

Present: Full: Robertson, Henry, Nelson, Cunningham
Alts: Small, Seymour Staff: Gordon, Rogers
Absent: none
Meeting convened 8:35 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. General Information and Correspondence
 3. Personnel and Organization
 4. Factional Wrap-Up
 5. Press
 6. National Conference

1. Minutes: Minutes of 8 July 1968 have been produced and distributed. Those of 23 Jan. 1968 are being stenciled; 12 Feb. 1969 await stenciling. The status of all other back minutes is as reported at the last meeting.

Motion: To approve the PB minutes of 8 July 1968. Passed

2. General Information and Correspondence:

- a. British Militant: Dec. 1968 issue had full, factional-inside report on Socialist Student Conference.
- b. Canadian Maoists: Progressive Worker reports split of Toronto group from PWM to PLP, on the basis of PWM's refusal to criticize the North Vietnamese Stalinists.
- c. PL: In response to the incident of violence at the Uptown PL headquarters (after which our leaflet "We Don't Believe in Free Speech Here..." was written by Nelson), we massed 18 distributors to give out this leaflet and assert our right to free speech within the movement. The 18 comprised 11 men, 7 women; 12 members, 6 sympathizers. There was no further physical reaction by PLers to our distribution. The meeting itself was large--over 100.
- d. NMU: First 2 issues of The Beacon, an NMU oppositional publication, received. Consideration of its content is held over to next PB meeting.
- e. Militant: 7 Feb. issue carried an account of the Black Nationalist attack on the Jews. In the guise of a simple sociological explanation of why there is black anti-Semitism, the SWP in effect gives a justification: "after all, they are small businessmen in the ghetto". This is the kind of reasoning the Nazis used. The article, predictably, slides over the vital fact that this is a created scapegoat, as it was in Nazi Germany. In fact, anti-Semitism was almost unknown among Negroes in the South, except for whatever was picked up from whites; Jews were seen as just whites, so that the possibility of blacks pitting whites against Jews was never envisioned. A stratum of Black Nationalist demagogues which the Militant tail-ends is in good part creating anti-Semitism out of the whole cloth. Short of a "final solution" (which in this country would take the form, if fascism came to power, of genocide against blacks rather than Jews), scapegoat-ism primarily hurts not the scapegoat but rather those who are diverted from struggling against their real enemies.
- f. SWP: Barry Sheppard has been kicked upstairs; Harry Ring, vulgar right-winger, replaces him as editor of the Militant. The aftermath of both partial displacement from the "peace" move-

ment and the French May events has been a left-opportunist turn on the part of the SWP-YSA. When Marxism is objectively and visibly vindicated (e.g., France shows the revolutionary potential of the working class), our ability to reap gains from it is blurred by centrists who adapt verbally to the left. The last several issues of the Militant have carried polemical articles which were even stylistically out of character and orthodox Trotskyist. 21 Feb. issue carried critiques of SDS and PFP, raising the need for an iron-hard Leninist party, a revolutionary programmatic outlook, a proletarian base.

- g. MDS: Ed Clark's New Orleans group has been scuttled. Clark had built it up to about 10-12, all organizationally loyal to PL but hostile to Clark. They came to NYC to confer with Rosen, are now being shipped to NYC and the Bay Area.
- h. YSA: 21 Feb. Militant reports Boston YSA will hold an Educational Conference 28 Feb.-2 March. We note that Boston has for several years been the home of whatever passes for a left wing in the SWP-YSA, including the aborted YSA anti-war left opposition.
- i. Bay Area: Libby has been arrested a second time; she was picked up with an American Federation of Teachers union group who were peacefully picketing. This is potentially quite serious as she is still under an 80-day suspended sentence. The teaching assistant section of the AFT has voted to support the Berkeley student strike. Libby was one of the original organizers of student support to the current oil workers' strike; they have now promised to support the student strike. The central core of the strike is unstable, with black exclusionism becoming more rampant.
- j. Workers League: For shoddy opportunist reasons, the WL people (including Turner) abstained on the issue of the Papert New America article at the Marcus group meeting--claiming the issue was "insignificant". Nonetheless, they were thrown out of the group an hour or so later, proving that sometimes "crime doesn't pay".

3. Personnel and Organization:

- a. Greg B.: Following breaking with the Wohlforthites, this introspective young man felt "a call" from "God" and is entering the Catholic ministry. With his acute mind he has the makings of a good Jesuit.
- b. Small: Has been very ill. He had 2 heavy asthma attacks, finally was hospitalized. He is now out of the hospital but will be more or less out of action for some time. Since he was local Organizer (replacing the then desperately ill Joel S.) we are in dire straits. Mark T. is now Acting NYC Organizer.
- c. South: We have extended the scope of work of a comrade temporarily in the South. He has visited Tallahassee, reports there are 10 sympathizers there, of which 3-4 are close contacts.
- d. Seattle: Both Rick and Miriam are reported by Harper to be politically active there, but as individuals, not co-ordinating their activities with us or even with each other. We have previously and repeatedly urged them to leave Seattle, which both have several times promised to do. Their SL mem-

bership over the past year has been at best marginal, minimal and dubious. We would like to keep them as members, but as real, legitimate, functioning ones--we have no need of Potemkin villages. We propose to tie in their continued membership contingent on their moving forthwith to a functioning center. Otherwise, it will be necessary to recognize that their prolonged isolation and estrangement has attenuated their membership to zero.

Motion: That, unless we can prevail upon the two comrades remaining in Seattle to go to functioning Spartacist locals within an early, definite period, to drop them from the organization for their non-functioning over many months as members (e.g., lack of public activity, financial support, maintenance of contact with the center or even with each other). Passed

- e. Women's Liberation: Our Bay Area comrades are active in this arena, which could be a fruitful one for us. We note that the Women's Liberation groups here have been excellent in their thrust: picketing the Miss America contest; picketing NYC abortion law hearing made up of 12 "experts"--11 men and a nondemanding repeal of all laws against abortion. Discussion

Motion: To append Robertson's letter to Chris on the Women's Liberation groups to these minutes. Passed

- f. Henry: His poor functioning in the NYC local was referred by the local to the Exec and by the Exec to the PB. We propose private discussion on his personal situation with him prior to taking up the referral in the PB.

4. Factional Wrap-Up:

- a. Seymour VII: Document on Turner has been submitted and can be stenciled now that our other typewriter has been repaired.
- b. Letter to Austin: Cunningham's enormous letter (18 pages already on stencil) was completed 24 Feb.; final portion awaits stenciling.
- c. Open Letter to Ellensites: Robertson's letter took up in condensed form some of the points he had intended to make in an internal document.
- d. Comment on Turner: Nelson and Robertson are working on a final comment on Turner's resignation.
- e. Crawford: Letter replying to our letter of 7 Feb. enclosed copy of his letter to Turner [appended]. We have written him requesting a copy of Turner's "grovelling letter" to Healy.

5. Press: We are now moving into a genuinely critical stage of need to get an issue out soon. SPARTACIST #13 projected contents: Bay Area round-up (oil workers strike, Berkeley and SF State student strikes, Libby arrests); SSEU; UFT leaflet (possibly including letter to Lutte Ouvriere); Czechoslovakia; reply to Wohlforth's "police agent" slander; Marcuse critique; review of Mage; Greek and Bolivian Trotskyists. Disc: Gordon, Cunningham, Henry, Seymour, Cunningham, Nelson, Gordon, Henry, Gordon, Robertson, Seymour, Robertson

Note: With a new issue coming out, it is important that locals whose P.O. boxes have lapsed or who haven't one promptly remedy the situation.

6. National Conference:

- a. Resolution: We must get out the draft of our perspectives resolution shortly. Discussions in the drafting commission and especially in the PB have prepared us for the task. Small is suggested to do a first draft. Robertson will do draft Organizational Rules.
- b. Scheduling: Two dates have been suggested for the Conference: 27-29 June and 4-6 July. Both are Friday through Sunday. We need to hear from CC members and alternates, organizers and locals as to preferences. Many comrades may have 4 July off work. On the other hand, air fare discounts may not be in effect for 4 July, and the earlier date is safer for comrades traveling by car. Disc: Cunningham, Nelson, Gordon, Robertson

Meeting adjourned 11:15 p.m.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 24 February 1969

18 February 1969
(corrected)

Chris K.
Bay Area

Dear Chris,

A thing that I didn't take up with you in our phone call today in response to your letter was regarding the Women's Liberation groups in which some of our comrades are active. We recently noticed with a great deal of interest a series on the Woman Question which appeared in the Guardian (issues of 18 Jan., 25 Jan., 1 Feb. and 8 Feb.). The third article of the series was very much the best. This series was by Beverly Jones, excerpted from "Towards a Female Liberation Movement" put out by the Women's Liberation Distribution Center, Washington, D.C. I take this series to be typical or at least symptomatic of the present Women's Liberation groups which seem generally associated with the New Left student milieu and which have been springing up around the country. In any case, the articles were, at a certain level, very perceptive indeed in explaining the mechanisms whereby young women--as students, girlfriends and young mothers--are oppressed in manifold, interacting ways. In effect the series centers on the specific problems of young, middle-class women around the radical movement and what they have to put up with.

However, while these particular problems are a good point of departure to draw in young women, the series of articles of which I speak and so far as I know the bulk of the radical women's organizations (which have been doing some good, flamboyant work on the East Coast lately) fail to emphasize sufficiently a key linkage in making the jump from the oppression of women to the need for social revolution. And I think that our concentration on this connection might make our comrades' propaganda more concrete, persuasive and radical. The connection I have in mind is that of the family, which throughout a woman's life gives definition to her oppressed state: as daughter, as wife, as mother. The family is a central target in the Marxist criticism of society. The program of communism includes its abolition (when society has reached such a point that the family could be replaced by social relations of a superior physical and emotional content--our aim is not to put everyone in a contemporary state orphanage). It is the family--with all the connotations of the transfer of property through the generations, the necessity to control sexual access to women to ensure that a father passes on property to his son, etc., etc.--which generates all of the morality superstructure. In short, the family is the key social unit for the maintenance of capitalism: the worker's family by which the labor force is reproduced, the capitalist's by which his property (i.e., the congealed life blood of the workers) is transmitted to his sons.

Comradely,

Jim R.

P.S. While these thoughts have come to me freshly, I suspect they owe a lot to readings of Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State and also the early Wilhelm Reich.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 24 February 1969

Harry Turner
New York

C O P Y

London
10 February 1969

Dear Comrade,

Thank you for your letter but I was even more appalled by it than by the previous one and in particular by the copy of the grovelling letter to Healy. Why in God's name join Wohlforth? Out of the frying pan into the fire if you ask me. True they produce a fortnightly paper--as full of sectarian rubbish as the Spartacist--but that is about the limit of their superiority. Even if Robertson has behaved badly W. [Wohlforth] is unlikely to be any better. I can of course see that it was pretty bloody for you in your isolated position but I think you have made a grave error.

I am in greater sympathy with G. White when he deals with the faults of the Trotskyites. I feel he is too pessimistic--they have failed in the States but not elsewhere--and Leon's ideas may appear (I believe will) in all sorts of unexpected places. Even Robertson's contribution minus R. himself may play a role. Really in an organisation of less than 100 people you do not have to look for deep class analyses of splits but merely to personalities.

No, I was never in Healy's SLL though I felt pulled that way more than once. I can assure you that the Tate affair was quite disgraceful and as you know this, why on earth do you act as you do. Kay though she is withdrawing into isolation may appear sectarian yet I feel that this isolation is more apparent than real as both the WL and SL have not really been involved in the struggle but involved in nit-picking (scientific nit-picking of course).

You will be glad to hear that on 31 Jan. Rouge and Lutte Ouvriere filled the Mutualite with 4500 supporters who were not Healy's floating lumpens--here today and gone tomorrow--but serious people. I gather that Frank in the PCI may be getting the chop and the other, Krivine, may take his place. These people are serious unlike the OCI and FER.

I think that faction fighting in a small organisation is frightfully demoralising to all the participants, and I think that everybody involved will deteriorate pretty quickly unless they are careful. Your comment about principled positions and programme I take as a good joke. It is the sort of thing said after doing something unprincipled. Sorry to sound heated but there you are.

Yours fraternally,

Edward Crawford

cc: Robertson
Ellens
file