

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES 1 April 1968

Present: Full: Turner, Nelson, Stoute, Robertson, Henry (late)
Alts: Ellens, Janacek, Small Staff: Gordon
Other: Mark T. (NYC Organizer), Dave C. (editor)
Absent: Staff: Martin
Meeting convened 8:25 p.m.

- Special Agenda:
1. Press
 2. PFP and California Trip
 3. Supplemental General Information and Correspondence

1. Press:

- a. SPARTACIST No. 11 Review: Authors of the articles were:
"Labor Socialist Ticket": Gordon
"Defend City Labor": Small (first draft Turner)
Arab-Israeli: White (with heavy editing and inclusion of line material from PB memo)
"Theses...": Espartaco
"How Does Violence Start?": Gow
Assorted Negro frame-ups: Robertson (source material from Stoute)
"You Will Go": Hainline (heavily edited by Janacek)

The issue continues to draw favorable comment from our comrades around the country and others. Staff was pleased with the issue and considers that it meets our criteria for a balanced issue geared to our several audiences.

- b. Press Plans: The last issue cost us well over \$1000 including mailing costs, as we have had to reorder two thousand more copies from the printer as a result of our expanded mailing list. As far back as Robertson's letter to White (appended to PB minutes of 24 October 1966) we anticipated that if we got a full-time editor we would immediately run into a new bottleneck: finances. The increase in cost is a result of the growth of our mailing list and fifty per cent postage increase for third class single copies.

Staff has been considering two measures to cheapen costs.
1) Files reorganization: We would merge our subscription files and general files, entering the general as a 2-3 issue trial sub (after which they will be solicited to obtain paid subs or else be cut off) or indefinite donated subs for libraries, other organizations, a few people important to us. We have run a massive cut-off of our foreign mailing list, requiring from interested people no money but a completed interest blank. All together, of the 4000 items mailed last issue about a quarter were cut-offs. One drawback of a more ruthless cut-off system is that some of the non-subscribers will be people we are still interested in but who will not receive notifications of public activities after they are removed from the current files; we will need a better system of information retrieval from "dead" cards. We have considered obtaining a "Special Third Class" mailing permit which would save perhaps \$50 per mailing, but the reason the post office gives a

postage reduction for this permit is that it entails enormous restrictions and requires us to do essentially all the processing. Envelopes must be packaged in exact numerical zip code order, which would necessitate refiling all our plates, now filed alphabetically by state. Further, this permit involves no saving on foreign mailings. We are still considering this, however. 2) Press Structure Reorganization: We would retain the printed SPARTACIST as a bi-monthly but would produce less than six issues yearly. This would leave us several uncovered months, which would be covered by monthly offset supplements designed to be topical rather than encompassing. The supplement style would be a 4-page facsimile of the printed paper and would be nominally priced at 5¢, although it would also be intended for free distributions depending on the nature of the event and the content of the issue. We would produce the supplements using our own labor for composition on the IBM Executive typewriter and a union-label commercial offset shop. Layout would be two columns per page, type size roughly equivalent to 9 point (the larger of the two type sizes used in SPARTACIST). The concentration of the supplements on topical material will necessitate an increase in total copy available on topical subjects, in order to maintain our present balance between topical and theoretical articles in SPARTACIST itself. This plus our higher frequency will mean we must get good, topical articles from our comrades around the country. In the long run, this dual press system opens the way for an eventual separation into a frequent newspaper organ and a theoretical journal when our resources, the objective situation and our relationship to the class struggle permit. The cost would not be that great, considering the number of major national leaflets we have produced between issues of the paper. If we have no national tours, we could probably have 4 full SPARTACISTS per year (and 4 supplements); with tours or other serious unanticipated expenses, 3 SPARTACISTS (and 6 supplements). This set up tends toward our longer term perspective: to get Comrade Syrek to set up a shop here, to do enough commercial work to be self-supporting and then begin to subsidize our paper (instead of subsidizing the early retirement of our commercial printer). We are presently hung up by two serious difficulties: 1) the inability to rapidly liquidate Seattle to get competent, qualified comrades into the Bay Area to compensate for the loss of Syrek, 2) getting our hands on about \$2000 to finance this move and equip a shop here.

Disc: Mark T., Ellens, Nelson, Janacek, Gordon, Robertson, Janacek, Robertson, Ellens

Motion: That on those months not covered by a bi-monthly issue of SPARTACIST we produce instead a 4-page offset Spartacist supplement. Passed

- c. Next issue: Is planned as a 4-page supplement on the war for the 27 April demonstrations. It should contain three articles: 1) from V. in Germany, on radical student anti-war demonstrations in Berlin, 2) the war, centered on Viet Nam itself--the Tet offensive, the new NLF program, the question of a coalition government, 3) the war from the domestic side--the

ORO's, continuing break-down of relations between black and white radicals, PFP, McCarthy campaign (now in light of Johnson withdrawal), threatened "long hot summer".

U.S. society is now polarized in two ways which work in opposite directions: the war and "crime in the streets" (i.e., fear of Black people). A long hot summer is shaping up with the threat of real race riots--as distinct from uprisings against the cops--of marauding mobs in racially segregated areas. A real race riot would mean a few incidents of blacks killing a couple of helpless whites which would incite the most vicious reaction. Cops actually do "cool" a race riot, but of course unequally. Blacks and whites killing each other leaves behind very deep scars against co-operation on class lines. The question is how to introduce elements of a forceful character which can be truly neutral. Once, for example, we might have called on the UMW to take over the role of maintaining order--or perhaps the ILWU in the Bay Area, which is 55% black. We want to evoke the image that another kind of solution is possible. Pure race violence evokes total fear and immediate adherence along racial lines. We can deplore the violence--as the bourgeois papers and politicians will 6 months later. For the Northern cities it seems impossible to come up with a demand which sounds like it will work, which is hypothetical but tangible. An example of this kind of slogan is to raise "black power" as meaning a total break with the Democratic Party and independent black political action; it is damned hard to achieve but sounds plausible.

About the Johnson withdrawal--it is probably too bad. The political survival of the present administration was hooked into winning the war militarily, but since Indonesia 1965 this policy has actually been against the best interests of the bourgeoisie; the isolation of China was already achieved. Now a turn has been made. To be sure, it can be unmade, but this would be fairly difficult; the implications of the Johnson withdrawal will cause a disintegration of the Saigon governmental apparatus and serious consequences for the puppet South Vietnamese army, and further decline in the morale of the U.S. troops (nobody wants to be the last guy to die in Viet Nam while peace is being negotiated). The U.S. will seek to negotiate a coalition government. The most rational course for the bourgeoisie to pursue, which it will be hard for them to do, would be to pull out of Viet Nam, offer "No strings attached" foreign aid and hope to achieve an Algeria-type solution. This will be difficult because some sections of the ruling class do not see this as clearly. In any case, it would be difficult to reinstitute capitalist relations in South Viet Nam as the war and the reliance on the U.S. to back up the native government has pretty well shattered the objective preconditions.

The point of urgency we have been talking about re the war has come to pass. The Democratic Party and the imperialist

character of the system stand revealed. The bourgeoisie needs a McCarthy, Kennedy, or even Nixon--anybody to supply the healing balm, to provide a new rhetoric and cover. All the "Dump Johnson" stuff ignores that Johnson is subordinate to the U.S. capitalist class.

Disc: Mark T., Henry, Gordon, Ellens, Nelson, Small, Janacek, Stoute, Turner, Robertson, Mark T., Ellens, Gordon

Motion by Henry: To have a SPARTACIST supplement dealing with an analysis of the welfare situation in preparation for the 19 April union elections. (Withdrawn by Henry)

3. PFP and California Trip: Somewhat stale by now except for a point relevant to our projected domestic article: The line of the Oakland Black Panthers to the black community regarding race violence is "get a gun and stay home." The Panthers are militant (they have been in shoot-outs with the cops), politically radical; they have rejected Stokely Carmichael's line on "all black unity" and have refused to withdraw candidates of theirs who are running against black Democrats and Republicans. It should be noted that the Panthers are not simply "hustlers" who pretend to have a mass following; they actually have a base in the ghetto and are attempting to be responsible to it. Disc: Henry, Nelson, Turner, Robertson

4. Supplemental General Information and Correspondence:

SSEU: Radicals in the union are overwhelmingly pro-McCarthy and there are even a couple of people around the Militant Caucus wearing McCarthy buttons. The union leadership is pushing for a "straw poll" of the membership of the existing U.S. presidential candidates. We are faced with having to push for Halstead-Boutelle or for abstention. If we are put in the situation of having to make a choice among existing alternatives which the rest of the population will not face until Election Day, we should definitely not abstain. In order to inject more of a choice into the poll, we should propose adding another question to it, along the lines of "What party would you like to see win the next election?" with one of the choices being "a new labor party".

Disc: Mark T., Gordon, Janacek, Cunningham, Ellens, Robertson, Henry, Stoute, Janacek, Nelson, Ellens

Motion: To table the rest of the point to the next meeting. Passed

Meeting adjourned 12:00 midnight.