

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 9, December 10, 1971

Present: Barnes, Boehm, Breitman, Britton, Camejo, Dobbs, A. Hansen,
J. Hansen, Horowitz, Jenness, Lovell, Novack, Sheppard,
Waters

Visitors: Kerry, Reissner, Scott, Seigle

Chairwoman: Waters

AGENDA: 1. Antiwar Movement Report
2. Popular Frontism
3. Administrative Committee Report

1. ANTIWAR MOVEMENT REPORT

Reissner reported.

Discussion.

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

2. POPULAR FRONTISM

Camejo reported.

Discussion.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Sheppard reported on letter from Comrade Levitt. (see attached)

Discussion.

Motion: To send the following letter to Comrade Levitt.
(see attached)

Carried.

Sheppard reported on request of the Oakland-Berkeley branch.
(see attached)

Motion: To concur with the request of the Oakland-Berkeley
branch that Comrades Stu Singer and John Studer
continue their assignment in the YSA.

Carried.

Sheppard reported that Benson has been assigned National
Financial Director.

Meeting adjourned.

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

I would like to request permission from the Political Committee to contribute, as an individual, to the written discussion preparatory to the coming World Congress. I would also like clarification as to whether a minority ideological tendency in the S.W.P., like the "For A Proletarian Orientation Tendency," will be permitted to participate in the International discussion -- which I would find more preferable.

As the basis for my request, I cite the following:

1). July 7, 1971 letter from the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party to the United Secretariat, printed in International Information Bulletin, No. 5, July, 1971:

"In view of this, it is now our opinion that the leaderships of sections and sympathizing organizations who feel concerned about these developments would do well to begin consulting directly with each other, particularly in considering what relationship these developments may have to the political differences that have arisen, and what is the wisest course to pursue. This should include the leaderships of declared tendencies in national sections, where they may exist, inasmuch as this is a period of discussion preparatory to a world congress." (emphasis added)

2). The proposed Statutes of the Fourth International, published by the International Marxist Group:

"The International Executive Committee has the power to recommend that delegates of minority tendencies in national sections, who would not otherwise be represented at a World Congress, be seated with voice."

I would like to enter the discussion around the following main subjects:

1). Support to the proposals for the rapid institution of a genuinely Democratic Centralist International, with majority decisions binding on all participants. (See the article, "Again, and Always, the Question of the International," by Comrades Krivine and Frank, International Information Bulletin No. 5, July, 1971). Complete support to the rights of tendencies and factions within all sections of the International and the right of correspondence between members of the same section: rights openly opposed by the S.W.P. leadership at the most recent Convention of the Party. (This included the denial of the right of representation on leading bodies by minorities, contrary to Leninist tradition.)

2). The Middle East: opposition to the position of the Socialist Workers Party, for a "democratic, secular state in Palestine." This is the most serious issue facing the coming World Congress, inasmuch as the S.W.P. position runs counter to the theory of Permanent Revolution and the program of the Fourth International. Support to the position of the European comrades, for a socialist Middle-East.

3). Opposition to the document, The Worldwide Youth Radicalization, and opposition to the petty-bourgeois orientation and student perspective of the S.W.P. Support to the policy of increased and serious intervention into the working class movement being undertaken by the leading European sections. This assumes added significance for the development of our Party in the United States, in view of Nixon's attack on the working class through

the wage freeze and the totally inadequate response to it by the S.W.P. -- a response which flows from the weakness and petty-bourgeois character of its present orientation.

(4). Latin America. Here I will present a position opposed to both the student perspective of the S.W.P. and also to the armed struggle perspective of the European leadership. For a position based on the Transitional Program and integration of our cadres into the mass organizations of the workers.

Naturally, I will abide by the decision of the Political Committee on this matter -- although pointing out that the World Movement, not an individual section or sympathizing group, ought to be the ultimate authority on questions like this.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the United Secretariat for their information.

Comradely,
s/Ralph Levitt

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
December 10, 1971

OAKLAND-BERKELEY

Ralph Levitt

Dear Comrade Levitt,

At its meeting of December 10, the Political Committee took up your letter of November 5. It reached the following conclusions:

(1) In its platform, the Proletarian Orientation Tendency did not include positions on the key issues in dispute in the world Trotskyist movement. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency platform was confined to differences in current positions and orientation of the Socialist Workers Party. Adherents were recruited on this declared basis regardless of their conflicting views on various international questions.

(2) So far as knowledge of the positions of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency and its leaders is concerned, the Political Committee reminds you of the fact that all of the internal bulletins produced during the Socialist Workers Party pre-convention discussion were sent to every group affiliated to or in sympathy with the Fourth International.

(3) Neither your quote from the July 7, 1971, letter from the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party to the United Secretariat, printed in International Information Bulletin No. 5, July 1971, nor from the proposed statutes of the Fourth International have any bearing on your request.

(4) Your request to make an "individual" contribution to the pre-world congress discussion would have the effect of reopening the discussion that was closed by the 24th National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party. Consequently your request is rejected.

Comradely,

s/Barry Sheppard
Political Committee

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3536 Telegraph Ave.
Oakland, Calif. 94609
Dec. 6, 1971

Barry Sheppard
SWP N.O.
NYC

Dear Barry:

This letter is to inform you of a formal recommendation of the Oakland/Berkeley branch to the Political Committee.

You will recall from our earlier correspondence that after consultation with the local YSA leadership that it was our opinion that in order to successfully carry out the work of the YSA here this fall it was important to continue the assignment of John Studer and Stu Singer to the YSA, even though both reached their 25th birthday in October. There was a divided vote on this in the branch.

In your letter of November 1 you recommend that in view of the lack of a consensus on this question in the branch it would be advisable for the branch to make a formal request to the Political Committee to decide on its recommendation. You also report that after consultation with the YSA NEC on this matter you found that the NEC also felt that it is important for Singer and Studer, who are YSA National Committee members, to remain in the YSA.

On November 9 in the Executive Committee and on November 10 in the branch meeting I informed the comrades of the opinion of the YSA NEC and introduced the following motion, which was adopted by the majority in both bodies:

The Oakland/Berkeley Branch recommends to the Political Committee that Comrades Stu Singer and John Studer continue their assignment in the YSA.

Comradely,

s/Nelson Blackstock
O/B SWP Organizer