

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES No. 34, January 5, 1967

Present: DeBerry, Dobbs, Halstead, Hansen, Kerry, Novack, Shaw, Sheppard.

Visitors: B. Barnes, Horowitz.

Chairman: Kerry.

AGENDA:

1. Membership.
2. Antiwar Report.
3. International.
4. Monthly Review.

1. MEMBERSHIP

Shaw reported recommendation of Los Angeles Branch that B. H., a former member, be readmitted to the party.

Motion: To concur with the Los Angeles Branch recommendation.

Carried.

2. ANTIWAR REPORT

Halstead reported:

The student conference held in Chicago December 28-30 was originally called by Betina Aptheker to discuss proposal for a national student strike. It was set up with sponsors obtained almost entirely by CP youth, with DuBois tagging along and YSA more or less excluded until a few weeks before the conference. Then YSAers insisted on being included and were. By general agreement the conference did not center around the call for a national student strike which was considered unrealistic, but around a national student action tied in with the Spring Mobilization.

Over 200 attended; about one third SWP and YSA, about 1/3 CP and DuBois, about one third SDS and independent. Betina and other CPers favored supporting and tying in with April 15, as did SWP and YSA. But some CP and especially DBCers tended to write off SDS, and were not inclined to make a serious effort to convince and carry along SDS and independents who had serious questions about efficacy of a national mobilization. In addition many SDSers and independents were uneasy about the de facto bloc between the CP and SWP on this question and expressed fear of CP or CP-SWP domination.

Our line was to do everything possible to include SDSers and independents, to avoid setting up a rival to SDS, and to avoid setting up a purely YSA-CP dominated show, and to prevent the setting up of a CP front.

The CP fraction leaders were apparently very reasonable with us for most of the conference, going along with our major proposals. Just before the end, however, when the question of the continuing organization -- staff and headquarters -- came up, they moved for organizational control. We beat them down on this and they had to give in, accepting the proposal that the staff would initially be set up in New York where it would work in consultation with the officers of the Spring Mobilization Committee -- Muste, et al -- and where there is reasonable assurance that the CP can not set up a typical front, at least not without a fight.

The CP had to agree with this because we had too much power for them. We were as strong as they at the opening of the conference and toward the end they couldn't hope to carry a vote against us. This is a new situation and they apparently haven't quite made up their minds on how to deal with it.

It is important to note that the CP is uncomfortable with the present arrangement, have come along reluctantly and could try to pull something almost anywhere along the line. With this caution, we should also note that this presents an exceptional opportunity for us: First, to build a broad national student action which can spark the April 15 mobilizations; second, to draw in the best of the SDS and independent youth; and third, to work closely with CP and DBC youth, overcoming prejudice and being in a position to discuss politics as such with them.

Discussion: Sheppard, Halstead, Dobbs, Hansen.

3. INTERNATIONAL

Hansen reported:

(1) Healy threatened law suits and obtained retractions from two papers in England which carried Tate's letter on the beating. Tate also threatened with suit, but plans to defend himself in court if necessary.

Discussion: Halstead, Shaw, Dobbs, Hansen.

(2) A Congress of French Trotskyists will take place in January.

Motion: To send greetings from the party.

Carried.

(3) War Crimes Tribunal:

Letter from A. reports that London group is disappointed by limited results of efforts in U.S.A. (The American

project had been turned over entirely to ultra lefts at an early stage.) Question raised of whether we should make major effort required to rescue project here.

Discussion: Dobbs, Novack, Hansen, Halstead.

General agreement: The Tribunal project as an international propaganda effort is worthy and will have good effect on the antiwar movement. However, it is supplementary to the main tasks of the antiwar movement in this country. It would be a mistake to withdraw part of our limited forces from the main arena of activity in an attempt to accelerate Tribunal activity here. Task would be doubly difficult at this late date because sectarian approach is already established by authorized American representatives of the Tribunal.

4. MONTHLY REVIEW

Novack reported that Monthly Review position on China is available in their current issue. They support the "cultural revolution" as an anti-bureaucratic democratization in China. Recommendation to write a specific polemic against this position in the press.

Discussion: Kerry, Hansen, Dobbs, Novack, Sheppard, Shaw.

General agreement on recommendation.

Meeting adjourned.