

## REPORT ON THE OCTOBER 1976 MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

### Introduction.

The 29 member National Committee is made up of Gay, Glenn, Joel, Jack, Kim, Bill, Mike, Joe, Cal, Enid, Mark, Marilyn, Larry, John and Barbara from Detroit. Ken, Anne, Steve and Eric from Cleveland. David and Bobbi from Chicago. Sharon from LA, Fred from Louisville, Lindsey from Seattle, Jack from Atlanta, Mike from NY, Mel from Pittsburg and Joe from Gary.. The 29th member is nominated by the Red Tide and for the first time this place was filled by Steve from Detroit. There were some parts of a small number of sessions from which a few members had to be absent on business, but 27 members attended the whole NC and only Joe from Detroit and Lindsey from Seattle were not seated for session of the meeting.

In seven major sessions of up to three hours each, eleven major topics were covered. This made it be far the hardest working NC meeting there has been in recent memory and even prevented the holding of the traditional Saturday night party.

The report which follows will deal with the business of the NC, item by item rather than session by session.

### National Secretary's Report.

This is always the first item of business by the NC in which the EC reports to the rest of the NC on the overall state of the organisation and its work. The discussion period allows the other leading members to add to the report and comment on key parts of it. The report started with a look at what the convention achieved and more particularly the weaknesses of the convention. Two key weaknesses were highlighted. One that there had been too much emphasis on mass work to the detriment of the party building aspects of our strategy. Two, despite the heavy emphasis on mass work, there was still much confusion on what our position means in practise. The NC would therefore have to act as a "mini-convention" to rectify these mistakes.

It was also reported that in the several months before and after the convention the I.S. had stagnated in terms of its growth and this had led to a serious demoralisation. It had also meant that because we have less resources at our disposal than we thought we would have at this stage, we had been forced to draw back from a limited number of projects. The general situation also had its reflection in the branches and most particularly in the circulation of Workers Power (WP). In the case of the industrial fractions however there were the first fragile signs of overcoming our problems. The beginning of the campaign ~~xxx~~ around South Africa and the re-activation of the Tyler campaign also pointed towards the real possibility of the organisation re-asserting its direction and growth. But it was stressed that the positive signs were still weak, should not be over-estimated and were still outweighed by the negative signs. The rest of the NC was to be concerned with building off these positive signs and ensuring that there was a united national leadership taking responsibility for once again moving the whole organisation forward.

The discussion on this section brought out many and varied criticisms of the EC, some of which were accepted by them as legitimate. It was also felt by the majority of the NC that given the kind of problems faced by the organisation it was increasingly necessary to expand the responsible leadership of the IS far beyond the five member EC. The EC reply was to accept this observation and point out that the rest of the NC meeting was an opportunity to do just that. It was also stated that the only sound solution to our problems in the end was to find the way to recruit in serious numbers from the mass work we were continuing to carry out with varying degrees of success.

### Report on the Red Tide

This report did not go far beyond the reports that have already been published in the "News of the Month". The expansion of the RT to six branches and almost 80 members is a massive achievement but it has brought with it extremely serious problems. The RT has out-grown its perspectives, resources and leadership cadre and is now going thru what is turning out to be a difficult process of remaking its perspectives and consolidating its cadre. There was some useful discussion of what had to be done and the RT leaders reported on the provisional timetable for making these steps.

There was also some discussion on the resignation of Micheal (who was present with speaking rights for this session) from the RT leadership and his leaving for Cincinnati. Micheal raised some general criticisms of the way the IS leadership had related to the RT leadership and charged that these and other political differences of emphasis had played a part in his resignation. It was pointed out that this was the first time that Micheal had tried to raise a political justification for his resignation and that at the time of the resignation and for several weeks after he had insisted that his reasons for leaving were personal.

The IS EC also, during this session, outlined the plans which had been jointly evolved for ensuring that the RT became more self-reliant in political and material terms so that there would be more content in the generally agreed formulation that the RT should have political loyalty to the IS but organisational independence. It was also stressed that the organisation cannot develop in a different direction than the IS, must have its joint members operating under IS discipline where necessary and must have maximum help from the IS both locally and nationally in order to succeed.

### Discussion on the Document "The Employers Offensive, the Bargaining Round and their Effects on our Industrial Perspectives."

This document is already in the hands of the membership. The discussion on it gave rise to three amendments. The first from Dave of Chicago moved to table the document to allow the EC to re-write it in the context of the effects on our view of building the rank and file movement ~~in~~ the developments outlined in the document. This was rejected by 10 to 9 with 6 abstentions. The second, to delete the final paragraph of the document, was moved by Mike of NY and received one vote for with many against. The final amendment from Mark of Detroit was passed, having been accepted by the EC, by 13 to 4 with 6 abstentions. This amendment is included in the document which has been circulated. Finally, the document, as amended was passed for implementation by a vote of 24 for, 0 against and 1 abstention. This document now becomes the policy of the whole organisation.

### Discussion on the Document "Evaluation of the Auto Campaign"

This document is also now in the hands of the members, but certain small amendments were passed which are not included in it and should be noted here. A motion by Steve of C'land asking that the auto steering committee provide more details of local work and plans for the future was passed by 15 votes to 2. The committee will be putting out a new perspective document towards the end of the month which amongst other things fulfills the intent of this motion. A motion by Jack of Atlanta to clarify the contradiction contained in the section on our outside work at Fords was passed unanimously. That section at present implies that we should have done more but that it was impossible to do more. The sense of it should have been that despite the difficulties we should have continued the work rather than dropped it. Finally the NC passed unanimously a motion that branches cannot take members out of auto without SG/EC permission and proceeded to also pass the document, as amended overwhelmingly.

### Motion by the EC to Start a Political Magazine.

The EC motion was to launch a political magazine called WP Review, which would come out every two months containing about five long articles which would go into much greater political depth than WP could do. Many people were against that proposal on various grounds including the grounds that there was not a big enough readership for it, that we didn't have the res-

-ources to seriously write, produce and distribute it, that WP could do the job, etc. In the end it was agreed that we needed some vehicle for deeper political analysis ~~xxxxxx~~ immediately. That is a motion to table the question for the next three months while we concentrated WP from Dave of Chicago was rejected by 19 to 6. An amendment to the EC motion from Mike of NY to have the magazine in the form of a monthly 4 page insert into WP was opposed by the EC but was accepted by the NC by 15 to 12. The final motion, as amended, was passed by 17 to 9. Implementation of this new plan was passed on to the elected editorial board.

Discussion on the EC Document "In Defence of the PRP" and the counter document by Barbara of Detroit "The PRP, the ISGB, etc".

The EC document re-affirmed and extended what had been the position of the organisation on the PRP and the lessons of the Portuguese revolution. It also specifically took on the criticisms that have been raised by the ISGB, and while accepting the validity of some minor criticisms, specifically challenged all the major ones. The counter document essentially restated the ISGB position in the light of the EC document. These documents will be issued in the internal bulletin next week. After a long and serious discussion the NC voted 23 for the EC document and 3 for the counter document.

Discussion on the "Mass Work, Politics and Party Building" Document.

The document, which is now in the hands of the whole membership, was greeted enthusiastically by the NC and passed unanimously.

Discussion on the Resignation of Mike P from the EC

The discussion took place around the following EC motion.

"It is the position of the NC that Mike return to the EC. The NC re-affirms the position passed previously that it is the responsibility of IS leaders to put themselves at the disposal of the organisation. It is especially true at this time, when the organisation is experiencing something of a crisis of political confidence, that the organisation have available on its leading bodies, its recognised national leaders. Mike has made contributions to the work of the EC and has an important role to play. If Mike continues to refuse to serve on the EC, he must work out his future plans under the direction of the ~~XXX~~ EC."

The spokesperson for the EC made it clear that the EC believed that this motion followed very precisely along the path charted by the joint statement to the membership on the subject and as such should not give rise to either personal acrimony or a general political discussion on the role of leadership. Mike, in an equal time presentation opposing the motion, made it clear that he stood by the joint statement totally, but pointed out that an NC, and certainly a closed NC, should seriously take on a review of the functioning of the EC. The discussion revolved primarily around the questions of whether the EC had failed to adequately integrate Mike into its work and collaborate with him. A motion to that effect from Steve of C'land was rejected by 12 votes to 9. John of Detroit moved a motion that the NC simply accept Mike's resignation. Sharon of LA moved an amendment to that motion to add "with regret and with disapproval of the manner in which it was done". The amendment passed by 10 votes to 8, but the motion as amended was rejected by 16 votes to 10. This left the EC motion as the only motion still on the table, it was passed by 14 votes to 13 on a roll-call vote. The roll call was Gay, Glenn, Joel, Kim, Jack, Eric, Enid, Mark, Jack, Marilyn, Larry, Bobbi, Mike(NY), Steve(RT)...FOR. Mike, Bill, Ken, Sharon, Cal, Fred, David, Steve, Anne, John, Barbara, Mel, Joe(Gary)...AGAINST.

The NC did not take up the suggestion of the NY(UFT) branch that a further statement be issued to the membership on the circumstances of the resignation and the general feeling was that despite the great possibility for an extremely poor discussion on this subject, that possibility had not materialised. Indeed the discussion gave rise to a clearer understanding on the part of the participants both of the role of central leadership and the problems of the development of other leaders.

Discussion on the Document "Changes in Workers Power"

This document is now available to the whole membership. The NC felt that given the shift to ~~xxx~~ party building that had already been accepted overwhelmingly by the NC, that the role of WP as the most important tool the organisation has become even more significant. This means changes for the paper both in content and use, in the centre and in the branches. It means bringing the paper back into the centre of the life of the organisation with everyone becoming more involved. A motion by Bill of Detroit that the NC members send in a review of the next few issues was passed and the following motion by Steve of Cleveland was also passed unanimously.

" The NC expresses its appreciation and admiration to the WP staff for its efforts in the past difficult period. We further commit ourselves, as a leadership body, to work with the staff to make our campaign around the development of the paper and increased circulation, a success."

The WP document passed unanimously without amendment.

Discussion on the Campaign to Build a Political Periphery.

The background document for this discussion was the original document which went out to the branches over a month ago. This document which had begun as an outline has become in reality a summary of the changes that have to be made at this stage in the development of the organisation. The NC felt that the three major documents that had already passed (mass work, industrial perspectives and WP) had to be seen as an integral part of the campaign, that unless these politics were thoroughly understood in the organisation, the campaign would not succeed. It was also made clear that this campaign was of a different kind than campaigns in the past, that despite the specific recommendations the document contained, it also left great areas of flexibility and should be viewed as part of the necessary process of developing responsible leadership at every level of the organisation. There were also some extra specific recommendations raised by NC members to make the campaign more effective. These and other suggestions were dealt with at the organisers school and should by now be part of the branch plans for the campaign.

A discussion document from the LA exco (which will be published in the upcoming internal bulletin) was entered into the discussion but was not voted on at the request of Sharon. The NC also passed two amendments to the ~~xxx~~ original document by Mark of Detroit. These amendments read as follows.

"ADD TO PART 3. Party building can no longer be something we discuss only inside the organisation. While it would be a mistake to give only one reason for membership, we must learn to motivate recruitment on the basis of the need to build a revolutionary party. Ultimately this is why we, as an organisation, exist. Yet it is rarely put forward as a basic aspect of our internal politics. WP, for example, has tried to show how and why socialists are the best fighters. But we are going to have to do more than recruit on the basis of today's level of struggle. WP and the political magazine will begin to carry educational articles on this subject as part of our periphery building and recruitment campaigns."

& "ADD TO START OF PAGE 20. We cannot leave the development of black work perspectives for every branch at the level of the "flexible approach". The recruitment to the RT of scores of young black people is a forecast of a rebirth of a black liberation movement. The Black Commission will prepare for the next NC a draft perspective for rebuilding the black liberation movement. This perspective must take up some of the general political questions we have ignored as we have worked out limited plans for specific issues and situations. We must begin to develop a sense of which issues and social forces are going to foster and mold the new black movement."

The document, as amended, was passed unanimously by the ~~EE~~ NC. The NC also pledged itself, as a body, to ensure the implementation of the new line in all the branches and fractions.

### Organisational Session.

In this final session various organisational motions which had arisen in the course of the whole meeting were dealt with. A motion condemning the EC for failing to get its documents out on time was passed, as was a motion stating that in future these documents should be out three weeks in advance, with counter-documents available ten days before the meeting. Given the limited time that had been available for informal discussion and exchange of information a motion was passed requesting that future NC's include a party.

A motion to open the next NC to organisers and fraction steering committee members was overwhelmingly defeated as was a motion to have shorter agendas and longer speaking rounds for the next meeting. Finally a motion to have the next NC in early December around an agenda including black work, periphery campaign assessment, steel work and auto work was defeated and the EC announced that in all likelihood the next NC would be called for early January.

### Evaluation

In the opinion of the EC, and from informal discussions it is clear that this opinion is shared by most of the NC, this NC meeting represented a significant step forward for the organisation both in terms of political direction and the role of the NC. The combination of the serious problems we now have to face together and the fact that this was the first closed meeting gave rise to a meeting which was considerable more serious and responsible than in the past. It was also a meeting which ended with a real sense that key decisions had been made and that the NC as a united body would now have to play a full part in carrying them out.

This was not a meeting in which the participants felt we had solved all our problems. But it was clear that most people felt that we had taken the first crucial steps towards overcoming the present stagnation and demoralisation and while no-one should think it will be easy from here on in, there is certainly a real basis for some cautious optimism again about our immediate future.

There is still much to do, but both the EC and the rest of the NC learnt a great deal during the course of the meeting and are now much better equipped to take us forward. The October NC definitely represented a strengthening of the leadership of the organisation as a whole. It marked the entry into that level of leadership of several new comrades and an increased ability to implement our amended perspectives amongst the older cadre. In short, the immediate crisis is past. It will only return if the leadership of the IS, at every level, prove unable to clarify for the rank and file the present political situation facing us both internally and in the outside world and thereby fail to lead a successful campaign to build a political periphery.

Glenn Wolfe,  
National Secretary.