

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....23 January 1967

Present: Full: Robertson, Turner, Nelson, Stoute (late), Henry (late)  
Alts: Harper, Janacek Staff: Gordis  
Absent: Alts: Gaillard (l.o.a.), Glenn Staff: Martin

Meeting convened at 8:50 p.m.

- Agenda: 1. Minutes
- 2. General Information
- 3. Personnel
- 4. Area Reports and Organization
- 5. Spartacist Publications
- 6. Finances

1. Minutes:

Motion: To approve minutes of 5 Dec. with correction under Organization, that the National Office is not 18x20 ft. but 18x27. Passed

Minutes of 26 Dec. and 5 Jan. are in draft form. Joe V. suggested Xerox's be mailed of draft minutes to speed up circulation; however, in certain critical cases the organization could be seriously misled by errors in uncorrected minutes--otherwise it's a good suggestion.

2. General Information:

- a. Exchange of correspondence and periodicals with the Nat'l. Secretary of the Socialist Labour Movement of New Zealand (correspondence attached).
  - b. Newsletters of 14 and 21 Jan. contain articles by Banda coming down very hard in support of the Red Guards and Mao Tse Tung. The SLL has never had a theoretical position on the Chinese Revolution and is now being taken in by militant-sounding remarks by the bureaucracy. Bulletin now taking similar position, destroying Wohlforth's past record to get SWP to take a position for political revolution in China. Wohlforth has held the theoretical position of structural assimilation in relation to China; now his defense of Mao, the great proletarian leader, reduces his "theory" to shambles. Wohlforth tries to maintain an outmoded "orthodox" model by claiming no social revolutions since Trotsky's time. Now, blinded, he has run headlong into the problems of the present period. Newsletter announces a new revolutionary press service, International Correspondence, along lines of World Outlook, to start in Feb., in French and English. Next issue of SPARTACIST will take up some major political questions in our continuing polemic with Healy: (1) the United Front; (2) China.
  - c. YSA: Have opened pre-Convention discussion with Anti-War draft resolution dated 1/17/67. Convention will be held in a few months.
  - d. Letter from Rose, extremely informative. In particular, reports heavy opportunities for use of our literature, SPARTACISTS and MBs.
  - e. Bound Volumes: At the end of this year we will bring out a bound volume of the first 4 years of SPARTACIST.
  - f. Tate: Mimeo'd copies of correspondence from Healy's lawyer in which they try to suppress Tate received from Tate.
- Disc: Stoute, Turner, Robertson, Turner, Nelson

2. Personnel:

- a. Phila: Application received from Tom B., contact who had previously been working in Ga., probably with SNCC, now returned to Phila.; endorsed by Lou D. Also possibility of another recruit in area shortly.

Motion: To accept Tom B. as a candidate member.

Passed

- b. Boston: Neal C. former ASOC cadre, has expressed interest in Spartacist. He is serious, active and well-known; if recruited could be used as a field organizer. We will go up and talk with him.

Motion: To table Comrade Neal C's inquiry on joining Spartacist until we have an early talk with him about the politics of the organization and perspectives for work in the area.

Passed

An early trip to the New England area is projected.

4. Area Reports and Organization:

- a. National Office: We have obtained \$2,000 insurance on the office and its contents, against fire, theft and vandalism. Our security measures to date have already prevented robbery--14 offices in building, 3 on our floor, were robbed, but we were untouched due to our many locks, steel plates, etc. We now have 3 electric typewriters (IEM Exec., Selectrix, and SCM portable electric), press, and mimeo. Have purchased needed desks, chairs and other equipment.

- b. Bay Area: They are running White for City Council, asked our opinion. A full local does not need N.O. approval, but should notify NO in advance. SWP is running full slate. O.C.'s should clear election campaigns in advance. Disc; Turner, Robertson

- c. New Orleans: Has been very active, good recruitment; seeking to function as a responsible center in the South; want to put out irregular newsletter.

Motion: To approve request on newsletter, subject to provisions laid down previously on regional or local press.

Passed

They are requesting local status (OC's don't undertake political actions without prior consultation with NO but locals are deemed to have shown sufficient size, maturity and political stability to function independently within framework of national line). Local Committees have tactical competence within their geographical area.

Motion: To grant Local status to New Orleans. They have 7 members. This expresses a vote of confidence in the work of these young comrades.

Passed

- d. Houston: Two reports received. They have passed out several leaflets and have become prominent in the anti-war movement. Have 5 comrades and prospects for more. Houston seems to be doing all right. Hainline is organizing a Southern Conference for late spring.

- e. Baltimore: They have produced a newsletter, provocative in tone, entitled "Baltimore Statement on PB Visitation", signed by George L. and Robert K. 50 copies sent to center, will be sent out with minutes of 26 Dec. It makes no effort to project one single political difference, or even idea. Doug H. has written 7-page letter on Baltimore dispute to Lou D.

Motion: PB endorses general viewpoint of Hainline letter of 13 Jan. to Lou D. re Baltimore. (Voting tabled on this to end of agenda to permit whole committee to read letter.)

(Vote at end of meeting)

Passed unanimously

- f. Seattle: Letter dated 10 Jan. from Dick Fraser read. Miriam and Glenn, due to their inexperience, seem to have been facing some unnecessary difficulties. We are being forced to show some public face in Seattle due to loss

- of some valuable contacts. At this time we must make our political differences known, not engage in organizational fights. We should write Comrade Fraser about motions passed at last PB. We have heard from White that Miriam called and said that if Comrade Kinder spoke publicly in the area, she would be expelled. We should move fairly fast on the letter to Fraser before Kinder arrives. A problem is the political newness of Miriam and Glenn in a situation where they are faced with extremely experienced politicians. Chris should go as soon as possible for public meeting and discussion with our comrades. Disc: Stoute, Turner, Robertson, Turner, Nelson
- g. New York: Two motions were adopted at City Conference on 22 Jan. 67 which are of national interest: (a) To oppose critical support to any wing of the Chinese bureaucracy and for support of the independent struggle of the proletarian vanguard of China. (b) We recognize that Adam Clayton Powell is an agent of the Democratic Party's control over the ghetto. We therefore consider him a political and class enemy. With the current shift to the right, the bourgeoisie is punishing one of its hirelings. We therefore oppose his ouster because of the latent racism and the contradiction to bourgeois democracy involved. We propose that he be deposed by a party of the black workers.
5. SPARTACIST Publications:
- a. SPARTACIST #9: Disc: Robertson, Turner, Janacek, Nelson, Robertson  
Geoff White raised question. While agreeing on issue, feels that our editorial on Healy's gangsterism represents a qualitative raise in voltage, hence feels prior consultation on Central Committee indicated. PB in discussion affirmed that only new factor is Healy's conduct becoming more outrageous. In the editorial we call for Healy's ouster; but in SPARTACIST #8, in next to last sentence of editorial, we state IC should "purge its ranks of criminals, not deny their deeds". Disc: Nelson, Stoute, Henry
- b. SPARTACIST #10: Proposed articles: (Copy scheduled to go to printer 6 Mar.)  
Draperytes (Hainline or Henry)  
Origins of Stalinism (Robertson's talk in Baltimore)  
Article on Freud, LSD, sex, etc. - Helene  
Continuation of polemic against Healy  
Adam Clayton Powell  
Negro Resolution (Commission must report on progress to next PB; revisions to draft must be completed within next 3-4 weeks.)
- c. ESPARTACO #3: 8-page issue should be finished Wednesday, contains articles on Dominican Republic, Populism, and reply to Challenge on ghettos.
6. Finances: With SPARTACIST #9 our treasury has been completely depleted and we have had to borrow \$200 from Gordis. However, comrades have been paying in heavily, and we have spent quite a bit on the office--desks, chairs, and other needed equipment. We have taken on a heavy financial burden in renting this office, but comrades have been working many more hours. Without the burden of moving, we could have easily handled this issue of the paper. Comrades all over the country have been contributing well.

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 p.m.

ATTACHMENT, PB MINUTES

23 Jan. 1967

Dispute  
Wellington, N.Z.  
8 Jan. 1967

The Editor, "Spartacist"  
New York

Dear Comrade:

I was extremely glad--overwhelmingly happy, in fact--to see the November-December issue of Spartacist through a friend of mine. It expresses, in the Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League, a statement of Trotskyist principles which I myself have always believed in, but despaired of ever seeing clearly and unadulteratedly stated by the revisionist Pabloite "Fourth International", and, more, in your article on China, you apply these principles to a concrete situation in a fully Trotskyist manner. Up to now I had thought I was absolutely alone in believing that Trotsky was right about the necessity of socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, about the dependence of the revolutions in backward countries on socialist power in the advanced countries, and the inevitable degeneration of revolutionary regimes in backward capitalist countries without the reinforcement of revolution in the West. Now I see a magazine restating these propositions clearly. Believe me, comrades, I am very happy to know you exist.

New Zealand Trotskyism is still in a state of flux. We have established a small group, the Socialist Labour Movement, still insufficiently organized, but whose main policy statement coincides with yours. I am sending under separate cover a copy of the SLM paper Advance. We also publish a bi-monthly magazine Dispute, which tries to function as a theoretical journal for the entire New Zealand left, presenting a Trotskyist viewpoint to a wide audience, yet publishing a number of other views, within the context of Trotskyist politics, coming from a wide diversity of sources. Through Dispute we can get our theory, where we are strongest, across to people interested in theory, yet without appearing sectarian. I would like very much to reprint your article "Maoism Run Amok" in the next issue of Dispute. Would this be possible? I am enclosing copies of Dispute under separate cover.

Although you are a very small group by American standards, you are much better organized than we are, and have a much more direct experience of the struggle for a principled Trotskyist politics, while we lack experienced cadres here, and are still struggling for full organizational and, in some cases, ideological coherence, and lack international contacts. We should be glad of your advice.

Would you object to your Declaration of Principles being reprinted in Advance?

We should be very glad to hear from you.

Fraternal greetings,

Owen Gager  
National Secretary  
Socialist Labour Movement

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20 January 1967

Owen Gager,  
National Secretary  
Socialist Labour Movement  
Wellington, New Zealand

Dear Comrade Gager,

It was extremely heartening to receive your letter with its note of political solidarity with our general viewpoint. We are particularly appreciative that you found in our outlook that which we have earnestly tried to impart--an authentic revolutionary Marxism, i.e., Trotskyism.

You are of course quite welcome to reprint in your publications whatever you care to from our press. It was gratifying that you expressed particular interest in our Statement of Principles and the article on Macism since they are characteristic of our central outlook.

We are sending you under separate cover by air a file of Spartacist together with other of our materials and will send you by sea mail some small bundles of the current issues of our paper.

You inquire as to our advice regarding your situation. That of course is not easy, but we do desire to be helpful if we can. Two possible criticisms come to mind on reading the copies of Advance and Dispute which you sent (and which we hope to continue receiving). In Advance, your official organ, a small unsigned article "Flags and Flames" was printed which seemed to typify in tone that issue and which stated the following in bold face type:

"Britain puts its national interest before helping New Zealand.

"It can't complain if New Zealand puts its own interests first as well."

Certainly a major part of your work in New Zealand must be in the struggle against Anglo-American imperialism, but from the standpoint of the class struggle and internationalism, not a version of radical nationalism.

Both your periodicals tended to imitate the Pabloist national publications around the world in avoiding explicit reference to Trotskyism or making hard polemical presentations of Marxism. There is a great need for unity in the working class movement in action, not verbally by the Leninist wing dulling its critical edge. The way we approach these problems is exemplified by some of the material sent under separate cover: on the one side our documentary and uncompromising Marxist Bulletins, on the other a series of trade union caucus leaflets (written by our comrades) concerning a just concluded strike. Our draft document on tactics (subsequently considerably extended at our Founding Conference) may give you some idea of the kind of balance we seek to strike in our work.

We would be happy to assist in your desire to improve contact with other revolutionary groups internationally. We have working fraternal relations with the Voix Ouvriere group in France--address: 29 Rue de Chateau-Landon, Paris 10--as well as some contact with perhaps a couple of dozen other groups. Let us know what other countries in particular you need better contact with and we'll send you such addresses as we have.

Fraternally,

James Robertson, National Chairman  
Spartacist League of the U.S.

cc: Voix Ouvriere  
Western Bureau

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28 March 1967

Dear Comrade Robertson:

We have now received all the literature you have sent us, and it has been circulated around our small group. I am glad to say that most of our group agree with me that your position on the international movement and your attitude toward the SWP in the United States is both justified and correct.

The main defect of our group at present is organization. Unlike the Spartacist League, we have not emerged out of an existing but degenerated Trotskyist movement (the only previous Trotskyist organization in New Zealand collapsed during the war years, when members of it followed Shachtman out of the International) and have grown up primarily as an intellectual movement whose response has been to Trotsky's own ideas, as expressed in those of his works available in New Zealand, and to a much lesser extent as a response to the organization of the United Secretariat with whom our contacts have been unbroken but fairly limited, and have never reached the point of an organizational link (partly, because of our own lack of organization). At present we are a group of co-thinkers working together on various projects but not in an organized way. The formation of the Socialist Labour Movement is an attempt to formalize the existing situation and impose organization on existing activities. So far it has only been successful in so doing to a limited extent; but with the achievement of our immediate organizational aim--the fortnightly publication of an open Trotskyist magazine as SIM organ--we will move a step forward.

Various people in our group have had some contact with various Pabloite organizations. N., who left the CP to become a Trotskyist in 1952, has the closest connections with them. H., another member, has just returned from the United States where he worked with the SWP in Minneapolis. Despite his involvement with the SWP, he was very impressed with the theoretical content of Spartacist League publications, and considers your analysis of the "cultural revolution" the best he has seen. My own connections with the U.S. have been in correspondence and in a month's work with the Australian Section.

As my initial contact with Trotskyism had been with such books as History of the Russian Revolution and The Revolution Betrayed, my first contact with US publications made me aware of a considerable intellectual gap between the intellectual content of Trotsky's analyses, and the content of what his professed successors were writing. I reconciled myself to this for a time, thinking that some discontinuity of thought over the twenty-five years since Trotsky's death was to be expected. My impressions of the I.C. at this time--based on lack of full knowledge of disagreements between the Paris Secretariat and the IC--were that it was sectarian and adventurist, a conclusion which the loss of its post-1956 'elan' confirmed. (The drift from it of figures like Behan, Fryer and McIntyre all to different places for different reasons, seemed to suggest something was wrong with the SIL organizationally, however little one sympathized with the motives of those who departed from it.) Later I met an anthropology lecturer, Jeremy Beckett, who had worked with the British Pabloite group for some time and who was moving toward anarchism. He called Healy "a gangster with a printing press," which seemed to confirm what I had read in the Pabloite press.

It was my contact with the Australian section of the Pabloites which most disillusioned me with the Secretariat. The Australians were Pabloites in the

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narrowest sense; they were in constant communication with Pablo and regarded themselves as part of his factinnal group within the International. I found myself in very little sympathy with this group--reacting particularly strongly to a remark by Origlasse, one of the group's leaders and the closest to Pablo personally, that to follow the same line now that Trotsky had in the thirties would be reactionary--so he did not advise young comrades to read Trotsky's early works. (This may have been directed at me who used part of my Australian stay to read everything of Trotsky's I had not previously seen.) Bob Gould, then a strong Pabloite who wanted to secede from the International but now a leader of Germain-Frank loyalists, told me N. had criticized me in letters to the Sydney group for excessive attention to Trotsky's actual writings--a criticism which Gould seemed to endorse. This was in particular an objection to my view that it was still true that only a revolution in the advanced capitalist countries could rescue the Stalinist states from degeneration and my adherence to the theory of permanent revolution. The Australian section's actual work seemed to be concentrated on an opportunist attempt to win over bourgeois and petty-bourgeois pacifists through controlling the Australian CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament)--which meant in practice running an organization on the same low political level as the New Zealand CND where I had been organizing struggle against the leadership with some success. The Australian CND did not even push the demand for Australism withdrawal from SEATO and ANZUS! Yet its main public activity was centered around the CND; and its entrist work in the Labour Party had led to only one success--Origlasse was an Alderman on a Sydney borough council. I went back to New Zealand rather disheartened by all this; and, shortly afterwards, started Dispute.

This is the background to our present situation. Our main activity is on the campus; we have done some work in the Labour Party, the CND, and C. has tried to work with the CP, though not as a member and stating openly his Trotskyist position. N. has organized a Marxist study group which draws in a few trade unionists and some Public Service Association activists; as you will have gathered he is more sympathetic to Pabloism than is anyone else in our group, and his work, because of this, has been often ineffective.

This situation accounts for the tendency in our publications to fall back on Pabloist attitudes and styles of work. Until contact with you, we tended to regard these as more normative than we should have. Nevertheless, we have worked our way through to a substantial agreement with you, simply in our efforts to handle tactical problems guided by our own understanding of Trotsky's thought, and this slow working through is now forcing us to recognize and question these Pabloist survivals. You may expect in the next few months to see our publications make a more concerted effort to fully come to terms with the position of your group and to purge ourselves of the offscourings of our misguided attempt to come to some sort of terms with the IS.

This account of our position internationally is, I think, due to you and your comrades who may well have greeted with some bewilderment as well as satisfaction our announcement of support for Spartacist positions. As our contact with you increases, it may be that differences of approach and attitude may appear; I hope to write another letter to you shortly stating some of our group's more distinctive theoretical attitudes. We will try also to send you copies of the statements of position made by members of our group outside our own publications. I do not think our theoretical differences are sufficiently great--we agree in toto, as I have told you, with your statement of principles--to do anything but help us

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understand each others positions more clearly: reading Spartacist, problems arise in my mind over one issue only, nuclear weaponry.

One of our members is at present in North America....[He] comes from a CPNZ (pro-Peking) background, and was in New Zealand one of our more pro-Maoist members. He may not therefore have too much sympathy with your position, through I am writing to him about you. His last letter says he finds the North American Trotskyist movement "more traditional and jargonistic than I would have anticipated" and notes that George Novak of the SWP "seemed to have a closed mind." I suggest that you send him sample copies of Spartacist and see what his reaction is.

Best wishes,

Yours fraternally,

Owen Gager, for the  
Socialist Labour Movement