

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 12, 1967

No. 8

NEC present: Doug, Syd, Gus, Charlie, Mary-Alice, Wendy, Lew, Kipp

NEC excused: Susan, Melissa

NC Alt. excused: Peggy

Convened: 8:20

Chairman: Mary-Alice

- Agenda:
1. National Office Report
  2. NC Plenum Call
  3. Young Socialist
  4. Petrick Defense Report
  5. Northern Youth Convention Report
  6. SDS Convention Report
  7. Antiwar Report

1. National Office Report - Mary-Alice

- a. Motion: to accept Joe C. of Atlanta as a member-at-large.

Discussion: Charlie

Motion Carried

- b. Motion: to accept Jan L. of Manhattan, Kansas, as a member-at-large.

Motion Carried

- c. Motion: to publish the two statements by the Israeli Socialist Organization and Peter Buch's article on the "Myth of Progressive Israel" as a YS pamphlet.

Motion Carried

2. NC Plenum Call - Mary-Alice

Motion: that a plenum of the NC be called for September 8-10, 1967, in New York, and that the NC be polled for approval of the dates.

Motion: that the tentative agenda be: 1) Political Report 2) Antiwar Report 3) Petrick Defense Report 4) Organizational Report.

Discussion: Lew, Mary-Alice

Motion Carried

3. Young Socialist - Doug

The September issue of the YS will feature the SWP '68 election campaign and a discussion of the issues raised by

the NCNP conference to take place Labor Day weekend. Also of special interest in the issue will be an interview with a high school student, a page of high school notes, and a report on Bolivia.

Motion: to approve the report.

Discussion: Lew, Charlie, Syd

Motion Carried

4. Petrick Defense Report - Lew

Report on a discussion with Victor Rabinowitz, Howard's lawyer, regarding return of Howard's literature, and increasing antiwar sentiment among GIs.

Motion: to approve the report.

Discussion: Kipp, Lew, Doug, Syd, Lew, Mary-Alice, Gus, Doug, Mary-Alice, Lew, Syd, Doug

Motion Carried

5. Northern Youth Convention Report - Mary-Alice

Report enclosed.

Motion: to approve the report.

Discussion: Doug, Mary-Alice

Motion Carried

6. SDS Convention Report - Lew

Report enclosed.

Motion: to approve the report.

Discussion: Syd, Charlie, Lew, Wendy, Lew, Gus, Lew, Doug, Mary-Alice, Lew, Kipp, Syd

Motion Carried

7. Antiwar Report

Student Mobilization Committee Report by Kipp - enclosed.

Discussion: Doug, Syd, Charlie, Kipp

National Mobilization Committee Report by Gus

Discussion: Lew

National Conference for New Politics Report by Doug - enclosed.

Discussion: Kipp, Syd, Doug, Lew, Mary-Alice, Syd

Motion: to approve the reports.

Motion Carried

Adjourned: 10:50 p.m.

Report to the NEC on the SDS Convention, July 13, 1967  
by Lew

The Students for a Democratic Society national convention convened in Ann Arbor, Michigan, June 25 to July 2. Three hundred to four hundred and fifty were in attendance. Representatives from the Detroit and Ann Arbor YSA locals attended the convention. Three NEC members, Syd, Kipp, and Lew, attended part of the convention also. Carol L.'s descriptive report of the convention proceedings is enclosed.

Previously we have noted SDS's abstention from and hostility towards the antiwar movement and their steady political shift to the right. We further noted SDS's loss of authority and image among students. Although still attracting numbers of radicalizing youth, the pace of recruitment has slowed and the despairing whines of the leadership tarnished their former dynamism.

The political retreat of SDS comes as no surprise. Failing to come to grips with the axis of world politics, Vietnam, and failing to share the political and organizational burden of the antiwar movement, these developments have not overlooked SDS. As the escalation of the war continues and the possibility of a mass antiwar movement becomes more real, the SDS frustration and retreat increase in proportion to the degree that they ignore Vietnam.

The convention was officially called to evaluate SDS's past accomplishments and to chart a strategy for the future. It failed to do this or to face the pressing issues before SDS. The convention was small, considering that it was held in Ann Arbor, one of SDS's strongest local areas. It was unrepresentative of the national membership of SDS. The majority of the delegates were non-serious, anarchist oriented, and hippy inclined, while the serious radicalizing youth SDS has been able to attract were minimally represented. The convention was infantile in conduct and despairing in politics. Most characteristic was a radical verbiage ("I'm a revolutionary socialist") which covered a thorough-going frustration. The drift away from militant confrontation with the government was accentuated.

The most important question before SDS objectively was the October 21 demonstration and the question of attitude toward the National Mobilization Committee and the Student Mobilization Committee. Having learned little from the April 15 experience, the plenary passed a motion attacking the October 21 action. "We feel that these large demonstrations -- which are just public expressions of belief -- can have no significant effect on American policy in Vietnam." It supported local chapters' involvement in the action only on three conditions: 1. immediate withdrawal as the central theme. 2. only

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so far as the demonstration aids "organizing." (?!!) 3. "Above all, we call upon all to recognize that marches and visits to the White House will not end the war."

In essence the convention dodged the most sharply posed political question before it, and attacked the organized anti-war movement. This position was most clear when the plenary hissed Linda Dannenberg when she spoke on behalf of the SMC.

The convention took other positions on a variety of questions of lesser importance, but generally each exemplified their retreating posture.

The draft question most clearly revealed the frustration. The workshop on this question quickly turned into a soul session. The motion that finally passed in the plenary says nothing new and advocates nothing new. No program of activity is projected. The prevailing tone was to organize underground (read, abstain from the living movement).

The question of antiwar sentiment in the armed forces was discussed in relation to the draft. The hostility previously exhibited to the orientation of reaching out propagandistically to GIs was far less prevalent. Instead, a totally ultraleft approach has been adopted. (See Carol's report.)

A motion was passed pointing toward a student strike against the war in the spring with a multi-issue approach. It will be decided at the next National Council meeting whether or not SDS goes ahead with this.

A motion was passed calling for the defense of any tendency under attack, which is a healthy development, even though its significance is diminished by a red-baiting incident against PLP. (See Carol's report.) A motion in support of Howard Petrick, was fought by PLP.

The question of electoral activity and the 1968 elections was not discussed. A workshop on these questions was dominated by PLP which pushed for withdrawal referendums. The prevailing attitude was one of considering the '68 presidential elections irrelevant to the needs of "building for the long run."

The Progressive Labor Party exerted more influence on the proceedings than they have in the past. Seizing on the ultra-left verbiage, they have been able to gain a certain amount of authority. Even though most of their motions failed and there was a certain degree of hostility to PLP, their presentations in the workshops were well received and gained some support. They have been frozen out of the leadership and are only strong in a couple of areas, however.

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The third camp Draperites are the other organized tendency within SDS. More accepted than PLP, but fewer in numbers, they ran Eric Chester for national secretary and he was defeated. Some of their third camp anti-Soviet Union and anti-Cuba formulations received support.

The Vietnam Summer Committee was never discussed at length. An unsigned article attacking VSC was printed in the convention New Left Notes, but it is apparent that a number of SDSers are participating in the program.

The new officers of SDS may be characterized as the Eanet-Calvert clique. Apparently this grouping has a monopoly on the national leadership of SDS, which, of course, will mean an intensification of clique and factional warfare in the coming year. The Calvert grouping is campus oriented, anti-ideology, anti-electoral politics, and exceptionally prone to gimmicks, such as one or another anti-draft brainstorm. (See Carol's report for a complete list of the national officers.)

In all respects the convention was a defeat for SDS. Its small size, lack of seriousness, lack of any real program of activity, hostility to the antiwar movement, and clique domination mean a difficult period ahead for the organization.

The gradual evolution of SDS towards abstentionism, towards retreat from the political issues before it makes it more and more a roadblock to the development of the antiwar movement. It now becomes imperative for the antiwar movement and our organization to confront the SDS leadership, as we have done in two recent Ys, on their political line.

The contradiction between the bulk of the membership of the organization and those represented at the convention has deepened and will continue. A political confrontation of ideas and strategies combined with an active SMC and YSA campaign to attract SDS members and locals to October 21 and to socialism can produce meaningful results at this time.