

X: PC, TUCC

Trade-Union Coordinating Committee Meeting - October 16, 1979

Present: Hawkins, Jenness, Lovell, Lyons, Mailot, Morell

Guests: Cole, Leonard, Rose

Iran Defense - Craig H. reported on response among unionists to campaign to save lives of 14. Discussion held on ways to step up support among union officials in addition to continuing petition campaign among co-workers. Craig will suggest to committee that upcoming AFL-CIO and DSOC conventions would be good places to have further discussions with union officials.

AFL-CIO Convention - Lyons proposed that Hawkins head up participation for event which will begin Nov. 15 in Washington D.C. Our objectives are to get a good report for the Militant and to urge leaders of Nicaragua solidarity movement and LERN campaign, as well as Iranian defense committee to take advantage of gathering of top labor officials to discuss and win support for these campaigns with them.

New Orleans report - (guests Rick, Larry S. Peter S.) Tom L. reported on general situation in branch and character of organizing drive at Avondale. There are disagreements in branch on how to proceed in yard, relations of comrades in yard to steel fraction and branch, and relation of YSA to branch.

General discussion on how to proceed.

Militant sales people have been harassed outside Avondale. Peter S. will go down to New Orleans to discuss possibilities of responding.

Nicaragua Solidarity - (guests Fred Halstead, Rick, Osborne H.) Doug initiated discussion on participation in upcoming November 15 conference on Nicaragua to be held in Detroit. Hawkins to draft letter to branches encouraging participation.

Y to PC
members who
haven't
read.

Xs: OC, TUCC, Tom L

(RETURN ORIGINAL TO
YSA)

New Orleans Tour Report - Rick - 10/5 - 10/8 79

There are nine comrades in the chapter, eight are dual members. There's one woman, three blacks, and one junior high school student.

The exec is John C., Nels, Stewart, and Rich.

The Avondale fraction members in the YSA are John C., Nels, George, and Glen.

There are two YSA comrades in Equitable shipyards - Rich and Stewart.

Four YSA comrades are applying to Avondale - Dywond, Laura, Rich and Stewart.

Seven YSA comrades have transferred there since the summer. Two comrades have been released since Oberlin and Steve D. has transferred back to the Bay Area for personal reasons.

John C. is the YSA organizer and is on the Avondale fraction. He's also on the Kaiser-Avondale joint steering committee along with Greg and Derrick. He's been in the YSA about one and a half years, is 25 years old, and is somewhat inexperienced. He plays an important role on the Avondale fraction and has been under a lot of pressure recently.

Nels just got hired at Avondale a week ago and is a key person for building a strong YSA. He's the YSA campaign director and should play a big role in the Avondale fraction. He's 26 years old and joined in 1976.

Rich works at Equitable shipyards and is assigned to the joint party - YSA education and forums committee. He's been in New Orleans about one year, is 22 years old and has been in the YSA seven years.

Laura just transferred from Boston and has been in the YSA five and a half years. She's assigned to the campaign committee and Iran defense work and is 23 years old. She's been trying to get into Avondale but has had difficulty getting hired so far.

Stewart is the YSA sales director and works at Equitable shipyards. He transferred from Washington D.C., is 21 years old and will be applying at Avondale soon.

George transferred from Boston, has been in the YSA about one and a half years, and is 24 years old. He's the YSA financial director and has been working at Avondale a few weeks.

Derek B. is a 13 year old junior high school student who joined the YSA in April. He's very sharp, has read several Pathfinder books and pamphlets, sells the YS and Militant at school and on Saturday, and is assigned to the campaign committee. He's giving the YSA greetings at the October 24 campaign rally and is bringing a couple teachers to it as well. He's very active and has a contact at his school who's interested in joining the YSA.

Dywond just transferred from St. Louis this summer and is 18 years old. He works as a foofer right now and is supposed to apply at Avondale. He's had a series of problems since going to New Orleans, was disorganized at first, and taken a while to become active. He played a bad role at the YSA chapter meeting I attended, looks up to Derrick and Rashad voicing some of their ideas, and tends to be unserious.

Glen is a recent transfer and is working at Avondale. He just took a six week leave for personal reasons and is supposed to have good potential. I wasn't able to meet with him while I was there.

New Orleans is basically a new YSA chapter, because of the comrades who have transferred there to get into Avondale. The chapter has a wealth of leadership which is beginning to work together. Nels and John C. are the two central leaders. Most of the comrades except Dywond agreed that a big problem in the chapter up to now has been the lack of any real political discussion in the chapter. This includes any chapter reports or discussions on Avondale.

This flows from certain misconceptions as to the role of the YSA chapter since the YSA turn. Formerly, the distinction between YSA and party discussion was easier to figure out. The chapter has tended to lose sight of its perspectives up until recently, although they have been very clear about getting into industry. Most comrades including John C. agree that the chapter has tended to have no separate identity from the branch. Little or no political discussion seems to have taken place in the chapter for quite a while. Chapter meetings are bi-weekly because the comrades had felt that there weren't enough things to discuss that would warrant weekly meetings. Nels and John C. agree this should be changed, and that the chapter should begin to hold weekly meetings but Dywond disagrees. This will be discussed soon in the chapter.

The lack of direction in the branch has added to the disorientation in the YSA chapter. The influx of ten comrades into the branch, six of whom are in the YSA is beginning to turn this situation around. Leaving aside the larger problem in the Avondale fraction and the branch, YSA and party collaboration is good. There is a joint campaign committee, sales committee, and an educational and forums committee.

SALES

The chapter sold 55 YS's out of a goal of 125 in September. And subsequently lowered their goal to 75 for October. This is low however the chapter has six comrades working in the shipyards (none of whom can sell openly on the job). They work monday through friday and are all on day shift. The only campus they regularly sell at is Delgado Community College where they've organized a night sale once a week. They've sold around 30 YS's so far in October. Sales are beginning to be organized better now. The party and YSA held a joint sales mobilization the saturday

I was there. It was very successful. Comrades sold 19 YS's. The branch and YSA sales have been organized so that all comrades take the Militant, PM and YS while selling. The YSA also plans to begin selling the YS to Avondale co-workers as they meet with contacts off the job.

FINANCES

The fund drive goal is \$400 which is somewhat low for a chapter of nine, six of whom have industrial jobs. The individual pledges proposed at the YSA T&P was \$25. This is low, although, taking certain things into consideration it might be hard for most comrades to increase their pledges. All the recent transfers are just getting settled, looking for cars, and in general need extra cash. In addition, the branch is on a sustainer raising campaign. The avondale fraction has taken a goal of trying to increase their average branch sustainer pledges to \$20 a week. The hourly starting wage at Avondale is \$4.50. Nels is going to raise his fund drive pledge and will work on seeing if other comrades can raise pledges. The average sustainer pledge to the YSA is about \$3.00. This was the projection made at the YSA T&P based on the chapter expenses. The finances are still a little disorganized as George was made financial director only a couple of weeks ago.

CAMPAIGN

The local campaign of Greg Nelson for governor ends in November. Greg's campaign has received some good coverage and he's been able to debate the democrats and republicans on TV and radio. The comrades want to try and maintain some continuity with the national campaign. Matilde will be there later in October. They're planning a rally which they're trying to get some local union contacts to speak at. Muhammad Oliver may also speak at the rally. The YSA speaker is going to be Derek B. The campaign's also got a press conference planned, plantgate appearances at Kaiser and Avondale, but no meetings on campus.

In general the chapter has a lot of potential and the comrades have been very successful getting into Avondale so far. IT's a homogeneous chapter, and except for Dywond there are none of the personal or political conflicts that are effecting the branch. The problems in the branch can't help but have some effect on the YSA, though, especially because of the key role the YSA is playing in building the Avondale fraction, which lies at the heart of the disagreements among comrades in New Orleans. John C. raised with me that he thinks that they should change organizers before the YSA convention. John's been organizer for almost a year now. We agreed that Nels would be a good choice for organizer. I talked about this with Karen also. This would be an important move in consolidating a strong chapter there.

AVONDALE

I assume comrades have read Tom Leonard's letter about our perspectives at Avondale so I'll only reiterate some of the general points concerning the party and YSA's work at Avondale. We've decided to colonize the Avondale shipyards because it

fits a certain criteria which lead to the possibility of a successful organizing drive similar to the one at Newport News. These are: 1) a large concentration of workers - 10,000 at Avondale; 2) a good composition - 60% black and predominantly young, younger than Newport News; 3) the intention of the USWA to launch an organizing drive. An additional factor is the tremendous potential for local solidarity because of the large number of people who have worked at Avondale at one time or another. There's a high turnover at Avondale. As well, the poor working conditions there have been widely publicized in the New Orleans press. In addition, because the steelworkers are organizing the drive there's a good potential for the national steel fraction to help build a solidarity campaign.

Our intention is to build a Trotskyist tendency at Avondale. As proposed in the branch T&P the fraction perspectives are to make contacts and draw a periphery around us, and to get some comrades onto the organizing committee being built by the USWA international representatives.

In this way we'll be in the best position when the organizing drive starts. Currently Derrick is the only comrade on the OC. We're trying to get John C. and Mike on it also. Recently Derrick has changed his mind and doesn't think any more comrades should try and get on the OC right now. He feels it would look strange if comrades who've been hired recently try to get on. In spite of this, John C. has met with a USWA rep. who told him he should bring four contacts to the OC before they would consider him joining. John says they were cautious and are probably checking him out. This is probably because of the recent setback when some of the key leaders of the OC were fired.

Though comrades can't be open socialists on the job, the fraction is supposed to start making contacts. They can talk politics on the job. The idea is to meet with contacts off the job, show them our press, and get them to forums and campaign events. The YSA comrades are enthusiastic about the possibilities of drawing around some contacts and want to move ahead. Nels told me about a conversation he had during his orientation session. He talked about a whole range of political issues to someone.

Some of the YSA'ers at Avondale told me that Derrick doesn't really support our being more open. Contact work hasn't been organized by the fraction. It's left up to the individual comrades. From what I could tell Derrick has a pessimistic and cynical attitude towards being more open. A couple of times when comrades referred to our perspective of coming aboveground at Avondale, including during the branch meeting, Derrick laughed, implying that it was a joke.

According to YSA comrades the resentment towards the company is widespread. In general workers know there's an organizing drive in the works, but suffer from a lack of information. There are an abundance of stool pigeons in the shipyard and the workers are very cautious about mentioning the word union on the job.

The YSA'ers have received little help in filling out applications. The fraction doesn't help organize comrades in applying. In fact, Derrick told Nels he shouldn't apply. Laura

who has had some experience as a welder in Boston has applied and gone back two or three times to try and get hired. They've repeatedly told her there were no openings. But male comrades with no experience were hired the same day she was there. She wants to launch a discrimination suit. I talked to Tom Leonard in Atlanta about this. He suggested we could contact the Now chapter and ACLU and see if they'd help sponsor a suit. This should be discussed and moved on.

The Avondale fraction meets bi-weekly. There are four YSA comrades who have either applied or will apply shortly at Avondale. Up until now the comrades who've applied have been hired right away except for Laura. We could have up to eight YSA'ers on the fraction in the near future.

BRANCH

Avondale is at the root of the conflicts in the New Orleans branch. There's a tendency by some comrades who've been in New Orleans for a long time to be conservative about the party's campaigns. Derrick champions these views. These comrades are out of touch with the national perspectives and look at New Orleans as being exceptional. They aren't as attuned to the changes taking place in the south as comrades who've recently transferred there. Also Derrick seems to disagree with the party's analysis of the extent of the radicalization. This leads to a conservative outlook for the branch campaigns and at Avondale.

This outlook directly clashes with those of the comrades who've just transferred to New Orleans, in particular. While the YSA comrades on the Avondale fraction want to move ahead, and become more open Derrick continues to be a hindrance for comrades moving in this direction. This conflict has led to a lack of direction and clarity for the Avondale fraction.

NICARAGUA

The branch and chapter are just beginning to get their Nicaragua solidarity work off the ground. A very well attended forum with 50 people on Nicaragua was held a couple weeks ago. A report on Nicaragua was presented to the branch exec. It outlined the groups and organizations involved in Nicaraguan solidarity work in New Orleans.

The first is CERAN - the Committee for Relief and Aid to Nicaragua. CERAN held a large benefit on September 16, at which Mrs. Robelo, from the Nicaraguan consulate spoke. The second is NONSO, which I think stands for New Orleans Nicaraguan Solidarity Organization. NONSO has been showing one of the films on Nicaragua. Many of NONSO's members are Guardian followers and hang around a local radical bookstore. Third, is the Latin American Students at Loyola College. Fourth, there is a local HAND outlet through which aid is sent to Nicaragua. There is also a Nicaraguan consulate.

The comrades are trying to contact all these organizations and suggest they get together to hold a citywide event. So far we're still in the beginning stages of this work. Up to now the YSA hasn't made any assignments to Nicaragua work, but they plan to do this soon.

Supplement to New Orleans Tour Report - Rick

In the last two weeks tensions and conflicts between branch leaders has heightened greatly. One recent incident occurred when Karen wrote a Militant article on Avondale. The fraction had apparently agreed that Karen be responsible for Militant articles. She took it to Derrick for him to look over. HE refused to look at it saying the fraction hadn't authorized her to write Militant articles. The article was subsequently approved at the next Avondale fraction but Karen and Derrick had a big fight over whether or not the perspectives as laid out by the T&P were being carried out.

Since this incident and others Derrick has been hostile to many comrades but to Karen and Greg, in particular. From what Karen says somewhat of an equilibrium had been achieved in the branch before Oberlin. But when ten comrades transferred in this equilibrium was broken apart. Most of the new comrades there have wanted to push the branch ahead and open up at Avondale. This outlook has clashed directly with the more conservative ideas and lead some branch leaders to attack each other in the exec and at branch meetings.

I attended the Sunday, October 7 branch meeting. Karen and Greg were out of town. John Lindner was the acting organizer. I gave a YSA report to the meeting. After a break there were three reports. Under each report there was some good discussion. However, comrades tended to be super sensitive towards criticism, over-reacting to differing points of view. During the second half of the meeting Derrick and Rashad were continually laughing and being disrespectful to comrades. In addition some comrades were walking in and out the back door, and talking outside which tended to disrupt the meeting.

In the sales discussion Derrick and Rashad both criticized the Saturday mobilization because one team had gone to a predominantly white middle class neighborhood. The teams were largely experimental, but in fact the branch had sold 95 Militants and 19 YS's that week, which was very successful. Directing his remarks to me Derrick also criticized the subscription campaign. He implied that the only worthwhile sale was to co-workers. His attitude was unserious and he kept laughing.

Following this John C. los his cool and personally attacked Rashad, Derrick, and Dywond for not selling and that they always criticized but never did anything. Then a whole series of comrades attacked each other including Derrick. Unfortunately, the last person called upon was John Lindner. He was able to cut across some of the commotion but the damage had been done.

The situation in the branch seems to have come to a head recently. There's a spiral effect. I met with Karen on Monday when she returned. She was disturbed about the situation and wasn't sure how to proceed. I tried to set up a meeting with Derrick while I was there but he didn't want to meet with me. Instead, we spoke informally at a party. He didn't want to talk about Avondale then but was quite frank about his views on the

YSA and his general concept of industrial fractions.

Derrick thinks the YSA should be dissolved. He thinks the YSA NO, fund drive, and the YS are all a waste of time and that the money and time spent on building the YSA could be put to better use. He said this in front of several YSA'ers. He feels this way because he believes the only real meaningful activity of the party now and in the future will take place in the industrial fractions. Campaigns of the party will in essence come out of the industrial fractions. So, therefore, what's the necessity of the YSA. New comrades can be developed on the fractions. He subordinates the decision making power of the branch to the industrial fractions. This may be why he was so unserious at the branch meeting I attended.

When I met with Dywond, He expressed similar views to those of Derrick. He doesn't understand the need and role for a youth organization and is confused. He looks up to Derrick and Rashad. He socializes with them and is becoming hostile to certain members of the party and YSA.

He's very hostile towards John C., and actually he has some right to be, as John made a serious mistake recently when he accused Dywond of harassing and making a pass at Suzanne. John insisted that he and Karen meet with Dywond. Karen disagreed but John insisted on having the meeting. At this meeting he castigated Dywond for being offensive to some women comrades. In reality, Dywond had stopped this activity shortly after he arrived in July. The incident with Suzanne was blown out of proportion and wasn't really an incident at all.

I discussed the role of the YSA with Dywond and he seemed confused about it. At the chapter meeting he tended to play a disruptive role. After the branch meeting some things he said were particularly disturbing. I'm not sure whether he just got carried away or he really held to what he was saying. He made the conflict in the branch into a black vs. white issue, implying that some comrades had attacked Derrick, Rashad and himself because they were black. This isn't true.

Despite the problems in the branch the positive thing is that the conflicts are in the open. Unfortunately, they have tended to manifest themselves personally as opposed to politically. The YSA leadership is strong if a little inexperienced except for Nels and Laura. This is important as more YSA'ers get into Avondale.

It seems that the situation has gotten out of hand and that something should be done if our work at Avondale and the branch are to move ahead.