

(11)

Present: Full: Robertson, Nelson, Cunningham, Henry

Staff: Salant, Gordon

Absent: Alts: Small(exc.), Seymour

Staff: Rogers(exc.)

Meeting convened 8:40 p.m.

Special Agenda:

1. Minutes
2. Press
3. National Conference
4. SWP
5. Russia-China Border Incident
6. Wisconsin State Historical Society
7. Supplemental General Information and Correspondence

1. Minutes: Minutes of the last meeting, 17 March 1969, and back minutes of 30 January 1968 and 3 June 1968 have been produced and are in process of distribution. Two other back sets have been edited and await stenciling. Remaining in draft are the following: two sets, each involving a particular problem, from last October; two sets immediately preceding the Plenum; 1967 Plenum; 1966 Founding Conference; 8th Spartacist-ACFI 1965 Unity Negotiations. Attached to the minutes of the present meeting will be the annual SL financial report for 1968.
2. Press: Press plans for SPARTACIST #13 remain as projected at PB of 24 February. Copy for lead story, on Bay Area student and oil strikes, has begun to trickle in. Of the other material not already written, both SSEU and reply to Wohlforth on "police agent" slanders will be written here. Projected copy deadline is two weeks from tonight. The N.O. will shift over from getting out the factional bulletins and back PB minutes to an all-out drive to get the paper out. Disc: Nelson, Salant, Robertson, Gordon, Salant, Cunningham, Nelson, Gordon, Robertson
3. National Conference:
  - a. Documents: Second meeting of Perspectives Resolution Drafting Commission was held 12 March. Present, in addition to Commission members Small, Henry and Robertson and PB Secretary Gordon were PB members Nelson and Cunningham. Meeting discussed scope and background references for Resolution. Comrade Small has accepted the responsibility of writing a first draft, and has been relieved to the extent necessary of all conflicting SL assignments. Comrade Robertson will write draft Organizational Rules before the Conference; whether it will be prepared in time for a draft to be circulated in advance to the membership will probably depend on whether or not he will be making a tour to the South.
  - b. Scheduling: We have received no responses from the comrades regarding the two suggested Conference dates, which were 27-29 June or 4-6 July.
  - c. Central Committee: The PB comrades should begin to consider their recommendations for the new CC, in terms of size, distribution, etc. and also a slate. A viable PB must have an odd number of members; 5 seems the minimum workable size. For the CC as a whole to have an odd number of members, this means

full CC members outside NYC must total an even number. To have 6 qualified members of the CC outside the center, so that there would be more outside than in NYC, would be optimal, but seems impossible just now.

For us, the Organizational Question is an intrinsic part of politics; we view it as neither unimportant (e.g., as Wohlforth has claimed) or the overriding question (e.g., the anarchists or VO) but as one of the central dozen or so political questions facing the party. The SL is a democratic centralist organization. We emphatically reject concepts of geographic, rather than political, selection of leadership.

The Central Committee is the highest body of the organization between National Conferences. The PB acts as the CC's resident executive. It is because we are a centralist organization that we can have regional bureaus--because there is absolutely no question about who would have jurisdiction in case of a clash between a regional bureau and the CC or PB. A regional bureau is an arm of the CC and is composed of CC members.

The Leninist concept of the party rejects the idea of referenda or "the membership" in dispersal. "The membership" between delegated National Conferences is a fictitious abstraction, as dispersed individuals have no cohesion, no way to come together to exchange views and assert their will. Only a real body which can come together for each of its components to seek to convince the others can exist to enforce its views.

A Central Committee elects a Political Bureau from among those of its members who reside in one area. NYC is the political center of this country, and we see no trend toward reversing this; rather the opposite. Historically, some organizations have tried to shift their leadership center outside NYC to "get closer to the workers" and have either abandoned the experiment or disappeared from sight. CC members resident in NYC need not automatically be PB members, as the CC may choose to elect a smaller number. The SL believes strongly in naming bodies for the powers they really have--thus we have used the classical Leninist names, PB and CC, rather than calling our leading body e.g. an "Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee"; nor have we followed the SWP's practice--adopted during the French Turn to reassure YPSL's nervous about democratic centralism--of "Americanizing" the classic Leninist names.

We believe in a continuity of leadership. The selection of leadership in the communist movement has historically been in one of two ways: (1) The communist way, carried over strangely enough from the CP to the early SWP to the Shachtman organization, in which the outgoing leadership makes a recommendation for the new leadership to a National Conference and thus takes responsibility for its judgment. We note that the outgoing leadership presents a slate, full or partial, as it takes into account the balance by politics, experience, capabilities and weaknesses of the various comrades. (Any factions existing

must be given proportional representation on all leading bodies.) The slate is presented and motivated to the National Conference, and is discussed and voted on in a closed session consisting of the delegates only (voting and fraternal), so that the discussion by the cadres can be full and frank without unwarranted detriment to the authority of the leading comrades gratuitously, in the eyes of those who are not responsible for making the selection of leadership. (2) In 1944 Cannon propounded the theory that this system encourages candidates for leadership to seek to impress the central party leadership instead of their comrades in the branches. He proposed instead a Nominating Commission of responsible local rank-and-filers, one from each area, to bring in a slate, the Commission to be presided over by one representative of the central leadership. Under this system, predictably, the central leadership actually has just as much influence over the selection of the slate, without having to take responsibility for it. At our Founding Conference the central leadership made its recommendations, some of which turned out to be mistakes. It is better that we take responsibility for the way we exercise our authority in making such recommendations.

Disc: Henry, Nelson, Robertson, Salant, Cunningham, Henry, Robertson, Henry, Robertson, Nelson, Salant, Henry, Robertson, Nelson, Cunningham, Nelson, Henry, Gordon, Robertson

4. SWP: The NYC SL local passed a motion at its last meeting recommending aggressive opposition to the SWP's campaign for Paul Boutelle for Mayor of NYC, on the grounds that the overwhelming thrust of the local campaign will be the "community control", anti-UFT line. Their choice of Boutelle as candidate is also an indication of what aspects of their program they choose to stress. Their line on the black question is, in the current context, a proposal for a race clash to reslice the economic pie, especially now that the pie (e.g., funds for higher education etc.) is not just standing still but getting smaller. The City University system is already the scene of deepening racial hostility, in the face of budget cuts, as black students insist that the minority-group admissions programs must not be cut, while the Jews are adamant for a strict "merit system" of grades and test scores if there is an admissions belt-tightening. Even Debs understood the kind of line which must be raised, to demand the bourgeoisie must be the target of the various ethnic sections of the working class, not one another.

We should actively orient to the SWP now, as their contradictions have sharpened. Along side their most right-wing practical line to date, the Militant has been running orthodox Trotskyist articles which if we took at face value would force us to propose to unify with the SWP! The SWP cadres are presently of two sorts: (1) those who have made their peace with opportunism but at least remember the old rhetoric; (2) the fresh elements who are hardened revisionists, never even heard the "old Trotskyist" line. The SWP is no longer a centrist organization from which we could expect big pro-Trotskyist splits in the cadre. A split between a leftward-moving section of the rank-and-file and the leadership is what we can expect now.

Despite being completely discredited in many radical circles, the SWP-YSA is growing and making an impact. We propose that our people should follow their propaganda and activities and seek to make contacts and get into discussions with people in and around the YSA. Their past capitulations can now be used against them with success, especially the anti-war sellouts, in view of their turn to G.I. work, and their previous refusal to oppose the draft-resistance mood. The contradictions between the formally correct articles dealing with subjects up to and including the vanguard party and their present and past actions can be exploited. They will find themselves with new members recruited both on the basis of their verbal left turn in print and, for example, the last YSA "open National Convention" rally. Confrontations with opponents are also valuable for our comrades as a politically hardening and educational experience. On the literary side, we project an article on the National (and pseudo-National, i.e., Negro) Question, as the Wohlforthites, Hansen and Slaughter have all been riding the issue hard and all sides do enormous violence to Lenin. A serious drawback to making headway with this work is that in most areas of the country we no longer have any joint arenas with the SWP-YSA except possibly the anti-war G.I. work and the literary plane.

Disc: Cunningham, Robertson, Salant, Nelson, Gordon, Nelson,  
Salant, Cunningham, Robertson

5. Russia-China Border Incident: We do not support either side. Our position is not a third-camp one, but rather one of relentless opposition to both bureaucracies in taking their disagreements to the point of an armed clash with another deformed workers state, whipping up reactionary nationalist sentiment. Both countries are now squabbling about who conquered the island originally--i.e., the Manchu Dynasty or the Czar! There is no possibility of a position of self-determination for the inhabitants of Chenpao/Damansky as there are no inhabitants. The incident underlines the importance of resolute struggle against nationalistic bureaucratic rule of the USSR and China. Once denounced as "divisive" because we criticized the deformed workers states, the Trotskyists are now the only tendency which stands for communist unity against imperialism through overthrow of the self-interested national bureaucracies.

We believe there will not be significant differences with this line in our organization. If there is any difference, however, it would probably be an emotional anti-Maoism of the same sort as the Stalinophobia of the 1930's--revulsion against the Maoist propaganda of anti-culture, anti-freedom, making the necessity of a poor country which cannot offer its people the good things of life into a Puritanistic virtue. The USSR at least gives lip service to better ideals in their propaganda, even though we know they are lying--that Russian workers have achieved material comforts, education and culture, free speech and political freedoms. Comrades must not react with emotional anti-Maoism, but must instead recognize that the difference between the Chinese and the Russians, with regard to both propaganda and attitude toward "co-existence" with imperialism, flows not from any qualitative dif-

ference between the political or economic systems but from the difference in economic prosperity and levels of industrialization, the relative intransigence of the imperialists currently toward China, China's diplomatic isolation, etc. We must keep in mind, for example, that when the border war erupted between the Chinese and India, the Russians rushed MIG fighter planes to the latter.

[Motion: To permit Comrades Reuben and Betsy to remain within earshot of the meeting to do urgent work. Passed]

With regard to the U.S. policy toward the Sino-Soviet bloc, in the long run the interests of the imperialists are to stop the USSR, which has the real power in terms of industrial and military capacity. The U.S. cannot reverse its alliances in an instant, as there is a certain prestige investment in the current policy, an already created propaganda climate, etc. But inherently a rational policy for the U.S. would be an alliance with the Chinese against the USSR. The Far East situation is further complicated by the strong tendency for the Pacific, outside the immediate American spheres, to become a Japanese economic protectorate. Japanese imperialist appetites may soon fix their eyes on inroads into the U.S.'s imperialist domination and/or Manchuria.

In the immediate case of the border island, it seems more likely that the Chinese were the ones who provoked the incident; the New York Times analysis of internal forces in both countries seems convincing. This cuts no ice with us, however; we defend only a qualitatively superior socio-economic system.

It is highly unlikely that a major war will break out between the USSR and China. Robert Kennedy's recently published book on the Cuban missile crisis throws some light on the military policies of the deformed workers states. According to Kennedy's book, it appears the reason the Russians precipitously put the missiles into Cuba was entirely defensive. JFK was elected on the basis of a "missile gap"--i.e., to the detriment of the U.S. It turned out, of course, that the gap went the other way. Kennedy announced that, on the basis of its military superiority and a prominent Russian defector's having given the U.S. the locations of all the Russian missile sites, the U.S. had first strike power. The Russians panicked and put the missiles in Cuba. What upset them was not the missile gap, which they knew about, but the revelation that the U.S. knew it could get away with bombing them--i.e., a purely deterrent concept. This information also decisively disputes the impulse toward third campism in the Trotskyist movement (e.g., Socialist Current) which holds that the Soviet bloc should not have nuclear weapons.

Disc: Cunningham, Nelson, Salant, Gordon, Cunningham, Robertson, Nelson, Robertson, Gordon

6. Wisconsin State Historical Society:

Motion: To table to next meeting.

Passed

7. Supplemental General Information and Correspondence:

- a. Lutte Ouvriere: Is reversing the process of crystallization of the vanguard. They are on an all-out drive for unity with the Pabloists. Transcript of the speeches of LO and Rouge spokesmen at mass meeting at the Mutualite was carried in recent issue of LO. The LO speaker's remarks include the call for "not a Bolshevik party but a revolutionary party". They propose fusing their public organs--a united front for propaganda. LO is in the process of abandoning its politics in favor of the Pabloist line: recent issues of LO have given uncritical support to the Czech liberals and the Cuban revolution, notwithstanding LO's formal position that both Czechoslovakia and Cuba are capitalist states. The Pabloists have been raising the correct arguments for why unification would be wrong, in view of the immense political and theoretical differences. If LO is concerned, rightly, in forcing common actions between itself and others, what they should propose is a coordinating committee to work out common actions, a joint organization to defend victimized militants, an attempt to form common left-of-CGT caucuses or blocs in the factories, rather than a fused "revolutionary" organization, with no program, which has so many differences that it can have no discipline in action. Disc: Henry, Robertson, Henry, Gordon, Robertson, Henry, Cunningham, Gordon, Robertson, Nelson, Henry
- b. Ellensites: On the basis of some information received, it appears they have selected Detroit as their colonization project. A VO cadre projected he would visit the U.S. briefly, wanted nothing to do with us. This is in accordance with their evasions of us since Ellens began her wrecking operation; every time we tried to query them as to their responsibility for this, they took refuge behind their "security".
- c. DRUM: Our Detroit comrades went to the headquarters of the Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement, housed in a Black Nationalist building. An SL unionist said he was interested in discussing union tactics with them; they replied they had nothing to say to whites. Disc: Nelson
- d. BASL: Joanne S. has resigned from the Bay Area SL on the grounds she is not really interested in a vanguard party.
- e. Austin: We have received a letter from a U. of Texas student who is in close working contact with PL. He raised various political questions dealing with the party and the mass. The letter was friendly, stating he had been impressed with our propaganda and especially our correct position on Black Nationalism, which PL was two years behind us in arriving at. Disc: Cunningham, Henry, Robertson

Meeting adjourned 12:15 a.m.

Financial Categories

Income

- |                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| a - East Coast Sustaining Pledge | g - non-lit donations   |
| b - Midwest Sustaining Pledge    | h - loans to SL         |
| c - South Sustaining Pledge      | i - donations           |
| d - West Coast Sustaining Pledge | j - miscellaneous       |
| e - sales of SPARTACIST and lit. | k - Studies on the Left |
| f - subs to SPARTACIST           |                         |

Expenses

- |                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A - SPARTACIST costs             | I - consumable office supplies      |
| B - postage                      | J - miscellaneous, legal fees       |
| C - literature, Xerox, reprints  | K - office equipment                |
| D - personnel and travel         | L - repairs                         |
| E - telephone, telegraph         | M - taxes                           |
| F - ads, outside donations, CIPA | N - rent for office, P.O. box, etc. |
| G - non-lit expenses             | O - Studies on the Left             |
| H - loan repayments              |                                     |

INCOME 1968

Month	a	b	c	d	Subtotal	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	TOTAL	exc. loans TOTAL
Jan.	325	0	51	0	376	74	11	31	0	24	0	30	545	545
Feb.	422	95	35	150	702	34	7	13	50	54	0	49	909	859
Mar.	400	40	45	75	560	101	32	28	200	135	0	84	1139	939
Apr.	349	65	50	110	574	84	15	10	50	63	0	31	826	776
May	331	55	45	140	571	43	9	8	0	20	50	85	787	787
June	240	85	55	320	700	185	52	6	99	126	7	101	1275	1176
July	554	65	20	15	654	65	5	0	0	32	38	90	882	882
Aug.	485	35	40	125	685	36	2	0	0	32	0	34	788	788
Sept.	295	55	40	175	565	34	15	0	5	110	67	116	913	908
Oct.	235	65	40	0	340	74	6	0	0	124	52	47	642	642
Nov.	444	120	40	0	604	30	5	0	100	107	0	77	923	823
Dec.	365	70	40	200	675	30	3	0	20	65	41	27	862	842
TOTAL	4444	750	501	1310	7004	791	160	96	524	891	255	770	10492	9968
Average / month	370	63	42	109	584	66	13	8	44	74	21	64	874	831

EXPENSES 1968

Month	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	TOTAL	exc. Loans TOTAL
Jan.	0	0	20	82	45	0	52	55	9	103	0	0	7	95	12	480	425
Feb.	616	430	51	87	33	10	20	5	243	87	56	8	13	95	13	1765	1760
Mar.	0	16	74	388	37	2	0	0	14	100	23	1	70	114	26	863	863
Apr.	191	70	52	238	48	37	27	10	148	140	0	0	21	95	23	1046	1036
May	0	51	17	130	42	0	0	199	7	78	0	7	4	95	16	645	446
June	7	32	156	57	56	0	0	120	100	42	16	20	11	113	28	758	638
July	11	46	52	60	40	16	0	150	37	57	14	11	9	95	5	604	454
Aug.	470	336	18	85	55	165	0	81	31	43	117	25	12	138	5	1582	1500
Sept.	0	89	13	149	141	89	0	55	31	0	59	3	16	95	29	770	715
Oct.	0	126	10	100	66	338	0	50	43	6	0	0	11	95	37	883	833
Nov.	0	62	4	132	0	22	0	90	27	5	0	0	2	95	6	444	354
Dec.	0	0	25	70	83	31	0	50	5	0	0	0	12	230	6	512	462
TOTAL	1295	1259	490	1524	646	710	100	865	694	660	285	75	188	1355	207	10352	9487
Average / month	108	105	41	127	54	59	8	72	58	55	24	6	16	113	17	863	791