

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 16, January 23, 1976

Present: Barnes, Blackstock, Breitman, Camejo, Gersh, D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Lund, Lyons, Scott, Seigle, Shaw, Sheppard, Stapleton, Waters

Chair: Jones

AGENDA: 1. National City Critical Support Proposal  
2. Political Committee Assignments  
3. Baltimore Branch  
4. ERA Campaign  
5. July 4 Bicentennial Actions  
6. Angola Campaign  
7. Spain  
8. Plenum Portugal Article

1. NATIONAL CITY CRITICAL SUPPORT PROPOSAL

D. Jenness reported on San Diego branch's proposal to extend critical support to the Ad Hoc Committee on Chicano Rights slate for city council and school board in the National City elections to be held March 2.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the proposal to give critical support to the Chicano slate and to send a letter to the San Diego branch summarizing the Political Committee's suggestions on the campaign (see attached).

Carried.

2. POLITICAL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Barnes proposed that comrade Al Hansen be released from his responsibilities heading up the shop and comrade Bev Scott be released from the shop and national party finances to go to Boston to help play a leadership role there. The Boston branch, one of our major branches and an important regional center, is now in the process of dividing and is looking forward to this political assistance.

Over the last year Al, by agreement with the national office, has been moving toward more of a consultative role in the leadership of the shop as comrade Sue Adley has assumed more of the responsibility for organizing the shop and directing its work.

These shifts come at a time when the party's recruitment is increasing and when we can expect significant growth in the coming period which will make it possible and necessary to review and expand all aspects of our work. The shop will play a key role in all of this and it is important that the national office have an understanding of the interplay of how our policies affect the functioning of the shop, the interrelationship of the

policies and alternatives of other departments, especially Pathfinder and our publications, and our expansion perspectives. Thus it is important to continue to have a center party leader in the shop to play the kind of role Al has been in the last years. Comrade Lew Jones is being assigned to the shop to be responsible to the National Office for carrying out this review and expansion.

Motion: To approve the proposals.

Carried.

### 3. BALTIMORE BRANCH

D. Jenness reported on request of seventeen party members in Baltimore that a branch be chartered in Baltimore.

Discussion

Motion: That the Political Committee authorize the at-large members in Baltimore to constitute a party branch in that city.

Carried.

### 4. ERA CAMPAIGN

(Jaquith invited for this point.)

Jaquith reported on local actions in support of ERA planned for March 6-8 around the country, and on national action called by Illinois NOW for April in Springfield, Illinois.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

### 5. JULY 4 BICENTENNIAL ACTIONS

(Jaquith invited for this point.)

Jaquith reported on plans of the People's Bicentennial, Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and Philadelphia NOW for protest actions on July 4 in Washington D.C. and Philadelphia.

Discussion

Agreement: That the national office organize the gathering of more information on these activities to prepare a major propaganda intervention for the press and campaign.

### 6. ANGOLA CAMPAIGN

(Bailey, Benson, Schmuger invited for this point.)

Miah reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report and to assign Miah to direct the national campaign against U.S. intervention in Angola (see attached).

Carried.

7. SPAIN

(Baumann, Benson, Foley, Frankel, White invited for this point.)

Shaw reported.

Discussion

8. PLENUM PORTUGAL ARTICLE

(Baumann, Benson, Foley, Frankel invited for this point.)

Sheppard reported on new facts we've received since the plenum about the Nov. 25 coup that should be incorporated into our assessment of those events.

Discussion

Motion: To agree with general line of report.

Carried.

Sheppard proposed that he write an article for ISR and draft a resolution for the IEC based on report and statement adopted by the National Committee plenum incorporating our estimation of Nov. 25 events.

Carried.

Meeting Adjourned.

San Diego, California  
January 16, 1976

SWP Political Committee  
New York

Dear Comrades,

At a meeting on January 14, the San Diego branch unanimously voted to recommend to the SWP Political Committee that we call for a vote for the National City candidates of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chicano Rights and that the SWP actively campaign for and support these three candidates.

National City is a small incorporated city adjacent to San Diego. The population is 40% Chicano, and it is widely seen as the main concentration of Chicanos in San Diego County.

In October 1975, a 20-year-old Puerto Rican, Luis Rivera, was killed by a National City cop. At that time, the Ad Hoc Committee on Chicano Rights, the main organization in the Chicano community, took the lead in organizing and mobilizing a response from the community to this murder. On October 28, a mass demonstration of over 1,000 presented demands to the National City City Council. When the Council refused to respond, the Ad Hoc Committee, under the direction of Herman Baca, initiated a petition campaign to recall the City Council, which is composed of a mayor and four councilmen. The recall is aimed at the mayor and two councilmen only, because the remaining two councilmen are up for election in March and cannot be recalled.

The recall procedure is long and complicated and may not be successfully completed for many months. So far, the first step has been completed with 1800 signatures of registered N.C. voters filed for each of the three officials being recalled. This task required the mobilization of about 200 community activists and received widespread media coverage. The City Council now sees this recall movement as a real threat and is doing everything it can to get the signatures invalidated.

While planning to follow through on the recall campaign, the Ad Hoc Committee has decided to run three of its members for the two other City Council seats and one School Board seat. The election is March 2. The two candidates for City Council are Jesse Ramirez, Equal Employment Opportunity coordinator at the Veterans Administration Hospital, and Dr. Oscar Cuñedo, Spanish language instructor at Southwestern Junior College and school board member. Ramirez and Cuñedo are running against the incumbents Ralph Pinson, owner of a company that sells window screens, and Louis Camacho, a retiree from a meat packing firm. Both incumbents were endorsed by the local Democratic Party Club in the last election, although there is no formal endorsement for this race so far, and none of the candidates takes a public party label. The Ad Hoc candidate for School Board is Luis Natividad,

supervisor of a number of "community service centers," and a well known activist who has served on dozens of community organizations. He was chairperson of the Chicano Federation at the time he endorsed the Olga Rodriguez campaign for governor of California. In 1972 he ran for City Council and lost by 56 votes. He is running against three people described in the press as "a marriage counselor," "wife of a City Planning Commissioner," and "student at San Diego State University and president of the National City Filipino American Community, Inc."

The chairperson and central figure in the Ad Hoc Committee is Herman Baca. Baca has been a political activist in MAPA, LRUP and CASA and now uses his small print shop as a movement headquarters. He was the campaign manager for Pete Chacon, Democratic State Assemblyman, a few years ago. Chacon decided Baca was too radical and Baca as a result is bitter towards Chacon and the Democratic Party. Comrades can get more of his background from the article by Harry Ring in the Militant dated January 16, 1976. He is the best known and most respected leader in the Chicano community.

The March 2 election is officially "non-partisan." The seats being contested, however, are held by Democrats who have been strongly supported by the Democratic machine in previous elections. That places the campaigns of the Ad Hoc Committee in direct conflict with the Democratic Party and capitalist party politics. This is true for several reasons.

First, the Ad Hoc Committee is based in the Chicano community and relies on the community for its existence. The election campaign is being organized as a community action, with a strong Chicano nationalist character. The candidates are called "a Chicano slate." And the campaign is combined with a voter registration drive for 1000 new Chicano registrants. A weakness of this registration drive is that the Ad Hoc Committee is not publicly urging people to register La Raza Unida Party. This is due to the fact that the Ad Hoc Committee is composed of different Chicano organizations, some of which (like MAPA) favor the Democratic Party. Although Baca organized an LRUP registration drive a few years ago and signed up 3000 new voters, he has decided not to push this point during the current election.

Second, although the candidates do not understand the importance of independence from the Democratic Party, the dynamic of this election is in an anti-Democratic Party direction. Despite the lack of a conscious and concrete anti-Democratic Party line on their part, we feel that the objective counterposition of a Chicano slate to Democratic Party candidates makes our support to their campaign a principled position.

The program they have adopted is made up of the seven points listed on the recall petition as reasons to get rid of the present City Council:

1. Bias toward corporate interests in establishing zoning regulations.

2. Failure to provide for the safety of our school children.
3. Inability to harness federal funds for local projects and social improvement.
4. Mismanagement of federal funds.
5. Failure to provide adequate guidelines and policies for law enforcement officials.
6. Insensitivity to the multi-cultural needs of our community.
7. Failure to respond to the will of the people.

They are in the process of writing position papers on all these points and asked comrade Don Sorsa to become a paid (\$30/week) staff person on a week-to-week basis for the purpose of heading up a committee that will research and write these position papers. There is every indication that we will have a certain amount of influence on some of their literature.

The branch's role has been one of active participation in the October demonstration and the recall petition drive. We are seen as serious activists and have gained the trust of the leadership and rank and file. We were publicly thanked at the rally held to celebrate the successful completion of the petitioning and the announcement of the March slate. And we are now being consulted on ideas for the election campaign. The Militant with Harry's article was read widely in the Ad Hoc office and we intend to step up sales and subscriptions in National City.

By supporting this campaign the SWP has many things to gain, including:

1. Broadened contact with and influence within the Chicano and Black community.
2. An educational influence on how socialists participate in struggles and election campaigns.
3. Influence on the campaign itself, including possible influence on political positions taken by the candidates.
4. Winning Chicano supporters for our election campaign.
5. Increasing recruitment to the branch.
6. Gaining influence on two National City campuses -- Southwestern Junior College and Sweetwater High School.
7. Publicly challenging our opponents to support the National City Ad Hoc candidates.

The central focus of our support would be to stress that this campaign is an example of independent political action by the Chicano community, a step towards an independent Chicano political party. We would use the Militant and a statement of support to explain why we advocate a vote for these candidates. We will make suggestions such as a tour by one of the candidates, linking up with LRUP chapters in LA, and mobilizing support on campus and through extensive media coverage. We see this as the branch's central area of work which lays the basis for really getting to know about National City and all the Chicano groups that exist there.

The Executive Committee discussed how to formulate our support for this campaign and did not reach complete agreement. The tradition in our movement has been that the phrase "critical support" is used, with very few exceptions, when endorsing a non-Trotskyist election campaign. On the other hand, this campaign has very little that we criticize, and none of that publicly. There was no disagreement on our political approach or the tactical gains to be made. The discussion centered around terminology. The formulation, "call for a vote for and actively campaign and support" was agreed upon. We feel that some clarification of this question would be worthwhile.

Comradely,  
s/ Jessica Star  
for the Executive Committee

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
January 27, 1976

Jessica Star

San Diego

Dear Jessica,

At its meeting on January 23 the Political Committee approved your recommendation to extend critical support to the three candidates of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chicano Rights in the March 2 elections in National City.

In our discussion of your proposal we noted favorably that the branch's recommendation came promptly after the candidates were announced, that it grew out of the comrades' participation in struggles in National City, and that you've not hesitated about getting Militant articles in on these developments.

There were several points in your letter motivating the recommendation that we want to raise with you.

The first is your formulation that "this campaign has very little that we criticize, and none of that publicly." We recognize that you are grappling here with how to publicly present the party's support to a campaign that we believe is a positive development and that we want to support. As you indicate, this is not helped by publicly announcing our "critical" support. But recognizing this should not obscure the fact that we do have important criticisms of this campaign.

One is the Ad Hoc Committee's failure to take a clear position in opposition to the Democratic and Republican parties and to utilize its campaign to help educate on the need for independent political action by Chicanos. This programmatic inadequacy at this stage is underlined by the campaign's failure thus far to register voters in the La Raza Unida party.

You indicate that the fact that the Ad Hoc Committee's candidates are running against the established Democratic party machine "places the campaigns of the Ad Hoc Committee in direct conflict with the Democratic party and capitalist party politics."

But the facts you present don't affirm this estimation. Rather, they show that at this stage the Ad Hoc Committee is shying away from a direct conflict with the Democratic party or from presenting an anticapitalist program. The Ad Hoc Committee's seven planks are immediate reforms that would help Chicanos in National City and are there because of the real struggles that have taken place. However, they don't constitute a platform to mobilize Chicanos against the capitalist government and the key issues of unemployment, inflation, deportation and discrimination of undocumented workers, bilingual education, farmworkers organizing drive, etc.



You indicate that Herman Baca is "bitter" towards the Democratic party. Hopefully, this bitterness will be the stimulant for increasing his understanding of the class nature of the Democratic party and its inherently reactionary role. However, bitterness by itself is not evidence of understanding about the capitalist nature of the Democratic party and the need to break from it.

Despite these weaknesses in the Ad Hoc Committee's campaign, we agree with your judgment that this Chicano slate is objectively counterposed to the Democratic party-backed candidates which is the basis that we can in principle support it.

In your list of gains the SWP stands to make by supporting this campaign we should add the most important -- the opportunity we have to utilize our support to this campaign to help propagandize for the necessity of Chicanos breaking with the capitalist parties and organizing their own independent party to fight for their interests. We can point to this campaign and say, "We support this campaign because it's an example and could be a step towards the formation of a mass break by Chicanos in National City from the parties of their oppressors." We especially have a responsibility to do this because the Ad Hoc Committee candidates aren't doing it yet. A positive public presentation of what the campaign objectively is, what its potential is, and what it could lead to, is as you recognize, the most effective way for us to present our ideas about the campaign.

This all points to the necessity of the branch launching its election campaign right away. Experience has shown that this is the most effective vehicle for plaining our support to the campaign and utilizing it to publicize the concept of independent Chicano political action.

We know you are considering running a party candidate for congress in the district that includes National City. We think that announcing this campaign right away and utilizing it as your principal voice for supporting and commenting on the Ad Hoc Committee campaign is key and will maximize the gains you'll make from your activities in support of it. It's only with your own campaign that you'll be able to show in practice and in a positive way the kind of program an independent Chicano ticket should have. You should also urge the labor movement in National City and San Diego to both support the Ad Hoc Committee candidates and to emulate its break from the Democratic party. With this approach you will increase your ability to influence supporters of the Ad Hoc Committee ticket.

One final point: in your letter you indicate that Don Sorsa has been asked to go on the campaign staff and could "have a certain amount of influence on some of the literature." We

don't have an opinion about whether or not Don should go on the staff to help work on the campaign -- unless, of course, he was the party's candidate for congress, which would exclude it. However, we think it would be wrong to try to influence their campaign by writing statements for it because we may project positions that are too radical or advanced for them at their present stage of consciousness. Even if one or another candidate agrees to allow a good formulation or position that Don suggests on a leaflet, they might not be prepared to defend it publicly if they come under attack.

Keep us informed of your plans and keep the articles coming to the Militant.

Comradely,

/s/

Doug Jenness, for the  
Political Committee

## Report on Equal Rights Amendment Support Actions

by Cindy Jaquith, January 23, 1976

The recent large demonstrations in Atlanta and Richmond in support of the Equal Rights Amendment are a confirmation of our perspective that new opportunities are opening up to build a campaign of united, national actions to win the ERA. The Atlanta action of 3,000 set an important example for the kind of broad support that is needed to ratify the ERA. The speakers' list there included representatives of several trade unions, leaders of the different factions in the National Organization for Women, students, Socialist Workers party vice-presidential candidate Willie Mae Reid, and Black Democratic office holders Julian Bond and Maynard Jackson.

The main focus now for ERA activity is March 8, International Women's Day. In many cities we have helped initiate meetings to set ERA actions on the March 5-8 weekend. The broadest call for such a local meeting has been in St. Louis, where the Ad Hoc International Women's Day Committee sent out a call signed by women in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Communications Workers, UAW, and Teamsters, along with signers from NOW, National Council of Negro Women, Welfare Rights Organization, Socialist Workers party, and campus feminist groups.

Local chapters of the Coalition of Labor Union Women in several cities are supporting the March 5-8 activities. CLUW's big job is to get labor endorsements for these actions, help set up ERA committees in the unions, and encourage the unions to mobilize their members for International Women's Day.

All comrades in the unions should be active in this ERA campaign. One indication of the potential for union involvement is a front-page headline in the January American Teacher, the AFT's paper. It reads: "CLUW: All out for the Equal Rights Amendment." Inside is a report on the CLUW convention.

The March 5-8 actions can play an important role in uniting forces from the women's movement, unions, Black community, and campuses in local ERA coalitions. Regardless of the size of these initial actions, these coalitions can lay the basis for future ERA actions on a national scale.

The teach-ins, picket lines, and demonstrations in March can help build the April 20 national ERA demonstration called by NOW for the state capitol in Springfield, Illinois. April 20 is a Tuesday, which will limit the participation of working people and those from far away. Even so the action is already gathering considerable support in NOW chapters in the Midwest. We want to get other women's groups, unions, students, and Black organizations actively involved in helping NOW build this demonstration, and the teach-ins and debates planned on the weekend before it.

## Report on Hands Off Angola Campaign

by Malik Miah, January 23, 1976

Since the plenum, when we launched a national campaign against U.S. intervention into Angola, most branches have started getting involved in or are planning to organize activities against U.S. involvement in Angola. In most cities, activities in which the party is helping to initiate or are participating in coincide with the dates of Tony Thomas's and my speaking tours. The main demand raised in these activities is an end to U.S. intervention, which is the theme of Tony's and my talks.

First, it is clear from reports that we've received from branches that a great potential exists to support, organize or initiate activities against U.S. intervention into Angola as well as to explain our overall analysis of the character of the civil war. This means we should take an aggressive approach. We can initiate picket lines, forums, teach-ins and rallies on the campus and citywide. We should seek to reach out to broader forces than just student or radical groups. Organizations like the NAACP, Urban League, CBTU, Nation of Islam, NSCAR, NOW, other women's groups, and trade unions can be contacted. The sentiment against another Vietnam is high and thus provides good opportunities for us.

In some cities we are also supporting actions called by other groups, in some cases where the organizers make victory to the MPLA the central demand. We can bring our own signs and slogans placing the fire on the U.S. and their imperialist satellites. We have to, of course, be flexible in how we do this but shouldn't, in general, hesitate to participate in such actions.

The most broadly sponsored action to date occurred on January 19 in Washington, D.C. A rally of 300 (50-60 Black) was held at the Capitol steps. It was initiated by the New York-based American Committee on Africa. Some of its sponsors included the Americans for Democratic Action, Clergy and Laity Concerned, Dave Dellinger, Ron Walters, Cora Weiss, Women's Strike for Peace, United Church of Christ and Anti-Apartheid Movement U.S.A. The Washington, D.C. SWP and YSA also supported the action.

Last week's Militant reported on a broadly sponsored news conference held in St. Louis. This included representatives from the Nation of Islam, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the St. Louis Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression.

The meetings for Tony Thomas have also been attended by large numbers of independent Black activists.

Overall there is high interest among all layers of the population in what's happening in Angola. Everyone's main concern is to oppose any U.S. intervention.

Second, the public response to the different actions and educational activities has been very good even when the organizers of these events have not attempted to reach out to broad social forces like Black community groups and trade unions. This includes meetings organized by Maoists where the focus is not on getting the U.S. out of Angola but demanding that all the "Superpowers Out of Angola." For example, on January 10 the New York African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) held a rally of over 200 people, mostly Black. Also in New York, on January 17 YAWF organized a rally of 600 people. The main slogans were: "Victory to the MPLA" and "U.S. Out of Angola."

The Communist Party is also very active in its support to the MPLA. They intervened at the New York ALSC rally. They are involved in coalitions with other groups in a number of cities -- Philadelphia and Chicago, for example. In the coalition in Chicago, which includes the CP and YAWF, support to the MPLA is mandatory to participate in its meeting. We were excluded from a meeting planning a rally against U.S. intervention because we didn't support the MPLA. They've called a rally for February 7 which we are building with our own leaflets. We plan to carry our own signs and banners with the "U.S. Out Now" slogan.

Exclusion of groups and individuals critical of the MPLA has not been the general approach taken by the CP and YAWF around the country that we can ascertain. In fact, in some cities we have been able to participate in common meetings and actions with the CP. Tony, for example, spoke on a panel with the chairman of the St. Louis CP. We should try to continue such participation -- common actions, teach-ins and debates -- when possible.

An important part of our campaign around Angola will be the promotion of a Pathfinder book on Angola by Tony Thomas and Ernest Harsch which will be available by the end of February. It will include Tony's report to the party plenum and a selection of articles by Ernie on the background to the situation in Angola. The Militant plans to give special attention to promoting the book, and branches should begin early to think out ways of getting it into the hands of as many people as possible.