entitled to send fraternal delegates as provided by the party constitution.

4. Members admitted to the party after July 22, 1979, are entitled to voice in the party discussion but no vote on resolutions or in the selection of delegates.

5. Absentee votes on political resolutions and in the election of delegates shall not be permitted except in clearly established cases of occupational necessity, illness, or party assignment. In all such cases the votes must be submitted in writing and recognized by motion at the branch meeting at the time of the branch voting.

6. Members transferring from one branch to another within the same locality subsequent to May 7, 1979, must vote in the branch from which they transferred.

### PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

In case of political differences defined by conflicting resolutions, the election of delegates in the branches is to be on the basis of the vote on resolution or resolutions voted on at the meeting at which the delegates are to be elected. Members voting for a given resolution designate the delegate or delegates to which they are entitled on the basis of proportional representation laid down in this call, the designations to be ratified by the branch. Abstentions in no case count as votes.

1. If there are two counterposed political positions, the delegates are apportioned between the majority and the minority in proportion to the vote each receives. The percentage of the vote received by the majority, multiplied by the number of delegates the branch is entitled to, is rounded off to the nearest whole number to give the number of delegates going to the majority. The remainder are assigned to the minority.

2. If there are three or more positions, those positions which received too few votes to possibly get a delegate are eliminated first, beginning with the smallest. That is, if the percentage of the vote received by a position is multiplied by the number of delegates the branch is entitled to, and the result is "0" when rounded off, this position is not considered and its votes are subtracted from the total vote. After such positions have been eliminated, the delegates are apportioned to the remaining positions, beginning with the one with the highest vote. Using the new vote total, the percentage received by the position with the highest vote is multiplied by the number of delegates the branch is entitled to and the result is rounded off to the nearest whole number, to give the number of delegates going to this position. The same procedure is repeated with the position receiving the second highest vote, and so on, until all the delegates the branch is entitled to have been apportioned.

### CONVENTION ATTENDANCE

The National Committee proposes that all party members in good standing attend the convention as visitors, and that friends may be admitted to the sessions provided they have been invited by a branch.

Fraternally yours,  
NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY  
Jack Barnes  
National Secretary