

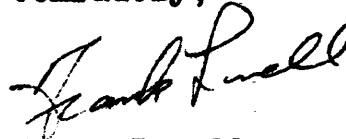
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 8, 1971

TO ALL SWP ORGANIZERS AND NC MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

The attached report and correspondence is to keep you informed of Stalinist activities in the union movement and our assessment of their efforts.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Frank Lovell".

Frank Lovell

Report on Northern California Rank & File Action Conference, Oakland, California, December 12-13, 1970, Jenny Lind Hall, by Jeff Mackler

Background:

This conference was part of the organization set up at the Chicago Rank and File Action Conference on June 27-28. Since that time a state-wide conference was held in Chicago on October 25 and it appears that similar conferences are to be held in other states. At the Oakland Conference it was announced that a Southern California organization is also planning activities.

Oakland Conference:

Everyone remembered to come to this conference except the rank and file. Literally every sect in the Bay Area came to present its "revolutionary" program. We counted 144 people at the height of the plenary session the first day and about the same number on the following day. Nevertheless the Drecentials Committee reported that 343 people had registered. (Credentials Report will be included at the end of this report.)

There were about 30 from International Socialists (IS); 5 Workers League; 5 Spartacists, and varying numbers from the Revolutionary Union, the IWW, Communist League, Wildcat, Committee for a Labor Party (Spartacist?), Hippies, Anarchists, etc. I did not see anyone from the Panthers or PL. We had 8 comrades observing from SF and Oakland-Berkeley. The remainder of the participants were overwhelmingly CP and their youth and a few secondary "labor leaders," dignitaries, and even one or two independents.

The conference opened with remarks from Philip Vera Cruz, listed as Vice President United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, Delano, California. He began by saying he was representing himself and not his union as was the case with all other dignitaries who spoke later. Vera Cruz told what the union had done for the Farm Workers but avoided all political questions.

Next on the Agenda was the adoption of the rules. The IS and the other "revolutionaries" opened up a big fight on the right to present minority reports from the afternoon workshops. A huge debate ensued with Archie Brown (an egomaniac from the ILWU) speaking about ten times while the chairman pretended he wasn't there. The debate clearly demonstrated that few if any independents were present. It was marked by numerous standing ovations, rhythmic applause, threats, accusations of racism, etc. The sects won the vote, to the horror of the CP, and it looked like it was time for us to go home. After a few other organizational matters were voted on, the morning session ended.

Upon entering the conference at the outset, each person was given a 7-page mimeo document entitled "Proposed Main Resolution." With a few minor additions, this document was passed at the close of the conference.

The afternoon sessions of the first day consisted of 5 workshops. These were:

- Labor and Racism and Exploitation of National Minorities
- Labor and Labor's Rights
- Labor and Unemployment and Poverty
- Labor and Women's Rights
- Labor and Peace and Independent Political Action

All the sects went to the last workshop above since they felt this was the "meat" of the conference. As a result they were able to pass a "Labor Party" resolution to be offered as an amendment to the main motion. The main motion clearly included running in the Democratic Party and supporting such candidates as Ron Dellums. The rest of the workshop time was occupied in a debate about whether or not to exclude Jimmy Hoffa from a list of people the Conference should initiate a petition campaign for. These included, Bobby Seale, Angela Davis, Caesar Chavez and Hoffa. The IS, etc., didn't feel Hoffa was in the same "category" as the others and wanted to exclude him from the campaign although they "recognized that the rank and file should solve its own problems." This argument went on for about an hour. They finally voted to keep Hoffa on the list.

The Chairman of the Labor and Racism workshop wore a Dellums button. The Workers League people gave him a run for the money with an assist from the IS. Otherwise no one wanted to talk about the question. It was agreed that more Blacks should be allowed in the unions and that racism was evil. There were about 10 Blacks present and about 25 at the conference as a whole. The discussion was at an extremely low level.

Comrades reported that about three independent women attended the Women's Rights workshop. The Conference did provide free child care and food for children.

The other workshops were attended by the CP oldtimers including a large number from Archie Brown's caucus in the ILWU which recently unseated the pro-Bridges leadership in Local 10. A group of dissident Teamsters was present and time was later allotted for their representative to explain why their group was expelled from the union.

The proposed Main Resolution clearly presents the politics of the conference. Each workshop was presented with a list of proposals to discuss and pass. With the exception of the Political Action workshop, these motions passed with little resistance.

The morning of the second day began with a presentation from Ola Kennedy, Co-Chairman of the National Coordinating Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy, (the group which came out of the June Chicago meeting) and Sec.-Treas. National Ad Hoc Committee of Concerned Steelworkers.

Kennedy flew in from Chicago to bring greetings and to describe an international peace conference she recently attended

in one of the Scandanavian countries. Ron Dellums was part of the "American delegation" and according to Kennedy he played a fine role. She went on to describe her discussions with peace leaders from Ghana, Vietnam, etc. There was no discussion of her report.

Next came a session on Trade Union Democracy in which a recently expelled Teamster told how he was bureaucratically thrown out. He neglected to explain the politics of his expulsion. A few people described caucuses in their unions including an ironworker whose caucus defeated the old guard. At the close of the session a motion was made for the conference to support the cases of the Teamsters and the Laborer's caucus in the Construction union as examples of efforts to win rank and file democracy. An ISer rose to amend the motion to include the 82 B-Book Longshoremen expelled some years ago. Archie Brown from the Longshoremen leaped to the podium and demanded to know what union the maker of the motion was from. When the ISer replied the AFT, Brown proclaimed, "That's just what I thought. Well we don't need your god damn help." The audience burst into applause and the amendment was killed without further discussion.

The final session heard reports from the workshops and voted on the main resolution. The Peace and Political Action workshop proposals were overwhelmingly defeated. The Labor Party amendment was defeated by 89 to 20. By that time most of the sects had left with the exception of Ann Draper and the IS. A motion for a one-day work stoppage from the same workshop also lost overwhelmingly. The CP had no trouble fighting this proposal on practical grounds. The CP was stronger numerically the second day of the conference. Apparently they made a special effort to mobilize their forces since the ultralefts had won a test vote the previous day. The vote on the main resolution was about 90 to 29.

Jack Kurzweil, Betina's husband, in arguing against the Labor Party motion recounted Lenin's description of the two kinds of cretinism, left and right. Those who called for a Labor Party now he said were left cretins. Kurzweil was recently fired by San Jose State because of his party membership.

The conference also voted to endorse NCAWRR as well as an upcoming conference on Peace and Conversion sponsored by some independents and the Contra Costa Central Labor Council headed by Art Carter. The conference is slated for January and Carter is in the process of lining up prominent Democrats such as McGovern to speak on conversion. (A report on this conference will follow as it develops.)

One interesting comment from a "rank and filer" who also happens to be on the Committee on Political Education of the Santa Clara Central Labor Council was as follows: "A real people's party has to be built inside the House of Labor. It can't be built with mimeo machines that are 42 years old, that's counting from 1928." Could he be referring to us?

The conference described its purpose as "to coordinate activities of the Northern California rank and file." it also urged the formation of industrial work committees. These committees were supposed to meet at the conference but never did.

A continuations committee was set up consisting of the original sponsors plus representatives from "legitimate" caucuses and representatives from areas affiliated with the National Rank and File. The Conference announced that there were areawide affiliates in SF County and Alameda County and that groups were being organized in the Southern Bay Area, Contra Costa and Marin.

Credentials Committee Report:

These were the "official figures" presented at the end of the conference. I suspect they are considerably inflated.

343 registered
212 delegates
129 observers

Anyone could be a delegate.

Unions Present and Number from Each:

28 ILWU	2 Painters
22 AFT (Teachers)	10 Machinists
19 Service Unions	4 Newspaper Guild
15 Carpenters	3 ITU
13 AFSCME	3 Printing Trades Specialties
14 Teamsters	5 Office Workers
20 ?	5 Hotel and Restaurant
11 Clerks	8 Cannery
6 UAW	3 Farm Workers
3 UE	1 IWW
3 Plumbers	
10 Ironworkers	
	<hr/>
	Total 208

There were also 1 or 2 people from 13 other locals.

SWP Intervention:

About 4 comrades from each local (SF and Berkeley-Oakland) attended. Our assessment was that no one would be there except the CP and the sects and that in no way could it be considered a conference of the rank and file. We did not participate in any of the floor discussion during the plenary session and to my knowledge no comrade spoke at any time during the proceedings.

Originally we had planned to introduce a motion at an appropriate time to have the conference support the call of the NPAC Conference for the April 24 actions. In addition we had

left open the possibility of participating in workshop discussions in a non-factional manner with our program in the event there was a valid opportunity to reach independents. After the first session it was plain to all comrades that even minimal participation in these proceedings would be a mistake. We wanted to avoid giving any credence to this sort of gathering and this was only possible by simply observing. After the first few votes on procedure, we abstained from all voting as well.

We sold a few Militants and ISRs but were unable to set up a literature table as the Steering Committee had unanimously voted that no literature tables would be allowed. When we saw the place assigned to free literature, we decided it was not worthwhile to make an issue on this question as the place available was inaccessible for most of the conference. The stated reason for no literature tables was "lack of space."

The other tendencies gave the CP all the cover they needed. For the IS it was more of a game than serious politics. All their actions and motions were presented with the utmost seriousness despite the fact that they were talking to themselves. It was sort of like finishing the ball game after it had been rained out.

Assessment:

The CP has sent some youth into the unions. This conference was an attempt to draw around their older cadres who remain in the unions whatever new forces they have been able to gain over the last few years. The politics were clearly the same as those the CP has projected over the years. The conference demonstrated that they have gained very little from their trade union intervention in Northern California.

The IS has also gained little if anything from their "proletarianization policy." Most of the people they sent to the conference were in the unemployed category, i.e., ex-campus rebels playing worker.

Additional Comments:

A "Free Hoffa Petition" was included in the conference kit. This petition is sponsored by the Michigan State Building and Construction Trades Council. The petition was not put before the conference for adoption. However, Hoffa was included in Point I of the Peace and Political Action Proposals.

The CP organized the conference very tightly. They appeared overly concerned that it would be taken over and thus attempted to institute a series of procedures, rules and committees (Resolutions Committee to deal with controversial questions) which would probably have alienated any real rank and filers had they attended. The atmosphere was so stifling that even most of the sects, etc., didn't show up for the second day. I am still wondering why they bothered to hold the thing in the first place.

COPY

COPY

COPY

The MILITANT
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

Feb. 5, 1971

Jeff Mackler
OAKLAND

Dear Jeff:

This is a delayed acknowledgment of your report on the Northern California Rank and File Action Conference, Dec. 12-13. The delay in answering was caused by the move to our new address. We hope to include your report in a national mailing shortly, strictly for the information of our own people.

I note that you mentioned "an upcoming conference on Peace and Conversion sponsored by some independents and the Contra Costa Central Labor Council headed by Art Carter." You say, "a report on this conference will follow as it develops." Has a date for it been set?

At the conclusion of your report you remark, "I am still wondering why they (the Stalinists) bothered to hold the thing in the first place." I think their reason remains the same as when they first called their National Rank and File Action Conference in Chicago last June 27-28. They hope to rally the old faithful, renew contacts, recruit a few young workers, and establish a base for maneuvers in the union movement. They expect a sharp cleavage in the union bureaucracy, and they are preparing for an alliance with the "progressive" wing. This is implicit in your assessment.

Comradely,

Frank

cc Nelson Blackstock