

February 22, 1972

TO MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a copy of the Control Commission report on the case of Comrade Rudie Austin, together with the draft of a motion on this case prepared by the Administrative Committee. This matter will be taken up at the next meeting of the Political Committee on Friday, February 25, at 1:00 p.m.

Other items on the agenda include: (1) gay liberation movement; (2) report on the WONAAC conference; (3) report on the Versailles antiwar conference.

Comradely,

Barry

Barry Sheppard

November 29, 1971

MEMO TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE:

The Control Commission at Oberlin August 5-8, 1971, interviewed the following comrades involved in the Detroit situation: Sara Lovell (also on tape), Edith Gbur, Helen Schiff, John Benson (also on tape), and Ron Reosti. Frank Lovell was interviewed prior to Oberlin; his remarks are on tape.

In our opinion, the facts are as follows:

1. The majority of the Detroit branch decided that it could no longer carry on its work if Rudie's behavior were to continue. The branch voted at its May 13 meeting that Rudie "be given an indefinite leave of absence pending necessary medical attention."

2. The disruptions, as we have ascertained them up to this point, consisted of the following:

a. Time frequently requested and granted to allow Rudie to give a report on the organizational matters with which she was concerned; at other times scheduled reports were cancelled because her report, which she wished to write out, was not yet finished.

b. When given the floor by the chair during branch meetings, Rudie's remarks were often overly long and often on irrelevant matters.

c. Outbursts from the floor during branch meetings without recognition from the chair.

d. When called to order, Rudie's reaction was either apologetic or defiant.

e. Rudie took her criticisms of branch organizational procedures into the antiwar office and into the women's liberation office where nonparty people and YSA members were present.

f. Rudie refused to accept certain proposed assignments but proposed other assignments for herself which the organizer felt were beyond her capacities.

g. Among the things that led comrades to believe Rudie needed medical attention was her "hyperactivity"; for example, she sold fifty copies of the Militant at the Washington antiwar demonstration.

3. Rudie told Sara and Frank Lovell that she considered her behavior disruptive but felt this was necessary because of the urgency of her criticisms.

4. It became increasingly difficult for the organizer and other branch members to maintain contact with Rudie because she would not talk with them.

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Helen Scheer and Reba were asked by the Control Commission to interview Rudie and other comrades in Detroit. On September 25-26 we saw Rudie, Henry Austin, Peter Signorelli, Sara Rosenshine, and Gerry Bubbenhoffer.

The following was ascertained:

1. Rudie recognized she had been disruptive in meetings, but said others had been also.
2. She had been called to order by the chair on several occasions, but never "warned" that disciplinary action would be necessary if she continued to speak without getting the floor.
3. She did not feel it a "compulsion" to sell fifty copies of the Militant at the antiwar demonstration in Washington, a point she said was made to prove she needed medical attention.
4. The afternoon of the May 13 meeting, a committee of John Benson, Helen Schiff, and Ron Reosti went to Rudie's house to ask her to take a leave of absence for medical reasons. She refused.
5. Before the branch meeting several comrades were telephoned; they were asked to stand guard to prevent Rudie's entering the hall if she showed up. She did not.

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From all the facts obtained, the Control Commission draws the following conclusions: (1) That Rudie's disruptive behavior was severe enough to warrant some action by the branch. (2) That, to meet this situation, the branch took the disciplinary procedure against Rudie of giving her "an indefinite leave of absence pending necessary medical attention." This action was taken at a meeting from which Rudie would have been physically barred from attendance, even though at the time the meeting began she was a member in good standing. The Control Commission considers that the branch acted unwisely in this procedure, as well as in its making a "judgment" on Rudie's health. (3) That an imposed "indefinite leave of absence pending necessary medical attention," although an attempt to deal with discipline questions that do not involve disloyal infractions, raises difficult problems and should not be used; instead, after informal methods for dealing with such situations fail, our regular procedures should apply.

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After interviewing and talking with Rudie and the numerous branch members listed above, we recommend that Rudie's leave of absence be considered terminated and that the Detroit branch leadership contact Rudie for further discussions.

Anne Chester
Duncan Ferguson
Sara Lovell
Helen Scheer
Reba Hansen

DRAFT MOTION

1. The Political Committee takes cognizance of the Control Commission's finding that "Rudie's disruptive behavior was severe enough to warrant some action by the branch."

2. The Political Committee also takes cognizance of the fact that the branch's action, in giving Comrade Austin "an indefinite leave of absence pending necessary medical attention," was done with the intention of helping her resolve what appeared to be a serious personal problem.

3. However, given the circumstance that Comrade Austin contested this course, it was ^{incorrect} not suitable to pursue this method of dealing with the problem, and the Political Committee concurs with the recommendation of the Control Commission that the leave of absence should be considered terminated.

4. Any repetition by Comrade Austin of the previous pattern of disruptive behavior must be dealt with in accordance with the party's regular disciplinary procedures.