

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 55, November 15, 1976

Present: Barnes, Berman, Breitman, Camejo, D. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Lund, Lyons, Sheppard, Stapleton, Waters

Guests: Jaquith, Morell, Rodríguez, Wohlforth

Chair: Jaquith

AGENDA: 1. YSA Report  
2. Plenum Agenda  
3. Educational Perspectives  
4. Women's Liberation  
5. Oberlin 1977 Dates  
6. Membership

1. YSA REPORT

(Brown invited for this point)

Berman reported.

Discussion

2. PLENUM AGENDA

(Aspoy, Brown, and Feldman invited for this point)

a. Barnes outlined the Secretariat's proposals for the plenum agenda.

Agreed: To continue discussion at next meeting.

b. Barnes initiated a discussion on the structure of the party leadership and the organization of district structures.

Discussion

3. EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

(Feldman invited for this point)

Feldman reported (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

4. WOMEN'S LIBERATION REPORT

(Hildebrand invited for this point)

Jaquith reported. (Written report will follow.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

5. OBERLIN 1977 DATES

Jones reported on proposal to schedule a national gathering August 6-13, 1977, in Oberlin, Ohio. A decision on the character of the gathering--whether to call a convention, or hold an educational conference or some combination of the two--can be deferred.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

6. MEMBERSHIP

D. Jenness reported on proposal to admit L.F., T.R., J.C.G., and L.L. as provisional members in Albany.

Discussion

Motion: To accept all four as provisional members.

Carried.

Waters reported on the recommendation of the Chicago Southside branch that R.E. be readmitted to the Party.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Southside branch.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

Report on Perspectives for Education Work  
by  
Fred Feldman and Tim Wohlforth  
National Education Department

The major turn in the party's work and the resulting creation of many smaller branches has had an impact on the party's educational activities. In carrying out the turn the immediate priorities were organizing the new branches, establishing them in the areas where they were focusing their work, carrying out the central party campaigns, and developing a new consciousness about working and talking with potential members.

In the first stages of this shift, it was assumed that the new, smaller branches would carry out the work of guiding and organizing internal educational work just as the larger branches had done in the past. The new branch structures not only make possible smaller classes, but they enabled the branch leaderships to be more alert to the educational needs of each and every member.

However, the many tasks the smaller branches were confronted with, and the limited educational resources available to each branch meant that many branches even had difficulty freeing someone to devote adequate time to thinking out and planning educational programs. The result has been a tendency for educational activity to wind down over the past year.

In recent months, under the pressure of these difficulties as well as the intensive election campaign activity, little organized educational activity has been carried out. This applies particularly to educational activities aimed at the membership as a whole, but it is also true of provisional membership and recruitment classes.

This has not reflected a lack of interest in education on the part of the branches. On the contrary, the branch leaderships and members have been aware of the falling off of educational activity and, in the post-election campaign period, are beginning to look for ways to step up this aspect of party work.

There are hundreds of new members and provisional members in the party today, plus there is a whole layer of party activists recruited in the past few years who have had little organized educational activity. The last time the party went through an intensive period of internal education was in 1973 and 1974, spurred on by the pre-world congress discussion in the Fourth International. A whole layer of the party was politically trained and consolidated through that discussion, but nothing like it has occurred since. At that time, it is worthwhile to remember, the party was able in most areas to combine a

## Education/2

preconvention discussion with a large-scale summer school, in addition to holding intensive winter and spring class series.

In view of the fact that our central goal is the recruitment and intergration of new members, the party needs to put a high priority on organizing education. It should be considered as one of the party campaigns for the next period and guided as such by the party leadership.

1. We want to urge that each area organize an educational weekend in January or February, aimed in the first place at educating our members and close contacts. These can also be built among Militant readers, campaign supporters, etc., helping to bring them closer to the party.

Such weekends should have a focus or theme determined by the educational needs of the party. One possible way of doing this might be to focus the weekend on a single topic like the Chinese revolution and Stalinism. Another topic might be American history, taking the political resolution's analysis of the structure and class consciousness of the American working class and the changes that are occurring in it, and tracing this back to its origins and development in American history. Of course, other topics like southern Africa or women's liberation can be valuable as well.

To encourage this process, we must rebuild the national speakers list and make more nationally assigned comrades available to take speaking engagements around the country.

As a start Fred Feldman is developing a series of classes on China and Stalinism, and Tim Wohlforth is working on a series that covers some problems of American history as related to our political resolution.

As we travel to different branches to give these talks we will take the opportunity to talk with branch and local leaderships, and get a better feel for education problems and possibilities.

2. We want to urge branches to get provisional members classes going. The National Education Department will be preparing a new introductory study guide (taking up some questions like Stalinism, and party organization, as well as out current politics) to help this along.

3. Recruitment classes should be held. In our opinion, these should not be combined with new members classes. The purpose of recruitment classes is just that--recruitment. They aim to introduce people to socialist ideas and basic socialist concepts in a way that will make them want to join and feel comfortable about joining our movement. The

recruitment series should be brief--three of four classes--and branches may want to consider repeating the same or a very similar series in a cycle. At any rate, the purpose is not at all the same as that of a provisional members class.

In addition, provisional members (especially those who already feel quite committed to helping build the party) often feel a little uncomfortable with raising difficult problems in a class aimed at recruitment.

4. Recruitment classes or other class series should not be viewed as a substitute for a forum series. A regular forum series is a basic branch propaganda institution that plays a key role both in reaching the interested public with our ideas, and in educating members about the party's views on key current issues. It is an important recruiting tool in itself, and can also be used to attract prospective members to recruitment classes and other activities. In addition, a regular forum series plays a key role in establishing each branch as a political center in the area where it is located. Reinstating the regular forum series as a norm for every branch is one of our tasks in the coming months.

The division into smaller branches greatly facilitated many of our tasks, but given the present size of the branches, it is more difficult to organize basic internal party institutions like education on the branch level.

In cities where more than one branch exists, it's the local that must take on the job of guiding, coordinating, and in some cases organizing party internal education. Teachers and materials must be shared among the branches. The same is true of forum speakers. There is no reason why the city cannot organize or encourage the organization of classes that cut across branch lines--seminars, etc. Plus the educational weekends should occur with increasing frequency.

This means that each local needs to have an educational director. Virtually none does today. There have to be local executive committee discussions about education. There has to be local leadership in education.

To help the small branches establish regular education programs, especially those not organized in a local structure, we plan to reestablish a functioning national tape library. There is a great demand for this, and the tape library can make a qualitative change in the level and frequency of education in many branches and YSA chapters.