

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....3 June 1968

Present: Full: Robertson, Henry, Turner, Nelson, Stoute
Alts: Janacek, Ellens, Small
Staff: Cunningham, Gordon, Martin(late)

Absent: none

Meeting convened 8:25 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. General Information and Correspondence
 3. Internal Situation
 4. Personnel and Organization
 5. Trade Union
 6. French Crisis
 7. Press

1. Minutes: Current backlog is rather serious, as minutes are becoming quite important as we are entering into a discussion period.

2. General Information and Correspondence:

a. Peace and Freedom: A moderately radical group in California PFP has proposed to run Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther leader currently jailed in frame-up charges. Proposal met with both support and opposition within PFP. The Panthers themselves did not initiate this move but are going along with it, although with reservations. Our Bay Area local is writing the Panthers about our criticisms of the PFP and therefore of the Panthers' alliance with it. The Panthers seem to be the only serious and militant black organization in the U.S. today and are being more or less physically annihilated by the cops, who are evidently pursuing a deliberate policy of trying to provoke and kill them. Our line on critical support is determined by program and constituency. While we are supporting the 3 Panther candidates running on the PFP ticket in black communities and along their own programs, Cleaver as presidential candidate of national Peace and Freedom would be a PFP captive. If Cleaver were to run both for president and also for Congress on the Panther program we would support him in the latter case and not the former.

b. New York Times: Is spending lots of coverage on the black student situation. The Times is a rational bourgeois paper which sees in the ambivalent character of the black student movement currently a chance to exploit its contradictions for bourgeois ends. They have run a follow-up story on the Columbia University actions, where after the original occupation of Hamilton Hall the black students have pretty much kept out of campus action. The current mood of the black students on some campuses--the demands for separate dormitories, "black history", soul food--leaves room now for some smart racist operator like Buckley to urge acceptance of all these demands, which would result in an inferior education of black students similar to the Catholic higher school system (where they teach "apologetics" and not much calculus). At the same time, in this society, college-educated black students can have little other perspective than jobs in big companies to put a black face on the Establishment. This is a very transient mood, which breaks down over the proposition of all-black (conservative

- and radical) unity and the sealing off of black students and their experiences permanently from white radical ferment on campus.
- c. Brooklyn School Dispute: The UFT is catering to racist sentiments in its drive for support (e.g., ad in New York Times: "Don't let our schools be taken over by local extremists") and the past history of the union's attitudes and actions toward race oppression leads to the philosophy of one bad turn deserves another. The attempt to fire 16 teachers without specific individual charges and a hearing is unjust. Local communities have the right to administer the schools and decide whom they want for administrators, but teachers as workers have rights too. While we would be extremely critical of Shanker and his allies, the strike has to be supported, although the dispute itself is destructive to class struggle and consciousness.
 - d. Columbia University: A document has been written by Comrade Manuela, directed to the strike militants, analyzing the various idiocies taking place and proposing tactics for united militant struggle instead of the dichotomy between gutless moderates and ultimatic, exclusionist, minority-confrontation-oriented radicals.
 - e. Mexican contact: After a long talk with a Mexican contact fluent in English, it appears that he is a very cool Posadist. Yet he is anxious to discuss with us despite Posadas' hysterical denunciations of us, and very anxious for us to be involved in work in defense of Mexican Trotskyists. It is hard to tell how hard he is on the particular and peculiar positions of the Posadas tendency. He also urged that we send a representative to Mexico City over the summer to discuss, and wants to meet with us again.
 - f. Mexican groups: We have received a very cryptic clandestine letter from Mexico requesting a large quantity of our literature be sent them. We cannot tell which groups this letter represents, and are not likely to find out in the near future from here. We understand that there are 3 groups of Trotskyists in Mexico--Pabloist, Posadist, independent, the latter somewhat similar to our positions and which has had some contact with Healy.
 - g. Class Struggle: We have the responsibility to reply to their critique of our Guerilla Theses. We should (1) incorporate our view and criticisms of VO's analysis of East Europe and China--the question of whether these countries can have a non-violent return to capitalism; (2) use general formulations so that the exchange could be read with profit by Pabloists, Healyites, Maoists.
 - h. "The Farther Shores of Politics": George Thayer, who wrote a prejudiced and highly inaccurate account of the ultra-right and extreme-left in Britain (The British Political Fringe) has come out with a similar book on the U.S. which we have not yet seen.
 - i. SLL vs. IS: A new scandal has erupted in Britain between the Healyites and Cliffites, detailed in two recent letters to us from F. Rowe of Socialist Current. They have evidently done one another a dirty trick. The SLL-YS called a demonstration in support of the French revolt, arranged for permits, put out

some publicity, etc. The state caps capitalized on this, called a demonstration for the same place to assemble half an hour earlier, making no mention of the SLL-YS call. When they all turned up, the Healyites, because they had the permit for the demonstration, were able to get the cops to cooperate with them and move the ISers to another street, refused to allow slogans other than their own, on the basis that they had called the demonstration and also were also worried that the ISers would indulge in New Left-type "confrontation" scuffles with the cops. Effect of incident is to harden loyalties on both sides against the other group.

- j. "What is the Peace and Freedom Party and Where is it Going?": About 150 copies of this SL statement, written by Mark T., were distributed to the PFP New York State Convention. Ellens raised some specific wording criticisms of it as well as some more general ones: that the document had "no class analysis", was a picture of only a part of the reality, implied that we believed the PFP was capable of orienting to the working class and was thus too soft on it.

Motion by Robertson: To support and endorse this very fine and persuasive propagandistic effort addressed to the Peace and Freedom Party.

Disc: Ellens, Nelson, Stoute, Janacek, Robertson, Turner, Gordon, Henry, Small, Cunningham, Ellens, Nelson, Stoute, Janacek, Robertson, Turner, Gordon, Henry, Small, Cunningham

VOTE on Motion: For: Full: Robertson, Nelson, Henry
 Alts: Small, Janacek
 Consult: Gordon, Cunningham
Opposed: Full: Stoute Alt: Ellens
Abstaining: Full: Turner
Not Voting: Consult: Martin

Motion passed 3-1-1

3. Internal Situation: The NYC local has acted on motions involving allocation of local forces. The exact motions and votes of the local meetings are appended to these minutes. Our projected national discussion will be a political rather than a purely educational one. The document submitted by Ellens at the local meeting, "What is a Working Class Perspective?", will be appended to these PB minutes. The initiative for the intensification and escalation of a difference should be taken by the minority, as the majority in a Bolshevik organization has considerable rights which would be easy to abuse. Time and energy consumed in preparing and circulating the discussion material will partially paralyze the organization. All comrades must resolve to work hard to break the logjam. Since the tone and disagreements are quite sharp already, a co-editor along with Robertson, to represent the minority viewpoint, should be assigned to edit the secretary's PB minutes drafts. To use Internal Bulletin form for the discussion would slow us down enormously. Materials appended or physically attached to PB minutes imply the same level of security of distribution as the minutes themselves; enclosed material may be circulated to any comrade.

Motion #1 by Robertson: To have an internal political discussion on the matters raised by the Stoute-Turner-Ellens groups without any particular time limit to be set now, possibly to be taken to a national gathering--Plenum or conference.

Motion #2 by Robertson: That we have joint editorship of PB minutes drafts and the appended materials by Robertson and a comrade of the minority.

Disc: Turner, Nelson, Ellens, Small, Gordon, Henry, Janacek, Robertson, Turner, Nelson, Ellens, Gordon, Henry, Turner, Ellens

VOTE: Both Motions passed. Ellens states that she votes for the second motion only if the minutes will get out within a reasonable time, since not getting the minutes out can deliberately be used by the majority as a way to avoid having the discussion.

4. Personnel and Organization:

a. Staff:

Motion: To add J. Rogers to staff. Passed

b. Chicago: To drop from membership Scott U., with prejudice for his total non-performance and unpaid debts to the organization and to any comrades he could get to lend him money. Passed

c. Central Committee:

Motion: To accept Comrade Harper's resignation as alternate from the Central Committee. Passed

d. Security:

Motion: To review at a later date our policy on personal habits detrimental to the organization. Passed

e. Los Angeles: Ron B., after a period of inactivity for personal reasons, has again begun to function as a good member--selling the paper, reopening a Spartacist P.O. box, etc. He will attend the forthcoming Bay Area SL educational weekend. Ron was dropped for membership for inactivity and we were even unable to reach him to inform him of this. During this period, however, he never did us any harm in any way and now evidently wants to be a member of the SL and function like one.

Motion: To authorize the Western Region to readmit Ron B. to membership in whatever category they deem appropriate.

f. Bay Area: Dee Kinder has resigned from the SL, having become completely involved in her personal life. Comrade Syrek has announced plans to move to NYC by the beginning of July and to set up as soon as possible a party press. NYC is delighted to hear it; Bay Area, understandably less so, and badly needs personnel to make up for this loss.

g. NYC: At last local Executive Committee meeting, Robertson raised criticisms of the functioning of almost all NYC comrades. In the past, slacking off has existed but has not been overly destructive--as we were lenient with most instances, but immediately moved hard against anyone who made a program of his personal weaknesses and/or disputed the right of the organization to enforce a minimum level of performance and decide as a body every comrade's political assignments. By such a policy, we have been able to maintain as members of the organization people whose functioning was somewhat poor, erratic or even unsatisfactory for a period, and to use these people and seek to help them resume satisfactory functioning.

In a factional situation, however, all comrades including those who disagree with a line must be held accountable for carrying it out. Therefore, this implies that non-performance for personal reasons by majority or minority comrades cannot be tolerated or it will become impossible and unfair to insist that minority comrades who differ politically with a line must also carry it out. We have extra demands on our time now resulting from the necessity for the internal discussion, which must be prevented as much as possible from interfering with our work. Disc: Turner, Janacek

Motion: To table the balance of the agenda to a special meeting
next week. Passed
Disc: Cunningham

Meeting adjourned 11:35 p.m.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 3 June 1968

Motions and votes from discussion on allocation of forces in the NYC local (from local minutes of 24 April, 8 May and 22 May 1968)

24 April: Motions by Robertson:

(1) "The local recommends that the pan-union Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee transform itself into particular civil rights committees and caucuses in the next period.

(2) Paralleling this change is the criteria that intra-union civil rights committees and caucuses be restricted to members involved, and that SL non-members of unions be involved only at the fraction level."

8 May: Motions by Turner:

(1) "The local recognizes that the present pan-union MLCRC is an interim formation which is eliminated in the process of building CRC's and caucuses in particular trade unions, and by their linkage in a federation which assumes the responsibility for the building of other CRC's in trade unions in which the masses of superexploited black and Puerto Rican workers are found. The work of comrades in the MLCRC should be closely supervised by the local executive committee which will also ensure that reports of their activities be made regularly to the local.

(2) "All comrades who are capable of contributing to the work of the MLCRC should be involved in its activities, either as members or supporters, in order to implement, as quickly as possible, the directives of the PB and CC on the building of CRC's and caucuses in the trade unions, which will fight for the unity of the working class on the basis of a struggle against the special oppression of the black and Puerto Rican workers. The local recognizes, however, that a Leninist organization cannot limit itself to trade union arenas, but must also be involved in other aspects of the class struggle, e.g., anti-war, student, black ghettos, electoral activities, etc., to whatever extent is necessary and possible. For the SL, as yet a propagandist group whose present function is mainly exemplary, the recruitment of cadre as a result of the upsurge in arenas involving the radicalized student milieu is a vital necessity. This local also has the responsibility for helping to maintain the N.O. Forces presently involved in MLCRC and other trade union activity will, therefore, have to be utilized in pressing struggles in other arenas, when and as necessary."

22 May: Motions by Ellens:

(1) "Because of the serious implications of this dispute taking place in the New York local, I move that we have begun locally a discussion and recommend to the PB that we begin a discussion nationally on the meaning and implementation of the differences in NYC. (The following document, What Is a Workingclass Perspective?, to be considered as part of this discussion.)

(2) "While supporting Turner's motions, I feel that the disposition of the MLCRC in the next period is unclear. Because of this, and in the light of: (a) the need to continue the hospital newsletters and distributions at least until the new contract is signed sometime between July and September; and (b) the difficulty of getting comrades into the other union; I move that the MLCRC be maintained as it now stands, until the new contract, with the present comrades and occasional aid of the other comrades in the local, adding only those comrades who expect to shortly join the union we are now concentrating on. (Of course, if other comrades become involved in trade union situations, in this next period, the question of additional personnel should be reopened.)"

22 May: Amendment by Robertson:

(to add this sentence at end of his first motion): "In particular, MLCRC should continue its present union leaflets through the period of the next contract, while giving main emphasis toward building the superceding caucus in the new union concentration."

22 May: VOTES on all motions:

Ellens motion (1): passed 11-2-1 (1 consult. for)
For: Kay, Shirley, Liz, Mark T., Mark K., Winnie, Al, Harry, Jim,
 Hugh, Jan, Mike(consultative)
Opposed: Lyndon, Dave Abstaining: Helen

Ellens motion (2): failed 4-8-2 (1 consult. abstaining)
For: Kay, Harry, Hugh, Shirley Abstaining: Al, Jan, Mike(consult.)
Opposed: Dave, Mark K., Mark T., Helen, Liz, Winnie, Lyndon, Jim

Turner motion (1): failed 4-10 (1 consult. not voting)
For: Kay, Shirley, Harry, Hugh Not Voting: Mike(consultative)
Opposed: Liz, Jan, Dave, Lyndon, Winnie, Mark T., Mark K., Al, Jim,
 Helen

Turner motion (2): failed 4-10 (1 consult. not voting)
For: Kay, Harry, Hugh, Shirley Not Voting: Mike(consultative)
Opposed: Helen, Jim, Jan, Dave, Mark T., Mark K., Winnie, Lyndon,
 Al, Liz

Amendment to Robertson motion (1): passed (carries motion) 14-0
 (1 consult. not voting)
For: all, except Mike(consult.) Not Voting

Robertson motion (2): passed 11-3 (1 consult. for)
For: Shirley, Liz, Jan, Dave, Winnie, Jim, Al, Mark T., Mark K.,
 Helen, Lyndon, Mike(consultative)
Opposed: Harry, Hugh, Kay