

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....1 July 1968

Present: Full: Robertson, Stoute, Henry, Turner, Nelson(late, exc.)
Alts: Janacek, Small, Ellens(late, exc.)
Staff: Cunningham, Gordon Other: Joel S.
Absent: Staff: Rogers(exc.), Martin
Meeting convened 9:15 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. General Information and Correspondence
 3. Personnel and Organization
 4. SDS Convention Report
 5. Press

Motion: To admit Joel S. to meeting with voice. Passed

1. Minutes:

Motion: To accept the minutes of 26 December 1966, already distributed. Passed

2. General Information and Correspondence:

- a. G.I. Voice: Publication plans have been somewhat shattered by two events: (1) Comrade Syrek, our printer, will be pulling out of the Bay Area shortly. This makes less feasible proposal to have technical collective of several comrades there; also, we do not know when we will again have printing facilities in any part of the country. (2) Gallatin, who will be identified in forthcoming Esquire magazine article as its advisory editor in the Army, has been thrown out of the Army as a result of prominent newspaper photos showing him sitting at our SDS Convention literature table in close proximity with a large hammer and sickle.
- b. NYC Membership: Last fall NYC local had 23 comrades; now, even after recent losses including Ross grouplet, we have 20. Some of these, however, are recent transfers from other areas. Nonetheless, these 20 are on the average more active, as two inactives have been dropped to sympathizer status recently.
- c. CIPA: Has successfully been taken over by those who wanted to continue CIPA, including us; motion to dissolve CIPA, by Pler and others who oppose CIPA's continuing socialist orientation and support Peace and Freedom, was defeated.
- d. SSEU: Delegate elections held 2-3 weeks ago. In our main center we had some setbacks but most of Militant Caucus slate was elected; 4 Caucus supporters were elected, including as first delegate and first alternate. ACPiite Roberts is second alternate. The vote to affiliate with 371 and dissolve SSEU as an independent union was defeated, as 62% of membership voted to affiliate but 2/3 was required. Situation is still not good; die-hard affiliationists may join 371 anyway, splitting the union--and for a union to even consider liquidating is hardly a hopeful sign, complicated by the situation of having had a majority in favor of a motion which did not carry.
- e. NYC Class: Partially as a result of having a number of comrades either new to the local or here in transit to other areas, NYC local will have a semi-internal class series on the Russian question, to be given by Comrade Robertson.
- f. Crawford: Very informative letter received, reporting on his

- trip to France during the French crisis. It is apparently true that the Lambertistes had a position against student struggles and barricades; they became quite invisible--the only group which did not have a literature table at the liberated Sorbonne--and may have lost some of their young supporters, who participated in the disturbances with other groups. Crawford, who is generally somewhat soft and non-factional, expressed concern over the extent of the friendliness between VO and the Pabloites. An amusing note: in 3 weeks the anarchists went from being super-undisciplined to being uniformed storm-troopers. Crawford is now a very active member of the Cliffites. He has sent us material of the Cliffites and the Irish Workers Group. We have been sending him some of our PB minutes. The Cliffite paper, now renamed the Socialist Worker, will go weekly soon. Disc: Cunningham, Robertson
- g. Bolivia: We have received an evidently quite genuine letter from the POR, the main Trotskyist group in Bolivia and the recognized left vanguard of the Bolivian workers. They are requesting that we produce for them in Spanish three pamphlets by their theoretician G. Lora, dealing with guerrillaism (and hostile to it). It is somewhat agonizing that we have just lost our capacity in Spanish. They also want wide publicity for the disappearance of Isaac Camacho, a Trotskyist and tin miner, and want to receive material from us. They express the wish for "closer ties" with us, as they feel themselves to be closest to us, of all international Trotskyist tendencies. Disc: Janacek, Gordon, Robertson, Stoute, Turner, Joel, Janacek, Turner, Robertson
- h. Germany: Letter from V. received. We had asked him whether it would be possible for him to go to France during the recent events there. He remained in Germany in order to be involved in the struggle against the proposed Emergency Laws. Disc: Robertson, Turner
- i. NYC French demonstration: A good united front demonstration was held last weekend to protest the outlawing of the Trotskyist organizations. It was called by the SWP, who were hardly energetic about inviting support of other organizations; but once we found out about demonstration we, and other groups, were permitted a speaker at rally without any difficulty. Main participants were YSA, ACFI and us; also Iranian Students' Organization, which is fairly radical. We had three banners, denouncing CP betrayals, calling for support to VO and for the building of working-class vanguard parties in France and USA; got television publicity. We also distributed reprint of Bay Area SL leaflet attacking Pabloist conceptions and "student vanguardism". About 200 attended march and rally.
- j. Bay Area French demonstration: A rally initiated by YSA and co-sponsored by several other groups including SL was held, after city's Mayor had tried to prevent its taking place. After 20-30 minutes cops moved in, called for demonstrators to disperse, broke up rally with tear gas. About 700-800 were there. Larry S. was scheduled to speak, but rally didn't get that far.
- j. 1199: A last-minute mass meeting of the hospital workers was

called in preparation for the threatened hospital strike. We got out, on Turner's initiative, a leaflet signed by Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee, and distributed 2500 copies to hospital workers. Response was mainly good. Everybody else was there too--ACFI, CP, PL. A strike was averted by employers agreeing to \$100 minimum wage after one year. This represents a limited victory for the union. There seem to be several old friends and contacts of ours employed in the industry now. A party is planned by MLCRC for next week. Situation for us in union is contradictory; on the one hand the ranks were very willing to strike and now feel strong and confident; on the other, they will not have much sense of grievance against union leadership. Disc: Turner, Ellens, Stoute, Robertson, Janacek

- k. Lutte de Classe: May issue, which contained a critique of SL's Guerrillaism article, was evidently mailed in time to avoid mail tie-ups, as we have just received our bundle. We have the responsibility to reply.
- l. VO: Ellens reports receiving letter, dated 26 June, from a friend in VO. They have resumed some public functioning--are still having their public meetings. The unity-of-action pact has been joined by the Pablo Pabloites. It seems they are setting up unity factory committees with student representatives. VO is continuing to function independently as well. They feel they have been through their 1905 and that this experience has been of great educational value; that the students and many workers have learned about the real nature of the state and the trade unions. There do not seem to have been any arrests of VOers. Their headquarters is still there, but they are obviously not getting mail because of the ban. The lead story in a new French publication appearing after the outlawing of VO concerns the need for a revolutionary leadership and includes VO's differences with the Pabloists. Disc: Joel, Nelson, Robertson, Ellens

3. Personnel and Organization:

- a. Mike M.: Although he is still living in New Jersey, the comrade will be much more mobile now that he has graduated from high school and will be on his own.

Motion: To transfer Mike M. from at-large to NYC local. Passed

- b. NYC: Two comrades from Philadelphia are now in NYC and will be spending several months here before being reassigned to another area.

Motion: To accept the transfer of Joel S. and Charlotte G. from Philadelphia to NYC. Passed

- c. N.O.: Monumental task of reorganization of files in completed. A new division, which is temporary, of areas of responsibility has been set up: N.O. Secretary--Gordon; Files--Rogers; Finances--Janacek; Orders and Small Bundles--Martin and Janacek; Large Bundles--Robertson. Charlotte will be around N.O. and should be broken in on all aspects of staff work, in order that she--and the area to which she will be assigned--acquire a knowledge of general N.O. functioning.

- d. New Orleans: A letter from S. received; he says we are being attacked as hypocrites on our draft line as a result of Hain-

line's having gone AWOL and wants us to publicly denounce Hainline. This presents the problem that in order to expel Hainline we would have to take a position on what his action constitutes legally--to prejudge the case before its final legal resolution and thus jeopardize him. Hainline, who has suffered a personal break-down, may still return to his post voluntarily. He has been suspended from the SL pending resolution of the situation. Regarding hypocrisy, we cannot be accused of sanctioning his breach of our line on the draft, as we ordered him to return to his base. Disc: Nelson, Janacek, Henry, Ellens, Stoute, Turner, Robertson, Janacek, Robertson, Stoute, Ellens, Stoute, Turner, Janacek, Turner, Robertson

A letter from Joe V. received tonight announces that Comrade Richard F. will be brought up on charges for having come to a public meeting drunk and a trial will be held tonight. They want to put him on notice that he will be expelled if a similar incident takes place again. Although we cannot judge the actual merits of the case from here, in general a trial is an ugly business and should not be held unless the local intends to expel the offender as a result of the trial. Until this point is reached, the matter might better be handled informally, by patient education and comradely harassment. However, after the fact, even if a mistake in judgement has been made, the national center does not interfere in the affairs of a local or organizing committee. Only if a breach of principle is involved would we instruct a local or O.C. to undo an action it has already taken. Disc: Ellens, Janacek, Stoute, Joel, Turner, Nelson, Gordon, Cunningham, Robertson, Ellens, Stoute, Small, Gordon, Robertson

- e. Personal habits: There has been a good deal of pressure from some comrades for us to harden up our policy toward personal habits which are illegal and/or detrimental to the organization. Our underlying attitude is that we keep our hands off comrades' personal conduct unless the personal conduct becomes in its implications overwhelmingly political. Thus, our comrades must be cool: the use of additives is incompatible with SL membership, and any other illegal drugs must be kept entirely away from all headquarters, local organizers and Central Committee members. Our policy on "pot" is that in an inward, moral sense we have no objections to it, but we must avoid any legal jeopardy and comrades should be discouraged from making the "pot scene". The real problem for us is that while the use of "pot" is fairly innocuous per se it tends to be associated with a style of life that generally excludes continued political functioning. Regarding a redefinition of our policy, we really do not know how the bulk of the membership feels, although there are strong proponents of both "harder" and "softer" positions. As the old policy will serve well enough for now, we should take this matter to a National Conference.

Motion: To table action on this point to a National Conference, at which we will have a Commission on this subject. Passed

f. Espartaco resignation: Consideration of resignation of Espartaco comrades was tabled from meeting of 10 June pending consideration of accusations of improper conduct raised by Robertson against an Espartaco comrade and one other comrade, as question was raised of whether we should accept resignation of Espartaco comrade or should take other action. After discussion with Mike M., it seems that factional differences were taken up with him not as part of his "tutoring" in Marxism but otherwise and as a result of a question he had raised with her. While in view of the attitudes and actions of the Espartaco comrades after they had decided to break with the SL we do not want to extend to them a vote of thanks for their services, we should accept their resignation in view of their services to the organization previously. Discussion

Motion: To accept the Espartaco resignation.

Passed

g. Accusations against Ellens:

Presentation by Robertson: However, on the related accusations against Comrade Ellens, an informal confrontation has been arranged between Ellens and Joel S. for the benefit of the PB. No formal action will be brought as a result of these charges. There are two incidents involved: (1) In January, Ellens, during a discussion with Joel, a non-member and then quasi-sympathizer, told him that about a third of the SL were social democrats. (2) At the time of the trip by Stoute, an Espartaco comrade and Ellens to Philadelphia (which the N.O. found out about accidentally immediately before the trip took place but before Ellens' factional activity had been revealed--i.e., the trip was supposed to be simply to build the SL!), Ellens discussed the security question very prominently with at least one contact, giving a line which was not the SL line but the views of some members of the minority on the security question. Moreover, Ellens encouraged our Phila. O.C. (using the apparent authority of our N.O.) to adopt infantile clandestinity techniques. In the first case, Comrade Ellens simply went to a contact of the organization and bad-mouthed the organization. In the second, these three comrades raised their own politics and not ours as a main point of a discussion with a contact.

Presentation by Joel: I find this confrontation an ugly but necessary thing to do. Ellens' first remarks were made to me at the end of January in NYC. I was at that time not even a close sympathizer and didn't even consider myself a Marxist. In a 7-hour conversation with Robertson I became convinced on several points and then projected to him that after more study I might join the organization. The next day Comrade Ellens said in the course of a dinner conversation that a third of the NYC local were social-democrats. At that time I had no concept of democratic centralism so didn't see her remark as wrong.

The second incident was at the time of the trip of the three comrades to Philadelphia. I had still not joined the organization but was then functioning with the Phila. comrades in meetings and elsewhere. During that trip a number of contacts

were met by the three comrades from NYC. That evening we had arranged a discussion with another contact, at which all three were present plus the contact and Charlotte and myself. The first 45 minutes to an hour centered on the question of security. They dwelt very heavily on what can be expected to happen to incipient work without proper security. (The contact seemed baffled by the excessive emphasis on security and mentioned to me at a later date that he felt the organization was somewhat paranoid.) Then we continued the discussion with the contact for about another hour on general political subjects.

Presentation by Ellens: When Comrade Robertson first raised these points the only incident I could remember was that Joel raised to me, during our trip to Philadelphia, the criticism that the N.O. doesn't function, which I wet-blanketed and changed the subject. Now I remember what he is referring to. I raised something like "there is social-democratic functioning in NYC too" when Joel and especially Charlotte seemed very upset that they couldn't get the other Phila. comrades to be very active. I think that Joel has added in retrospect what he may have felt then or heard here later. I was only here one week then--how could I have said what Joel says? In Phila. Charlotte raised with me strange phonecalls, being followed around, etc. We took up security with a contact from Latin America, which is very important for a non-citizen. In fact I discouraged the comrades from some security practices; they had been thinking about meeting in different places, calling the meeting place at the last minute. At the discussion Joel refers to with the contact, security was not raised by me but by Charlotte; I tried to diminish the subject and look at it sensibly. I had been told that the contact was close to PL, so I discussed PL's concept of "public conspiratorial" functioning. It is strange that you say the contact was turned off--the next day he was very enthusiastic. Your account is very exaggerated. In fact, I discouraged you from doing with Tom's situation the same thing you people went ahead and did with Lou's. Obviously your account was conceived after the fact. I discouraged discussion about the VO report; although Charlotte was very enthusiastic about it, I didn't try to corner her. The arrangements for the trip to Philly were very last minute; likewise I invited Stoute and the Espartaco comrade to come. I mentioned to Robertson a number of times that they wanted me to visit Phila., that lots of people from NYC should come.

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

Summary by Ellens: Like Stoute, I don't want to see this thing dropped. On the alleged double recruiting--a political person is obviously going to stress whatever they feel is most important in talking with contacts. I discussed the working class with the contacts, certainly never felt it was a factional point or double recruiting to discuss it. On the security question, I had no concept except that the comrades here

thought security was a laughing matter. I didn't raise criticisms with Joel--Charlotte was complaining about the way Phila. was functioning; perhaps Joel should not have been in the discussion. A contact who is functioning as a comrade, is present in internal meetings, etc.--how can you call discussing things with him double recruiting? I didn't see it as not maintaining a common face. I don't think Joel would have been turned off by that. If I thought the organization was social democratic I wouldn't be wasting my time here now.

Summary by Joel: I have to question either Ellens' memory or her veracity. When I came to NYC in January I had never even met Tom, or seen Lou for several months. I certainly was not attending internal meetings or the like, had never been privy to internal matters. Obviously I could never have complained about how Phila. functioned! I don't understand Comrade Ellens' recollection of mysterious phonecalls; I never heard of any. I wasn't around when the incident of being followed around happened. No security measures were adopted after it, and it never happened again. There was no justification for the security measures that were advocated. We were stunned to hear that lots of comrades were coming down; we had never requested any, except for Ellens. What happened in the discussion with the contact was that Stoute and I left to get some food after the topic for 20 minutes had been security. When we returned it was still being discussed. Other subjects were discussed only when that topic was exhausted. The next day Ellens did an excellent job in PL's discussion group, but the contact in question wouldn't even ride home with us so I don't see any indication of great interest on his part. My next discussions with him were much more difficult than before. Chael!

Summary by Robertson: Ellens gives the lie to her claims of innocence when in their midst she asserts that the Majority thinks security is a laughing matter--far from it! But the point is it shows she knew what she was deliberately doing against us in Phila. while pretending to be on a trip for us. What this affair shows is that one must pay a certain price for trying to wreck an organization before leaving it. Bringing this to the PB has been called a frame-up. Why bring it before the PB? Because the PB is the sovereign body of which Comrade Ellens is a member. We had heard from the West Coast several months ago that Ellens was going out there--long before the reason she gives now, the more recent death of her mother. There is a logic to indiscipline--if you think the organization is all the things you say and we are a bunch of liars and frame-up artists besides, why should you behave like members and abide by discipline? Well, you may not like it but you have to do it in order to have the right to try to wreck it. There's no problem at all to function as a critic. Comrade Glenn functioned as a critic and got a sympathetic hearing for his views. It's also okay to try to replace the leadership. But you can't be disingenuous and say "we are not factionalists, we're just critics" while doing it, not if you expect to be believed. Comrade Ellens is propounding VO's

organizational techniques. But VO also has certain politics--related--which she won't discuss or defend. When she is out of the SL she'll have those political views too. VO has many strengths but also weaknesses. They are semi-syndicalist and weak on theory--they have theory but disdain it. Their strength, strong class instinct, turns into weakness when the proletariat is absent--e.g., Vietnam doesn't need a Trotskyist party, Stokely Carmichael can lead the black proletariat, the East European Soviet bloc states and Cuba are capitalist--this method is not different from the Pabloists'. Ellens must abide by the formalities--she must move as agreed, turn over all her French political addresses to the organization, get a phone, carry out certain commissions on the West Coast. You don't have to like us and you don't have to talk sweetly but you have to build this organization so long as you are a member. You can arrange a factional tour--this is your right--but you have to arrange it, not just grab it. You told your criticisms of the SL to a non-member, discussed your pet views with another contact. When a person gets a standing invitation to internal meetings--determined by the whole of the organization--the the wraps are off; anybody can discuss anything with him. Turner has shown that he wants to go with the Minority even though he doesn't know where it's going. The logic of the criticisms and positions is that your group is going to leave the SL, but any time that Marxist consciousness rises in you, you can get out of your present orbit.
Disc: Ellens, Turner

Motion by Turner: That we start factional points by 10:30 or else table them to the next meeting.

Disc: Nelson, Henry, Robertson, Janacek, Turner, Janacek,
Nelson, Robertson, Henry

VOTE on Motion: For: Turner, Stoute, Henry
Opposed: Nelson, Robertson

Passed

Motion: To have a special PB meeting next week to complete this agenda.

Passed

Meeting adjourned 1:20 a.m.