

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 5, January 11, 1968

Present: Barnes, DeBerry, Dobbs, Hansen, Kerry, Novack, Shaw, Sheppard, Jones.

Chairman: Barnes

AGENDA:

1. Antiwar Report
2. SDS National Council Meeting
3. International Report

1. ANTIWAR REPORT

Jones reported. (Summary follows).

Our major practical problem has been to get one of the national antiwar groups to set a definite date for a major spring antiwar action. Recent meetings of the New York Parade Committee and the National Mobilization Committee (NMC) have shown that there will be more difficulty setting a date than after any previous major demonstration.

Opposition comes from "moderate" or "right-wing" elements of the coalition such as individuals from Women's Strike for Peace, SANE, etc., who are more interested in diverting energy toward dissident Democratic and peace candidate moves. On the other hand, militant pacifists who have no interest in electoral activity are tending to retreat to their favorite forms of opposition -- smaller, distinctly pacifist demonstrations -- failing to agree with us, as they had in the past, that the most effective way to counter the moderate tendencies is to set a concrete date for a demonstration and move ahead with preparations.

The antiwar coalition as it has existed up to now is showing severe strains. At a recent Parade Committee conference Beinen engaged in some SWP baiting after a split vote on perspective. The result of that meeting is that a decision by the Parade Committee has been put off for another month.

January 13 there will be a meeting of the NMC. It will be difficult then to get a decision to call for a spring mobilization and we may not succeed. The major attention is likely to go to the indictment of Dr. Spock and others on the charge of conspiracy to thwart draft laws. In this case, too, we remain almost alone as the only tendency which proposes a broad legal defense effort on behalf of Spock. The trend has been to call for "defense" of the group by emulating them in counseling individual draft defiance.

The Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) remains the most militant group and the only one which can definitely be expected to initiate the call for a spring action. This will be proposed at the forthcoming SMC conference Jan. 27-29. The SMC has been corresponding with various international committees and will call for an "international days of protest" type of spring action. We

have been getting inquiries from groups in several other countries who are waiting for the Americans to set a date so they can begin to make plans for their own demonstrations at the same time. The international nature of the next action will be one of its most important aspects.

The SMC proposal will call for large marches or demonstrations in each major city at the end of a week-long series of actions and a one-day student strike. SDS has called for a ten-day series of actions in its own name April 20-30, creating an opportunity to bring them into the coalition from the beginning this time.

In another development, the CP youth have been introducing a proposal to add to the demands of the antiwar movement a demand to "end racism at home and abroad." At the SDS National Council meeting in Bloomington, Ind., they submitted a statement including the demand that antiwar groups should, in effect, prove they are not racist by giving 50% of the vote to a black caucus, and ending with their proposed slogan for campus demonstrations, "Freedom and Peace."

At the last SMC meeting in New York the CP was prepared to introduce the "end racism" demand. This is obviously a maneuver to put liberals and inexperienced student radicals on the defensive and water down the SMC demands in order to pave the way for dissolution into Democratic or Peace Party politics as the elections draw closer. Our comrades took the offensive at the SMC meeting by initiating a discussion on the relation of the SMC with the Black Power movement. We indicated the close relation of the demands for self-determination at home and self-determination abroad and explained how the phrase "end racism," like "peace" was so general that it lost all meaning. We explained the need to use terminology that would not be the same as that used by the racists themselves -- since even Johnson declares that he wants both "peace" and an "end to racism," while he is opposed to bringing the troops home from Vietnam right now and equally opposed to self-determination for black Americans. In this instance the CP was effectively blocked and dropped their proposal, at least temporarily.

2. SDS NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Jones reported. (Written report to be forwarded as soon as possible.)

3. INTERNATIONAL

Hansen reported that group in Mexico is moving toward unification with small pro-Cuba group.

Meeting adjourned.