

5. GAY LIBERATION

Sheppard reported.

Discussion

Motion: To continue discussion at a future meeting, after
a written version of the report is prepared.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

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Rudie Austin
Detroit, Mich.

May 23, 1971

To:
National Committee
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

Dear Comrades,

I request that the appeal of May 21, 1971 that I sent the National Committee be changed as follows:

I appeal the action taken by the E.C. of the Detroit branch of the S.W.P. and passed by a majority vote of the membership on May 13.

It is a false assumption and slanderous to state that I am mentally disturbed.

We had a serious problem in the Detroit branch three and a half years ago, and an even more serious one this past year. There were many inactive members and many resignations from the party. The Luveara Bouse-Evelyn Kirsch incident only emphasized the seriousness of the problem.

I was not in accord with the concepts of the E.C. and the organizers of the branch in the organization of branch work in which I was active over a period of years.

I became involved in the discussion because of my concern about the party. I do not think the pre-convention discussion period is a proper time to discuss organizational questions because there is the possibility of an amalgam with a difference of political views. Nor is it proper for the same reason for a discussion of the organizational questions except as presented in resolutions.

It is unfortunate that two of the sub-committee of the E.C. who were to meet with me were the ones involved in the dispute.

I cooperated and met with them but I have not received the charges against me that I requested.

I note that the Organization report to the N.C. plenum by Barry Sheppard discusses branch functioning very thoroughly and therefore will be discussed at the Convention. This was the root of the problems of the Detroit branch.

In writing to the N.C., I hope to explain how I became involved in this dispute.

Comradely yours,
s/Rudie

November 29, 1971

MEMO TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE:

The Control Commission at Oberlin August 5-8, 1971, interviewed the following comrades involved in the Detroit situation: Sara Lovell (also on tape), Edith Gbur, Helen Schiff, John Benson (also on tape), and Ron Reosti. Frank Lovell was interviewed prior to Oberlin; his remarks are on tape.

In our opinion, the facts are as follows:

1. The majority of the Detroit branch decided that it could no longer carry on its work if Rudie's behavior were to continue. The branch voted at its May 13 meeting that Rudie "be given an indefinite leave of absence pending necessary medical attention."

2. The disruptions, as we have ascertained them up to this point, consisted of the following:

a. Time frequently requested and granted to allow Rudie to give a report on the organizational matters with which she was concerned; at other times scheduled reports were cancelled because her report, which she wished to write out, was not yet finished.

b. When given the floor by the chair during branch meetings, Rudie's remarks were often overly long and often on irrelevant matters.

c. Outbursts from the floor during branch meetings without recognition from the chair.

d. When called to order, Rudie's reaction was either apologetic or defiant.

e. Rudie took her criticisms of branch organizational procedures into the antiwar office and into the women's liberation office where nonparty people and YSA members were present.

f. Rudie refused to accept certain proposed assignments but proposed other assignments for herself which the organizer felt were beyond her capacities.

g. Among the things that led comrades to believe Rudie needed medical attention was her "hyperactivity"; for example, she sold fifty copies of the Militant at the Washington antiwar demonstration.

3. Rudie told Sara and Frank Lovell that she considered her behavior disruptive but felt this was necessary because of the urgency of her criticisms.

4. It became increasingly difficult for the organizer and other branch members to maintain contact with Rudie because she would not talk with them.

* * *

Helen Scheer and Reba were asked by the Control Commission to interview Rudie and other comrades in Detroit. On September 25-26 we saw Rudie, Henry Austin, Peter Signorelli, Sara Rosenshine, and Gerry Bubbenhoffer.

The following was ascertained:

1. Rudie recognized she had been disruptive in meetings, but said others had been also.
2. She had been called to order by the chair on several occasions, but never "warned" that disciplinary action would be necessary if she continued to speak without getting the floor.
3. She did not feel it a "compulsion" to sell fifty copies of the Militant at the antiwar demonstration in Washington, a point she said was made to prove she needed medical attention.
4. The afternoon of the May 13 meeting, a committee of John Benson, Helen Schiff, and Ron Reosti went to Rudie's house to ask her to take a leave of absence for medical reasons. She refused.
5. Before the branch meeting several comrades were telephoned; they were asked to stand guard to prevent Rudie's entering the hall if she showed up. She did not.

* * *

From all the facts obtained, the Control Commission draws the following conclusions: (1) That Rudie's disruptive behavior was severe enough to warrant some action by the branch. (2) That, to meet this situation, the branch took the disciplinary procedure against Rudie of giving her "an indefinite leave of absence pending necessary medical attention." This action was taken at a meeting from which Rudie would have been physically barred from attendance, even though at the time the meeting began she was a member in good standing. The Control Commission considers that the branch acted unwisely in this procedure, as well as in its making a "judgment" on Rudie's health. (3) That an imposed "indefinite leave of absence pending necessary medical attention," although an attempt to deal with discipline questions that do not involve disloyal infractions, raises difficult problems and should not be used; instead, after informal methods for dealing with such situations fail, our regular procedures should apply.

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After interviewing and talking with Rudie and the numerous branch members listed above, we recommend that Rudie's leave of absence be considered terminated and that the Detroit branch leadership contact Rudie for further discussions.

Anne Chester
Duncan Ferguson
Sara Lovell
Helen Scheer
Reba Hansen