

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....9 April 1969

Present: Full: Robertson, Nelson, Cunningham, Henry
Aits: Seymour, Small Staff: Salant, Gordon
Absent: Staff: Rogers(exc.)
Meeting convened 8:55 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. General Information and Correspondence
 3. New York Panthers
 4. Membership and Organization
 - a. Wisconsin State Historical Society
 - b. Saling Case and Others
 - c. Legal-Financial Structure
 5. Press
 6. National Conference

1. Minutes: Two sets of back minutes plus the minutes of 17 March 1969 have already been distributed. Minutes of 24 March are in draft.

Motion: To accept the minutes of 30 January 1968, 3 June 1968 and 17 March 1969. Passed

2. General Information and Correspondence:

- a. Ellensites: We now have entirely independent confirmation of our surmise that Larry Shumm is now living in Detroit. This is in keeping with Ellensites' previously reported orientation to move their group to a Midwest industrial center to get "close" to workers. We surmise they have sent out preliminary colonizers, possibly including Ellens herself, leaving those who have roots or high-paying jobs in New York here temporarily. We have also heard that Shumm has been expressing great interest in the Cliff group (British state capitalists), thus paralleling VO's devolution in this direction.
- b. England: We have been receiving excellent occasional reports from George and Peggy M. in London. George's most recent letter takes up certain theoretical points, also mentioned finding the Grant group rather close to our politics. Peggy is interested in making a contribution on the Negro Question in the pre-Conference discussion. They plan to return to the U.S. in May.
- c. SDS: Full report received from our Southern field organizer on the SDS NC meeting held in Austin. He argues, correctly, that the SL should not be in rotten anti-PL blocs--questions whether Bay Area RSU is such. Southern SDS has severed all ties with SSOC and carried proposal for all-out organizational war. Our line was to oppose any witchhunting of SSOC or organizational competition between the groups. This by no means indicates we have any softness towards SSOC, which is politically to the right of SDS--SSOC argues for Southern nationalism and acceptance of money from liberal foundations, and is controlled by the CP. But we want to struggle with SSOC politically, not organizationally. We note SSOC's Southern nationalism is only a right-wing adaptation and logical extension of the New Left's general policy of "doing your own thing".

Our general policy toward SDS remains as formulated several years ago. Our primary focus is recruiting to the SL. We

strongly oppose exclusionism in SDS, which has included our fighting the national SDS leadership's attempt to purge PL and convert SDS into its own private preserve. In SDS, in general, PL has been our principal competition, as they represent a left wing in the group and also the main tendency with a pro-working-class line. Thus, since our interest is recruitment, we would often aim our intervention at criticizing PL, but by no means bloc against them. Regarding the RSU query, we work where there are opportunities; it is not unprincipled to work with "progressives" provided the line on which we base our work is correct.

We note that PL has completely reversed its formerly uncritical line on Black Nationalism, and now denounces all "Black Power" advocates, including the Panthers, as betrayers of the class question, perhaps in reaction to PL's having already lost its leading minority-group cadres. This is another of PL's contradictions, as their appetites are basically opportunist (e.g., UFT issue, on which PL went along with the overwhelming liberal and radical pro-"community" sentiment to denounce the strike although PL at the same time denounced "community control" as a fraud). This turn is indicative of the fundamental tension in PL, between subjectively revolutionary, if oversimplified, positions for working-class revolution in the U.S. and opportunist substitutionism i.e., a general "Third World" approach which included capitulation to Black Nationalism. Disc: Salant, Gordon, Seymour, Robertson, Salant, Nelson, Seymour, Gordon, Robertson

- d. Mao: Publicly supported Ayub Khan, for trivial diplomatic reasons, against left-nationalists in the current struggles in Pakistan.
- e. SLL: Recent issue of Newsletter carried 3 large photos of Wohlforth, perhaps indicating they're getting tired of trying to fill up a paper twice a week. They promise a daily paper by September. Newsletter also carried translation of French IC position on USSR-China clash, which implied unequivocal support to Chinese side, which is Wohlforthites' position. Disc: Nelson

- 3. New York Panthers: 21 Panthers are charged with allegedly shooting at (inaccurately) and firebombing police stations. They are also charged with conspiring to plant bombs in several of the less expensive big department stores; collusion with the Cuban government has been kicked around in the press. We should issue a statement to the Panthers, saying that we know a frame-up when we see one and we know they wouldn't try anything as stupid as bombing department stores--this is obviously a charge dreamed up by the cops to frighten away potential support and stir up opinion against the Panthers. We should also note the red-baiting involved in the hints with regard to Cuba. We are pro-Panther because: (1) they are the outstanding example, nationally, of black militants who have actually tried to organize in the ghettos and who are not co-opted by the Establishment. (Therefore they are open to political argument--they are Black Nationalist because they believe Black Nationalism, not because it pays to talk radical and get the government to pay you off.); (2) the

authorities recognize too that the Panthers are serious--that's why the current frame-up, the calculated police policy of provoking Panthers into shoot-outs, the attacks by "house nationalists" like Karenga; (3) we have long stood for the right of black people to self-defense, thus we support the Panthers on the principles of revolutionary solidarity. Disc: Nelson, Gordon, Robertson, Seymour, Cunningham, Gordon, Nelson, Robertson
Motion: To send a substantial donation and a statement explaining our solidarity with the Panthers. Passed

4. Membership and Organization:

a. Wisconsin State Historical Society (tabled from PB meeting of 17 March): The value of our internal materials depends on the future of the SL itself--whether the group becomes important or irrelevant, whether it represents part of a continuity. While recognizing many practical problems with the WSHS proposal, we must recognize that in principle there are important advantages to placing sufficiently inactive PB minutes in the important archives (e.g., refutation of Turner's version of the TWU strike intervention, presented in his introduction to his "SL Splits" bulletin, appears in the minutes reporting the original discussion). Inactivity of minutes is of two sorts: (1) organizational (e.g., work of friends who have been drafted is a sensitive issue so long as their work continues); (2) personal (e.g., references to a member still active in a union fraction as such). Minutes should be released to the WSHS by year--when nothing from that year is active. Disc: Cunningham, Nelson, Henry, Robertson

Motion: (1) While recognizing practical problems, the PB in principle is in favor of placing in the public record our mimeographed internal materials, subject to the criteria that they be inactive organizationally and personally, to be released to the WSHS by year. (2) That working criteria for the time-delay be established. Passed

b. Saling Case and Others: Our informal argument with Saling concerning his dubious membership has now been escalated by receipt of 19-page document by Saling, entitled The Trouble With Liz: A Comment on a Comment on a Statement. Document consists mainly of uncritical defense of Turner with regard to his suspension, with a short section at the end parroting Ellens-Turner "proletarianizing" politics (according to Miriam R., Saling showed her a first draft which she protested had no politics, after which he inserted the final section).

We have been putting questions to Saling and other marginal members regarding their dubious membership (1) organizationally, regarding loyalty and activity; (2) politically, i.e., a choice between the SL and our previously-internal Minorities, which now stand outside the organization. Saling, after a long period of total SL inactivity, reactivated himself in January. In response to our questions to him, Saling stated fulsomely his compliance with the first condition, but has now answered the second negatively, in effect, as his document does not contain a single word in criticism of Turner. Therefore we have every reason not to grant him his sought-after reinstatement. Moreover his otherwise inexplicable

conduct carries with it the overwhelming presumption that he was recruited by Turner while a lapsed SL member and that an attempt to send him back into the SL has been thwarted.

Saling is not a legitimate member--he has been carried as a nominal but dubious member on our sufferance. Whatever differences exist in the SL over the recent faction fight (or, now, the Saling Case) we prefer to discuss with legitimate members. The SL leadership has both democratic and centralist obligations; it would be a capitulation to illegitimate pressure by Saling to lean over backwards in an excess of democratic zeal to tie the SL up in a protracted discussion with a non-member. Comrades may wish to take a middle position regarding Saling--to coddle him while not permitting him full membership rights in view of the strain on the organization of producing his document, the danger that his views because they are so extreme would dominate the National Conference and suppress expression of smaller differences among comrades through desire to maintain a common SL face against Saling, etc. This would be unprincipled; all actual members of the SL must have full and equal rights and access to the discussion.

Other dubious members are Houston, Gallatin D., Miriam R., V., Howie B., Maedee McE.

Disc: Cunningham, Salant, Small, Robertson, Nelson, Gordon, Seymour, Henry, Cunningham, Salant, Small, Seymour

Motion by Robertson: We note that Saling's membership had lapsed over 1968 and that he sought reactivation in January 1969 for reasons of factional solidarity with Turner. We deferred action until this became clear, as it is now with his document of 23 March, which is an unconditional defense of Turner without a single criticism. Saling takes no exception whatsoever to Turner's grovelling before Healy, Turner's previous bloc with Ellens in view of his admissions now of her lies within the SL, Turner's accusations within the SL that we are anti-working-class and racist, or the accusations by Turner's associates that we are police agents. Therefore, we recognize that Saling is no longer a member. I.e., he is hereby formally dropped and with grave prejudice. This form of treatment rather than undertaking formal charges is indicated because he was an isolated member-at-large in a remote area, hence the collection of certain conclusive evidence and testing in his case is beyond our reach.

Counter-motion by Seymour: That we inform Saling that in view of his ambivalent status we do not believe he has the right to unlimited factional debate, but as a privilege we give him access to the Conference and also permit him limited access to the factional discussion with a reasonable limit on length.

Motion by Nelson: In view of the questions raised by Saling, we note that the following 4 documents express the views of the PB: (1) Cunningham, Open Letter to Turner (8 October 1968); (2)

Cunningham, Letter to Austin Comrades (15 January 1969); (3)
 Gordon, The Trouble With Harry, Part I (24 October 1968); (4)
Part II (6 January 1969)

Motion: To include the Saling Case in the special Commission at the National Conference on Turner projected by the PB on 16 Dec. 1968.

Motion: To circulate copies of Saling's document to the membership, along with a statement noting that we prefer to argue about the Saling Case with genuine members rather than argue anything with Saling, coincident with the principle that we struggle politically with our opponents either externally or internally, but not both.
 Disc: Robertson, Seymour, Cunningham

VOTES: On Countermotion by Seymour: For: Seymour
Opposed: All else Failed 0-4

On Motion by Robertson: For: All but Seymour
Opposed: None Abstaining: Seymour Passed 4-0
 [see statement clarifying Seymour's vote, attached]

All other motions passed unanimously

- c. Legal-Financial Structure: New York State has raised the minimum annual corporate income tax from \$25 to \$100. SL is presently a corporation, which we became on the basis of legal advice. Tax rise means we should investigate this question again. Disc: Nelson, Salant, Robertson, Nelson
- d. Tours: We need a tour to New England, possibly upstate.
 Disc: Salant, Seymour
- e. Houston: Southern field organizer reports Ramon E. has profound differences with the SL, including opposition to democratic centralism, and may actually represent jeopardy. He reports the other comrades in Houston agree Ramon (who in addition, among other things, has never paid a regular sustaining pledge) should be dropped.

Motion: To refer this question for action to the Southern Regional Bureau, with recommendation to drop Ramon if this report is correct in the main. Passed
 Disc: Henry, Gordon, Salant, Henry

Motion: To table balance of this agenda to next meeting. Passed
Meeting adjourned 1:00 a.m.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 9 April 1969

Statement by Joseph Seymour

I believe that Rick S. wanted to re-activate his membership purely to act as a pro-Turner-Wohlforth factionalist. I believe he had no intention of accepting the decisions of the National Conference. Therefore, the organization had an absolute right to drop him for inactivity and was justified in doing so.

My motive for a counter-motion and abstention is the belief that his presence would clarify the issues in the faction fight and our perspectives, for the comrades. My action therefore represents a tactical and not a principled difference.

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