

Present: Full: Robertson, Cunningham, Nelson, Henry
 Aits: Seymour, Small Staff: Gordon
Absent: Staff: Rogers(exc.)
Meeting convened 8:30 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. General Information and Correspondence
 3. Personnel and Organization
 4. Economics Discussion

1. Minutes: PB Minutes of 22 August and 6 May have been produced and distributed. Minutes of 16 December await stenciling. All others are in draft.

Motion: To accept the Minutes of 22 August and 6 May 1968. Passed

2. General Information and Correspondence:

- a. SDS: An enlarged National Council meeting was held in Ann Arbor over Christmas vacation. It was characterized by inflamed factional squabbling between PL and the others. All were united only on the question of purging the Marcusites, who have been calling themselves "SDS Labor Committees". PL seems to have swept ahead and is, because of lack of alternatives, skimming off the SDSers who simply want to be serious. There seems to be nobody (but us) who wants to keep SDS a broad, inclusive radical student group, as the clique now running SDS also wants to turn SDS into a "cadre organization" along the lines of their version of "revolutionary communism". This combined with the factional heat means that SDS may well be torn apart. We should certainly encourage comrades to intensify their efforts in SDS while it lasts. The biggest fights were over the UFT strike and a proposal for a march on Washington on the day of the Nixon inauguration. The Marcusites report that PL's Stalinist hysteria was so intense that they feared for their bodily safety. Disc: Small, Seymour
- b. International Committee: We have known for a long time of the Wohlforth group's political hostility to the French IC section, the Lambert group. We have now learned, on very good authority, of two publicly smothered positions of the Lambert group which would help to explain the Wohlforthites' attitude. This group opposed the pro-Red Guard line and the pro-Arab line over the Arab-Israeli war. Disc: Nelson, Seymour
- c. Lutte Ouvriere: A letter to LO introducing our UFT leaflet was drafted by Gordon in consultation with Robertson. The letter, copies of which have been circulated in our organization, asked LO to print our views on the teachers' strike in their "Tribune Libre" column, which has carried views of other tendencies on various subjects.
- d. China: The new CCP Constitution represents a new logical step in "Supreme Leader-ism". The Central Committee is no longer elected by the Party, and Mao's leadership and his choice of successor are now part of the CP Constitution. (This is quite similar to the formal relationship of the Pope to the College of Cardinals, except that the Cardinals still get to choose the successor.) We note that the reality of power in East Europe and the USSR is the same as in China, but the democracy

in form allows the possibility of protest against the abuse in practice. Under the new Chinese CP Constitution, one-man rule is codified and legitimized in law.

- e. Military Rights: An issue of "G.I. Voice" newspaper has been produced in NYC. The press run is 4,000. It is aimed at draftees in the course of induction. This is not either in content or regularity the national organ which had been previously hoped for, although the nominal editor is G. Dietz, an ex-soldier. Disc: Nelson, Cunningham

3. Personnel and Organization:

- a. Greg B.: His resignation from the Workers League and application for membership in the SL are attached. Greg, 20 years old, strikes us as a very valuable and extremely well-read comrade. By virtue of his occupation he has easy entry into our District 65 fraction.
- b. Libby Fund: \$110 has already been raised in NYC. We have no information on the success of the fund in other areas, which should send the money they collect directly to the Bay Area.
- c. Joel S.: By overworking himself on SL activities, Joel became very seriously ill and is still incapacitated. He has spent several weeks in a rest home following his release from the hospital. His illness was additionally a loss for us because he and Charlotte were scheduled to go to New Orleans immediately to reinforce our ailing regional center. We do not know yet for how long he will be incapacitated or whether he will still be able to go to New Orleans after a few months' rest.
- d. New Orleans: The very existence of our local is threatened. Of the 4 local members, 2 have recently resigned for personal reasons, and Joe V. is threatened with the draft. Leon, meanwhile, has an opportunity to become involved in a trade union paper in North Carolina. The N.O. has mentally canvassed the membership for comrades to go in even for a month or two to fill the gap until long-term personnel reinforcements can be found. Gallatin D. and Nick D. have been suggested for temporary stints, while tentatively we would like to see Dave R., Rick S. and the comrades presently in Ithaca sent in for a longer period of time. Disc: Gordon, Cunningham, Seymour
- e. Bay Area: Jim and Trish L. have resigned. Comrade Harper has reportedly refused to repay the organization \$60 borrowed on her behalf to pay the cost of shipping her belongings from NYC. Workers Action #2 has arrived. Disc: Nelson, Seymour
- f. Turner: Turner, Hugh F. and Turner's son Howard have reportedly applied for membership in the Wohlforth group. Turner has mailed his resignation statement very widely to members and non-members of the SL. Several comrades are working on replies and documents dealing with Turner. Letter to Turner from Roger P. has been stenciled for the edification of the comrades.
- g. Internal mailing: The N.O. recently put out a massive mailing including the two sets of PB minutes, SSEU leaflets and documents which almost wrap up the factional discussion.
- h. Ellens: We have received additional confirmation (Donna H. via Sandra N.) of our surmise that all the Ellensites are do-

ing is studying Capital on the lowest possible level, as reported in the Stoute-Janacek letter to Joe V. Probably, given Ellens' organic incapacity to lead, they don't know what else to do. Ellens' followers are in the main not very political, but even so they should be getting pretty bored by now. Only the direct aid of their French friends could stabilize the group. Robertson will write something taking up the Ellensites' pretensions to the authority of Lenin and Trotsky and the precedents they think they discovered for their "to the workers" liquidation. We doubt that any of the group can be won back to the SL, but would like to assist in their disintegration among themselves.

- i. Internal bulletin: The various documents dealing with the VO issue, from Ellens' "Organizational Report" to the correspondence with Crawford, have been made up into the form of a 96-page internal bulletin, nominally priced at \$1, mainly for selected use internationally. Our comrades received copies of all the documents contained in the bulletin as they were produced, and can get the covers and bind their own bulletins for free. The rest of the factional material will also be made up into two other bulletins. This must be done in fairly short order, so that the N.O. can proceed to aid the editor with SPARTACIST #13.
- j. Western Regional Bureau: With only 1 member of the CC on the West Coast for the present, we cannot now have a WRB. The Southern Regional Bureau will continue so long as it has the two CC members still in the region.
- k. New England: We have a valuable invitation to speak at the campus of a close New England contact. We have one comrade and several other contacts in New England.
- l. NYC local minutes: We repeat our previous caution that the N.O. assumes no responsibility for or control over local minutes, which are often handled by inexperienced comrades. They should not be credited with the same degree of accuracy as PB minutes. Comrade Joanne S. of the Bay Area was extremely disturbed by the report, in NYC local minutes, that the PB had ordered a cessation of interest in work of anti-war GIs. This was simply not true. The PB had noted with regret that a perspective for a national GI organ had met with several setbacks and had encouraged our friends to proceed with local efforts. Comrades must read local committee minutes critically and with judgment.
- m. "Essential Trotsky": Copies of this book are being remaindered by the publisher at 45¢ a copy. We have bought up 120 copies and will sell them for \$1. (They were sold originally at \$1.50.) The book contains 3 essentially complete essays including Trotsky's "most Trotskyist" work, "Lessons of October". We bought them for their political, not their commercial, value, so they should not be sold to bookstores etc., but saved for members and contacts.
- n. Martin: Comrade Martin, formerly on staff, has resigned from the NYC local for personal reasons. She remains a close sympathizer.
- o. NYC Marcus group: Our intervention may be "poisoned" by the tactics of the Wohlforth group. They have made themselves

obnoxious and outrageous, and this has raised mumblings of "Throw the WL out" and "get rid of 'external' cadres". We cannot discount the possibility that the WL may have a conscious tactic of "smash and grab"--pull out a contact or two with them and force the exclusion, along with them, of their main enemy: us. We must point out to the Marcusites that one of the ways in which wreckers wreck is by causing a group to take indefensible exclusionist action as a means to a necessary thing for any group--controlling outside trouble-makers. Exclusion of "outside cadre organizations" is a political question. The Marcus group is explicitly anti-vanguard party. A group can limit itself to "inside cadres" only if it is willing to declare "we are a party ourselves, a competitor of groups like WL and SL, the embodiment of the only correct program, etc.". Disc: Small, Nelson, Small, Nelson, Gordon, Nelson, Robertson, Seymour, Gordon, Nelson, Cunningham

4. Economics Discussion: The committee responsible for drafting our Perspectives Resolution met 18 December. The comrades felt the need for an extended discussion in the PB on the economic situation. We note that the New York Times' annual economic reports are out and are in the main valuable.

Presentation by Seymour: This is a war economy; the war has been the decisive factor in continuing the economic boom, preventing a depression in 1967. Since 1966 fixed investment in industry has increased only a third as much as the military budget. Also, increase in state and local government spending and employment has increased enormously and cannot continue to do so at the same level. Steps toward rationalization of this sector will undoubtedly be taken, and will result in contraction of the job market for college graduates--witness the projected massive reorganization of the NYC Welfare Department. Therefore, public employee unions are a good place to watch, as these jobs will be under the ax.

A war economy means a large percentage of the total wage bill results in war production rather than consumer goods. Thus, people have a lot of money (wages) and not too much to spend it on. Thus--inflation. The consumer price index rose 12% in the last 3 years, compared with 5% over the preceding 7 years. Real income declined from 1965 to 1967 and has been slowly rising since. Strike figures are high, showing a slow but fairly steady rise since 1965.

Assuming the war continues, we can discount the talk about a "controlled recession". The manipulation of the economy at will is difficult. I expect a continuation of the status quo until at least late 1969. If there were a recession, it would hit exceptionally hard because of the unprecedentedly high level of consumer indebtedness.

There is an attempt to repeal the section of the Taft-Hartley Act which specifies that contracts negotiated by union leaders must be ratified by the membership.

Internationally, our analysis of the balance-of-payments crisis (gold crisis) was correct but was invalidated by the French events. Because of the loss of production for export due to work stoppages DeGaulle can no longer hold gold. The U.S. has also been taken off the hook by the willingness of West Germany to hold U.S. dollars. The growth of the Japanese economy is phenomenal; Japan is now the third most powerful industrial country in the world.

The British economy has been in crisis for 7 years. Last year's 14% devaluation of the pound was not enough and has been eaten up by inflation. The British trade union structure is archaic, with a dozen unions in a plant. But the unionists are militant; 90% of all strikes are technically wildcat because contracts are not now legally binding. The Tories have been wanting to move against the unions for a long time. It has been hard for the Labour Party to do so because the needed measures are a reorganization of fundamental union structure, rather than a simple matter of cutting wages. The measures now beginning under Barbara Castle are fairly small--a 60-day "cooling off" period after which contracts become legally binding. The situation should be extremely fruitful for revolutionary Marxists.

The French problem is essentially temporary--the general strike raised wages 14%. DeGaulle says he intends to solve it by "austerity", which generally doesn't work. He will probably have to devalue the franc by about late 1969. But DeGaulle should not be underestimated, and may pull through without devaluation. The German capitalists have it easy, as the working class continues docile.

The balance-of-payments crisis reflects essentially the sharpening of the contradictions within the capitalist class along national lines.

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

[a full, six-page, rough but complete transcript of the above economics report and discussion was made for the benefit of the Resolution Commission]

Meeting adjourned 11:50 p.m.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 20 January 1969

C O P Y

Brooklyn, New York
24 December 1968

Workers League
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrades,

I am writing to submit my resignation from the Workers League. This is not an easy or painless thing to do, amounting to recognizing a year of working to build the Workers League as an error. This is the conclusion I have come to in the recent internal discussion and convention of the WL, confirmed by my re-evaluation of the positions our minority held and assumptions it acted upon.

The adoption of the P.C. perspectives by the convention last month binds minority members of the Workers League to act under majority discipline, upholding majority positions. However, democratic centralism cannot exist in a political void, on purely legalistic and statutory grounds. For a minority to submit to this way of functioning it must have at least a minimum of confidence in the Workers League on any question.

My own fundamental differences with the WL are well known from my participation in the minority tendency at the convention. Since then, I have begun to critically study and re-evaluate the positions of that tendency. I believe that in our positions on both trade union and youth work, we adapted to the majority's frenzy stemming from their concept of the impending crisis, a concept the minority essentially rejected. The majority said the WL has to build a mass labor party movement and right away, the minority responded by agreeing that yes, the WL has to build a mass workers' movement and right away, but why labor party? On the question of youth work, we again adapted to the majority's crisis-frenzy. They said build a mass student youth movement, we said build a mass proletarian youth movement. Both positions were wrong. The immediate task of the small vanguard organization in the U.S.A. today is the building and development of a Trotskyist cadre sufficiently large and qualified to intervene agitationaly in the class struggle for the construction of a revolutionary workers' party. The frenzy for the mass movement was understandable, coming from both our own impatience and the pressures of the WL majority, but it was way out of touch with the concrete reality of the American labor and socialist movements. However, I remain a supporter of the minority positions of rejecting the majority concept of the crisis of capitalism, for real work towards independent working-class political action (as opposed to the WL majority's concept of the labor party as a be-all, end-all "necessary stage" in the political development of the American working-class), and for Trotskyist intervention in the Negro struggle in the immediate sense of working to construct a black Trotskyist cadre to form the nucleus and foundation of revolutionary socialist intervention in the struggle of the masses of black workers, a potential

20 January 1969

vanguard force of the American revolution. It is on this question that our most basic differences have erupted and on which the Workers League and its allies of the International Committee stand fully exposed, on which the WL made a complete turn from its original deficient position of recognizing the need to reach black workers through "labor party"-directed work in the unions to a position bordering on white chauvinism, the position of the SLL. This shows an incapacity to recognize the potential vanguard forces of the class, which points to an incapacity to ever construct a vanguard party of the class. Most disgusting is the WL majority's almost overnight change in line on the basis of Mike Banda's opinion, without any analysis of the actual situation of the Negro in relation to the entire U.S. working class. I guess this is what comrades have always meant when they spoke about "starting from building an international movement"--rejection of any independent role for ourselves in constructing an American workers' vanguard, having to look through the eyes of the SLL and act on a British analysis of concrete American conditions.

I have come to the conclusion that I was in error in joining the Workers League a year ago, that the Workers League and International Committee are incapable of contributing to the construction of the revolutionary party in the U.S. and the re-construction of the Fourth International. For a revolutionist to realize the absence of a revolutionary party and International means, while some demoralization is almost inevitable, that he must set about working for their construction. The only way to proceed is with one's eyes fully opened to the truth--accepting half-truths and errors you can't succeed and can do quite a bit of harm. Because I want to keep my eyes opened to the truth I am resigning from the Workers League. I intend to apply for membership in the Spartacist League on the basis of general agreement on perspectives for building a revolutionary workers' party in the U.S.A. from the small vanguard formation existing, and on the degeneration and need of re-construction of the Fourth International.

The American workers' vanguard will be built, the revolutionary International will be re-constructed and re-established. This will not be done by pretending that they exist, but only by resolute struggle to start building them now on the basis of the cadres available now, the opportunities for developing roots in the working class now, the international collaboration practicable now. This is the hope for socialism and it cannot be abandoned for illusions about the ingrown sects which proclaim their existence as "the party" and "the International". To do so is to commit oneself to continued irrelevance to the proletariat and its struggle, a commitment I have no intention of making.

I urge all comrades of the Workers League to study the history of the anti-revisionist Trotskyist movement in the U.S.A.--(the 1962 split in the Revolutionary Tendency of the Socialist Workers Party, engineered by the leadership of the SLL in a blatantly anti-Leninist authoritarian manner, the 1966 International Conference at which Spartacist comrades were set up once again for degradation and expulsion without political grounds)--especially in the light of the

20 January 1969

recent turnabout on the Negro question, recognizing that the Workers League is no revolutionary party, nor on the road to its construction, but represents a left centrist literary tendency servile to the British Socialist Labour League, and come to join the ranks of the anti-revisionist Trotskyists of the Spartacist League who are today working toward the emergence of a new vanguard party of the American working class and toward the re-construction of the Fourth International.

Fraternally,

Gregory B.

Attachment, FB Minutes of 20 January 1969

Brooklyn, New York
14 January 1969

Spartacist League
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrades,

In my resignation from the Workers League of 24 December 1968, I stated my view that "the Workers League and International Committee are incapable of contributing to the construction of the revolutionary party in the U.S. and the re-construction of the Fourth International", and reaffirmed my own dedication to the cause of their construction. As concretization of that dedication, I want to formally apply for membership in the Spartacist League. I believe that this is the only honest course of action I can take as a revolutionist committed to the historic interests of the working class in building a Leninist party and establishing workers' power. I believe that the Spartacist League, of all the tendencies on the left, is uniquely capable of consistently working for the construction of the vanguard party of the working class by reason of its adherence to and development of the revolutionary theory of Trotskyism and its correct appraisal of its current tasks in applying this theory in class struggle. I look forward to finally being able to work towards the goal of the establishment of a workers' America and a workers' world (unhindered by the particular preoccupations and momentary concerns of a politically unstable centrist "leadership") in an honest and truly revolutionary organization.

Comradely,

Gregory B.