

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 12, February 15, 1972

Present: Breitman, Britton, Dobbs, A. Hansen, J. Hansen,
Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Novack, Rose, Sheppard, Stone

Visitors: Kerry, Scott, Saigle, Shaw

Chairman: Britton

AGENDA: 1. World Movement
 2. Plenum Call
 3. Election of Administrative Committee
 4. Personnel
 5. Administrative Committee Report
 6. Points of Information

1. WORLD MOVEMENT

J. Hansen reported.

Discussion.

2. PLENUM CALL

Sheppard reported.

Motion: To schedule a plenum of the National Committee
on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, May
11, 12, 13 and 14.

Carried.

Motion: To propose the following tentative agenda for the
plenum:

1. International and World Movement Reports
2. Political Report
3. Election Campaign Report
4. Gay Liberation Movement
5. Youth Report
6. Organization Report
7. National Officers
8. National Committee Membership
9. Political Committee

Carried.

Motion: To invite branch organizers to attend the plenum.

(as observers)

Carried.

3. ELECTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

Sheppard reported.

Motion: To elect an Administrative Committee composed of
Jones, Scott, Shaw, Sheppard and Stone.

Discussion.

Carried.

4. PERSONNEL

Breitman opened discussion.

Discussion.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Sheppard reported on Gregorich letters (see attached).

Motion: To send the following letter to Comrade Gregorich et al. (see attached).

Carried.

Scott reported that the Tallahassee, Fla., YSA local given permission by Administrative Committee to conduct a 1972 campaign as a Socialist Workers campaign.

Motion: To concur with the action of the Administrative Committee.

Carried.

Scott reported that the New Haven, Conn., YSA local given permission by Administrative Committee to conduct a 1972 campaign as a Socialist Workers campaign.

Motion: To concur with the action of the Administrative Committee.

Carried.

Scott reported on recommendation of Upper West Side branch to readmit J.S. into membership.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Upper West Side branch to readmit J.S. into membership.

Carried.

6. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Breitman.

Discussion.

Meeting adjourned.

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Boston, Massachusetts
December 27, 1971

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
New York, New York

Dear Comrades,

We the undersigned ask that the Political Committee call a convention at the earliest possible date (June or August of 1972), and that a long pre-convention discussion be scheduled to begin immediately. Such measures are necessary in order to act upon the latest economic developments.

Nixon's August 15th assault on the working class pronounced the death-sentence not only to the 25-year capitalist prosperity, but also to all neo-capitalist theories basing themselves on this long-term boom. The Party must now re-examine the theories of the "blunting" of the cyclical fluctuations in the economy, its orientation toward petty-bourgeois "mass movements", and above all must immediately pronounce judgement upon what Trotsky called its "self-isolation of a capitulationist variety from the mass trade unions".

August 15th clearly put the Party on the spot. It could either rush to the defense of the working class in a living way, or by issuing remote ultimatums to a distant rank-and-file, forever miss each new opportunity to build a revolutionary leadership in the working class. It chose the latter, the course of least resistance. The Party has answered a cannon with a pea-shooter! To the concerted attack of the world's mightiest ruling class, the SWP has answered with futile "Militant sales at plant gates".

The political line presented before the 1971 convention in "For A Proletarian Orientation" has clearly been vindicated, calling for a whole new appraisal of the Party's history, its theoretical justifications, and above all, its present orientation.

In view of these developments, we feel a long and most full discussion is necessary -- culminating in a convention. We have tried to raise political discussion on new developments since the convention in the Boston branch and have been told that we must make a formal request to the PC for an opening of pre-convention discussion. This discussion must take place on a national basis -- not atomized in this or that branch.

We await word from the Political Committee, trusting that it will act upon this call at the earliest possible date.

Comradely,

David Edwards
Pam Edwards
Jon Garfield

Peter Gordy
Barb Gregorich
Katherine Page

John McCann
Phil Passen

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January 5, 1972

Barbara Gregorich
Boston, Mass.

Dear Comrade Gregorich,

In regard to the December 27, 1971, letter to the Political Committee signed by yourself and seven other comrades, there is one element of ambiguity concerning the status of your letter.

It is not clear from the letter whether it is a request from those who supported the Proletarian Orientation Tendency or only from the eight comrades, as individuals, who have signed your letter.

Please clarify this matter, so that the Political Committee will have this information when it considers your letter.

Comradely,
s/Barry Sheppard

cc: Larry Trainor
Dave Wulp

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Boston, Mass.
January 18, 1972

Barry Sheppard
New York, New York

Dear Comrade Sheppard,

There is no "element of ambiguity" in our letter. The first sentence of the letter reads: "We the undersigned ask that the Political Committee call a convention...." There are eight names signed to the letter. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency was supported by over eighty people. We are dialecticians, Comrade, and recognize that surface appearance does not necessarily reflect reality, but there is no way, as far as we can tell, that eight equals eighty. The letter and the request it contains come from the eight comrades who signed it.

Furthermore, as you well know, the Proletarian Orientation Tendency dissolved organizationally after the last convention, remaining only as an ideological tendency in the Party. For "those who supported the Proletarian Orientation Tendency" to have submitted our December 27 letter would have required a reconstitution of the Tendency and some sort of discussion on the points contained in the letter amongst all the Tendency supporters. None of this has happened. In the absence of such a reorganization and discussion the eight of us, though we all supported the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, would certainly not take it upon ourselves to do anything in behalf of "those who supported" the Tendency.

The ambiguity exists in your letter, Comrade Sheppard, for it implies that the Political Committee considers who signed the letter more important than what is in the letter. Which do you think is more important -- the number of people who request such a convention, or the objective conditions which motivate such a request? We consider the objective factors to be decisive. We hope that, whatever the decision of the Political Committee, it bases its decision on those factors.

Again, the letter is a request from the eight comrades, as individuals, who signed the letter.

Comradely,
s/Barbara Gregorich

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February 15, 1972

Dear Comrades Gregorich et al.,

This is in reply to your letter of December 27, 1971, which states: "We the undersigned ask that the Political Committee call a convention at the earliest possible date (June or August of 1972), and that a long pre-convention discussion be scheduled to begin immediately."

You argue that it is necessary to call such a special convention in light of Nixon's imposition of the wage freeze on August 15. However, the Political Resolution adopted overwhelmingly by the August 1971 convention of the party, explained why the imposition of wage controls was one of the indicated options of the capitalist government in the given economic and political situation, and outlined the party's basic orientation towards the trade-union movement. The orientation and analysis contained in the Political Resolution has been confirmed by the events of August 15 and since. You also assert that the line of For a Proletarian Orientation, which was decisively rejected by the party convention, has been "vindicated," and you call "for a whole new appraisal of the Party's history, its theoretical justifications, and above all, its present orientation." The Political Committee rejects the arguments you advance as an attempt to reopen the discussion decided and closed by the 24th National Convention of the party.

Article X, Section 1 of the party constitution states that special conventions may be called by the National Committee or "on the demand of branches representing one-third of the membership." Your request for a special convention of the party does not meet this constitutional provision.

Comradely,

s/Barry Sheppard
for the Political Committee