

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....22 April 1968

Present: Full: Turner, Robertson, Nelson(late), Stoute(late)
Aits: Janacek, Small, Ellens Other: Dave C. Staff: Gordon
Absent: Full: Henry Staff: Martin
Meeting convened 8:45 p.m.

- Agenda: 1. Minutes
2. Personnel
3. General Information and Correspondence
4. New Orleans Report - Stoute
5. Military Rights
6. Bay Area Electoral Policy--Panthers
7. Trade Union
8. Ross Grouplet
9. Press

1. Minutes: Uncorrected drafts are up to date. We are badly behind owing mainly to lack of stencil-typing time.
 2. Personnel:
 - a. Bill G.: We have received an application for candidate membership in the SL from Bill G., formerly of Chicago. He attended the Midwest Regional Educational Conference last August and was highly spoken of by our Chicago comrades. He has now moved to California and is attending graduate school at San Diego. He should be encouraged to move if possible to Berkeley or San Francisco in order to be integrated into the organization and work in a functioning SL local. Disc: Dave C., Janacek, Robertson
- Motion: To accept Bill G. as a candidate member of the SL. Passed
- b. Glen R.: Comrade Glen Robinson of the Seattle local died the night of 3 April. He had been ill for a long time but his disease flared up suddenly and he died after being very sick for several months. Comrade Robinson was in his mid-20's. He came from Idaho. His father had been a member of the IWW. Comrade Robinson strongly personally identified with the aim of working-class emancipation. He was enthusiastic about our turn toward the trade unions and sought, under very difficult circumstances, to implement this line. Comrade Robinson was the SL's first member in the Seattle area. We should take note of the death of this comrade in our public press.

3. General Information and Correspondence:
 - a. Spartacist West: Several criticisms have been raised of SW #14. It contains two bad formulations. On page 1: "The American capitalist class is preparing in Vietnam for a military assault on the workers states...." (might better have read "Sino-Soviet bloc"). On page 4: "/ISC's/ 'Third Camp' position, which refuses to defend the Soviet, East European and Chinese workers states against imperialism...." (should have read "deformed workers states"). Second, the cartoon is of a Guevarist sort which is implicitly deprecatory of Marxism and theory in general. Disc: Janacek, Gordon, Dave C.
 - b. Bay Area: The BA comrades have requested to know if they should indulge in a bit of public self-criticism over the PFP entry. We might well acknowledge over the Calif. PFP entry that it

was a tactical misinterpretation of the possibilities to have acted as if the PFP could have been transformed into something other than a classless radical grouping. We must not pose the question as, "Were we criminal class betrayers?"! Any public stand taken on the PFP entry should conform to the formulation in the forthcoming May supplement.

- c. NYC: Has elected a new local Executive Committee consisting of Mark T. as organizer plus six others: Al N., Mark K., Kay E., Jerry E., Harry T., Hugh F.
- c. ACFI: Recent issue of SLL Newsletter reported meeting between IC representatives and the Workers Leagues of the U.S. and Canada. A new Canadian organ, Spark, will make its appearance, and the U.S. Bulletin has pledged to go weekly by next year. We have since heard from Earl Gilman that the British have insisted that he and his grouping be invited back into the Workers League, after Gilman had been denounced, expelled and reviled in the public press. (Earl now expresses more agreement with us; he has indicated disappointment, for the same reasons as we had, with the new Foxite publication ("New Rank and Filler"), which he had previously intended to work with.) The reason for this action on the part of Healy may be the old Stalin Comintern trick of having an organization which is deeply split, held together only by the dominance of "Big Daddy". The Earl minority would be powerless in the organization, hated for the despised "Earlism" and considered traitors by the rest of the membership, but will still be inside to watch Wohlforth and appeal to Healy as arbiter. Healy would have a loyal and entirely unthreatening minority as well as a loyal majority.

4. New Orleans Report - Stoute

Comrade Stoute spent a week in New Orleans over Easter vacation. L. has struck again. We now have the mailing list of all of Ed Clark's contacts around the country. There has been another split in MDS; Bob Head and wife are now putting out the "NOLA Express", a rather non-political, muckraking paper consisting largely of reprints from newspapers. The issue of the MDS split was that Clark accused a young CP'er or ex-CP'er in print of being a member of the Democratic Party and a McCarthy supporter. The guy denied it but Clark didn't care. Clark is leaving New Orleans for Texas, at least for the summer. We now know, but cannot prove, the identity of the person who put out two leaflets attacking Joe V. and the SL. A bunch of black organizations have recently sprung up in the ghetto. The march to protest the shooting of a 13-year-old Negro boy who was "looting" (collecting bottlecaps in a vacant lot) was small and without incident.

There is a strong resurgence of a sentiment of Southern Populism in SSOC, Southern PL, Southern SDS, combined with Southern nationalism (singing "Dixie" at a Southern SDS convention!). Joe feels the need for a defined program for the rural poor. We may be setting up a continuing working relationship with a militant in the self-defense movement who is impressionistic, fearful and interested. Comrade Stoute spoke at SLUNO; there was a lot of extra red tape, but the meeting was finally permitted. It was very successful--about 30 people, including many Negro students, much SL

lit sold--although it had not been publicized until the last minute. She also spoke at a political theory class which lasted for several hours. Our local has more contacts than it knows what to do with, including many contacts and responses from ads scattered throughout the South. Our comrades are also in dire need of non-SL Marxist literature for their own education and for contacts. Joe V. goes for his Army physical tomorrow. The local is pledging \$42.50 per month.

Comrade Tom and a black friend were arrested following their having gotten out of a car to watch a crowd watching two black cops beating a pregnant woman; the crowd, which objected, was charged by more cops swinging clubs. Tom and friend drove on but stopped a few blocks away to make a phone call and were picked up by the cops. Leaflets signed by SL and a black group calling for a demonstration to protest shooting of 13-year-old boy by cops in bottle incident were found in car. Municipal charges are: refusing to move on, disturbing the peace by creating a scene; state charge is inciting to a felony. Municipal charges carry fines and light jail terms; state charge would be 1 year for Tom (5 years for friend, currently on parole). They have already paid \$255 bail money. Press release has been sent to all our locals plus radical and liberal press nationally. Joe has promised to do an article for SPARTACIST on the New Orleans harassment, from the UnAmerican Committee report to the current arrests.

Disc: Janacek, Robertson

Motion by Robertson: That any duplicate, surplus or collected second-hand bulletins, periodicals, books and pamphlets of interest to Marxists be sent first priority to New Orleans. Passed

5. Military Rights:

a. Hainline: See 11 March letter by Robertson to Syrek (appended). Hainline has not been responsive to pressures brought on him to return immediately to his base. He has the conviction that the Army was in a conspiracy to kill him, running all the way from the top. He seems plainly to have had some sort of personal breakdown. The Army could seek to try him for desertion, for one of three different possible maximum penalties: 1) 3 years (if soldier returned to base freely), 2) 5 years (if soldier is captured by the authorities), 3) 10 years (if soldier is captured by the authorities after deserting while facing hazardous duty or having missed a troop movement). Hainline's conduct is regrettable for us for three reasons: 1) Hainline was a principal exponent of our Army line which he has now flagrantly violated and which he agrees with in principle. This could be an enormous public embarrassment to us. 2) He has damaged and delayed the perspective of encouraging a soldiers' rights publication to be put out by our members and friends in the Army and others. 3) A deep and unusual personal flaw in Hainline has been revealed. He is now in all likelihood politically through as a Marxist. Hainline had uncommon talents which would have been of great value to our movement. Our Bay Area organization, including Comrade White, has been entirely hostile to Hainline's conduct. Disc: Dave C., Ellens, Turner, Stoute, Small, Robertson, Ellens, Nelson,

Stoute, Ellens, Robertson, Turner

- b. Soldiers publication: We should encourage our friends to proceed at full speed with the ideas they have had. The Military Rights Commission has recommended that the paper should be called "GI Voice", not "GI Spartacist", as it has been conceived as a highly political transitional organ. We have finally seen several copies of "Vietnam GI", published by ex-ASOC'er Dave Komatsu and others. In general, while we do not have a strong injunction against this publication, as we have toward the Marcyite Army organ, which is simply a provocation, "Vietnam GI" does not have our politics and underlines the need for a transitional soldiers' publication. There are some people (civilians) who had become interested in the "Fort Polk GI Voice" and would like to do something else along these lines. We have heard that two YSA'ers in Atlanta have been drafted. Both Petrick and Stapp were held in the Army for practically their full two years and then given undesirable discharges.
Disc: Stoute, Gordon, Stoute

6. Bay Area Electoral Policy--Panthers: An informal recommendation has already been conveyed to the Bay Area local regarding our attitude toward the three Oakland Black Panther Party candidacies which are run technically on the PFP slate but on their own programs and in the black ghettos. Although as a result of a bloc made to help PFP get on the ballot and enable Panthers to run candidates, the Panther candidates are technically PFP, the content is different despite the label.

Motion by Robertson: That we recommend to the Bay Area local that our comrades give critical support to the Black Panther candidates on the grounds that their candidacies are entirely politically independent of the PFP and that in those three congressional districts only, we recommend PFP registration, in contradistinction to the rest of California, where we want to see complete dissociation.

Passed

Disc: Turner, Stoute, Turner, Robertson, Stoute, Turner, Robertson, Nelson, Robertson, Ellens

We should also seek to make contact with the Panther leaders and explain the nature of the PFP and our attitude towards it, why we split from it, why we support the Panther candidates. We recognize that an approach to them is extremely difficult owing to their Black Nationalist ideology, which they firmly hold although they do not let it impede them in organizing the ghetto against Black Democrats and Republicans. We might also investigate common trade union work with them if they have any orientation toward black struggle in unions and do not simply oppose unions, or at least seek to argue a union perspective to them.

7. Trade Union Report - Robertson

a. Bay Area: Comrade Syrek has raised a question regarding the independent labor party caucus, and the possibility of cooperation with e.g. Earl Gilman. He questions whether common work with centrists like Earl would be a united front for propaganda, which Marxists oppose, in which two groups get together and reconcile their programs to reach a lowest common de-

nominator. One's political program is already the minimum, broadest, least sectarian statement of what the working class needs. We and Earl could not present a common public face in running for office--could not make common propaganda with him for the purpose of state power. This is very different, however, from agreement on certain fighting points in one area, for example a trade union slate.

- b. Iowa City: Comrades have made close contact with a leading member of an important midwest trade union local. We met him at our campus literature table and he expressed interest. He is against the union bureaucracy and anti-Democratic Party. We are considering sending two of our most qualified and experienced trade union comrades from NYC to discuss with this contact and also scout around in his area.
- c. Philadelphia: Our comrades picked out a large factory and passed out a leaflet there. They got a number of good responses from the workers. Several SDS people were drawn in and were enthusiastic about this work. It was discontinued as a result of a bad security failure by the comrades.
- d. SSEU: A member of the Militant Caucus ran for alternate delegate at our strongest center against an ACFIite and was elected 2 to 1. The general union elections were held last Friday. The Militant Caucus ran a partial slate of 4; Workers League ran Dennis Cribben for one position; PL-dominated Rank and File Committee did not run a slate but ran a sabotage tactic of secret write-in campaigns for local leaders in the different centers. Our slate got 22% of the non-write-in vote on a fighting transitional program. ACFIite got 20% on a straight pro-affiliation with 371 line (criminal liquidationism), got strange-bedfellow combination vote of Rank and File Committee plus scabs. The Militant Caucus candidates overwhelmingly carried their own welfare centers, made strong showings in other radical centers plus about three other centers which, without much leafleting etc. work on our part, had a high vote for the caucus and generally a low pro-affiliation vote.
Disc: Gordon, Nelson
- e. NYC Perspective: Impending split of Ross grouplet (see point 8) raises a problem. We are losing our two people in local 1199 (hospital workers), which has been the major focus of the Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee's work. In general, this union poses a problem for us, as it is composed of white technicians and black unskilled workers, while our members are mainly white, middle-class and lacking special training. It would be difficult to find suitable personnel to feed into this fraction over a period of time. As we have already invested considerable effort in this union, and have large stocks of the four 1199 MLCRC leaflets, we should continue to press hard, try to sew up contacts, etc., but should realize that without party members in the union we do not have even a toe-hold. At the same time, our turn toward work in the unions on the basis of our orientation must be continued. We need a second fraction in NYC--one complementary to the white-collar SSEU. We should channel our personnel into District 65, which is desirable both because it contains a large number of low-paid black workers and also covers a wide spectrum of jobs--

direct mail, printing trades, garment center, retail sales-- for which our comrades could easily qualify.

The MLCRC has exhibited a sort of unconscious grabbing reaction, pulling into its activities too many comrades not actually involved in union work, to the detriment of other local work. This was an understandable response to the unsatisfactory character of the two comrades actually in the union, who were entirely incapable of doing satisfactory union work themselves. At the same time, a rational, considered division of labor must be achieved.

It has been difficult to co-ordinate and integrate the work of the MLCRC with our other union arena, the SSEU. This is because they embody different and, for a small organization like ours, incompatible forms of organization. There are four possible levels of work in the mass movement. While a large party can combine any of these levels, for a small organization they tend to resolve into two kinds of approaches. The levels are: 1) an individual in a union running for office on a personal radical program, e.g. ACFI's Dennis Cribben in SSEU, Mazelis in 1199, Gow on West Coast; 2) a caucus with a program, composed of party and non-party militants, entirely within a given union; 3) a multi-union left wing organization, e.g. Wohlforthite TULP, PL's Workers Action, our Bay Area Labor Party Committee. Such a group can make intensive propaganda but is restricted in direct union struggle because it is outside the union; 4) the revolutionary Marxists directly in their own name. The two approaches are a #1-#3 combination (ACFI, our Bay Area group) or a #2-#4 combination, which we prefer. In situations where #2-#4 is impossible for us, we must use #1-#3, as in the Bay Area, where we have many unionists in unions which are very difficult to get new members into in order to build fractions, and where our members are skilled workers with little job mobility. In New York we have been trying to combine SSEU work (#2-type) with the MLCRC (#3-type) structure, although the actual work carried on by the MLCRC has been to try to build a fighting fraction within a union, but on the basis of non-union members.

In NYC we must carry on three functions: 1) National Office work--producing national and international propaganda and maintaining a national organization; 2) general propaganda and petty-bourgeois arenas of work aimed toward individual recruitment--campus work, other radical organizations, public meetings, street sales; 3) struggle to extend our mass work. We have the forces to do these three things.

Disc: Janacek, Ellens, Dave C., Nelson, Robertson, Nelson, Gordon, Robertson, Ellens, Robertson, Gordon, Robertson

8. Ross Grouplet: Under goading from Bob Ross, our two 1199 fraction members refused to attend MLCRC meeting on grounds of "vital anti-war work" at Free University. Sandra simply wants out; Ross has reportedly been considering maneuvering and trouble-making in the organization or else the Marcyites. The actual split--overt refu-

sal to obey discipline--has come faster than we had expected from the previous trouble signs because the faction has been having secret faction meetings while showing another, softer face to us and other members of the organization. If Sandra, Sam and Ross affirm that they will abide by discipline in the future, we can set the already committed acts of indiscipline to one side and fight the issue out. It appears likely that the grouplet will prefer simply to be expelled, as they are reportedly planning to "boycott" the next local meeting. It also is likely that Donna will follow her husband out, although she is not in political agreement with the motley faction which emphasizes violent street confrontations with the cops.

9. Press:

- a. The first four thousand copies of the May SPARTACIST supplement will be delivered tomorrow in time for bundles to be mailed to the locals for distribution and/or sales to the anti-war actions. Front-page article was written by Gordon; back-page by Cunningham. The space count was considerably in error, so that several paragraphs from each had to be cut. The continuity of the articles was not impaired, but we are missing out on some political points we had wanted to make.
- b. Next issue: We are still broke. This makes likely another supplement for June. Recommended contents are: 1) brief obituary on Glen R., 2) current New Orleans case and background, from the UnAmerican Committee report to the present; 3) SSEU elections.
- c. National office: Projected changes in filing and mailing system should be started at once. Instruction on IBM Executive for Supplement setting will begin shortly.
- d. Marxist Bulletins: Comrade Harper has completed a good preface to MB #3 Part I (The Split in the Revolutionary Tendency). This must be stenciled and the bulletin itself must be restenciled, as the original stencils were ruined by excess pressure owing to inadequate storage facilities (now corrected).

Meeting adjourned 12:35 a.m.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 22 April 1968

11 March 1968

Marion Syrek,
Central Committee member,
Berkeley, Calif.

Dear Marion,

I have heard that Doug Hainline has gone absent without leave from his U.S. Army unit on the eve of his departure for Viet Nam. Doug doubtless did this for some to him overriding personal reason and hopefully intends to get himself straightened out with the military shortly.

However, in the meantime, both he and our organization are placed in mounting jeopardy by his action. So long as Doug continues to remain A.W.O.L. he increases the presently minimal penalties which will be taken against him; he mocks our principled position on military service of which he is a main architect and exponent; he opens up the possibility--should the authorities be so inclined--for a false accusation of conspiracy between Doug and other members of the S.L. to defy or evade military service or orders.

For all these compelling reasons should you make contact with Doug you are instructed--and I am sure you agree with these instructions--to argue with him that he must immediately return to his military base and if necessary you will order him to do so on pain of his summary public expulsion and denunciation by us.

This is a sufficiently serious issue that if it be necessary or helpful I am prepared to fly to the Bay Area to make these points personally despite the loss of time and money involved.

Please treat this letter and the entire matter as highly confidential. If Doug returns to his base in good time we will want to treat the incident as a momentary lapse not to be held against him.

Comradely,

James Robertson,
National Chairman