

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION OF THE PLENUM

Motion: To approve the following procedural recommendations:

1. That in cases of procedural disputes, discussion be limited to two speakers, one for and one against, and that each speaker be limited to two minutes.
2. That general discussion be limited to ten minutes per speaker and that no one speak twice until all who wish to speak have already done so.
3. That the Presiding Committee consist of Barnes, Horowitz, D. Jenness, Lovell, Sheppard, Thomas, and Waters.
4. To designate Eidsvik and Rupp as secretaries.
5. To invite as observers: Control Commission members, heads of national departments, members of the youth NEC, branch organizers, party organizing committee representatives, and special guests.
6. To give voice to organizers, department heads, and representatives from party organizing committees who are not members of the National Committee during discussion of "Implementation of Party Turn."

Motion: To approve the following agenda:

1. Political Report
2. Implementation of Party Turn
3. Party Campaign around Political Rights Suit
4. Portugal
5. Angola
6. World Movement
7. Election of Political Committee

Motion: To approve the schedule (see enclosed).

MOTION ON PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Motion: To establish the category of provisional membership. Each new applicant for party membership, upon being approved by a majority vote in the branch to which they are applying (or by the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large), will become a provisional member for a period of 3 months. Provisional members will have the right to attend branch meetings with voice and to receive internal bulletins. At the end of the 3-month period of provisional membership, the branch (or the PC in the case of members at large) will decide, according to the provisions in the constitution, on the applicant's membership.

This decision is to become effective at the time of its publication by the Political Committee in the Party Builder.

PROPOSED PLENUM SCHEDULE

Jan 2-4
1976

Friday, Jan. 2

- 10:00-10:15 Organization of Plenum (1/4 hour)
- 10:15-11:15 Political Report (1 hour)
- 11:15-12:30 Discussion (2-1/2 hours)
- 12:30- 1:30 Lunch
- 1:30- 2:45 Discussion
- 2:45- 3:15 Summary (1/2 hour)
- 3:15- 4:30 Implementation of Party Turn (1-1/4 hours)
- 4:30- 6:00 Discussion (3 hours)
- 6:00- 7:30 Dinner
- 7:30- 9:00 Discussion
- 9:00- 9:30 Summary

extend
discussion
then press
membership

Saturday, Jan. 3

- 9:30-10:30 Party Campaign around Political Rights Suit (1 hour)
- 10:30-11:30 Discussion (1 hour)
- 11:30-11:45 Summary (1/4 hour)
- 11:45-12:45 Portugal (1 hour)
- 12:45- 1:45 Lunch
- 1:45- 3:45 Discussion (2 hours)
- 3:45- 4:15 Summary (1/2 hour)
- 4:15- 5:15 Angola (1 hour)
- 5:15- 6:30 Discussion (2 hours)
- 6:30- 8:00 Dinner
- 8:00- 8:45 Discussion
- 8:45- 9:15 Summary (1/2 hour)

Sunday, Jan. 4

- 10:00-11:15 World Movement (1-1/4 hours)
- 11:15- 1:15 Discussion (2 hours)
- 1:15- 2:15 Lunch
- 2:15- 2:45 Summary (1/2 hour)
- 2:45- 3:45 Election of Political Committee (1 hour)

Note: It may be necessary to add about four more hours to the schedule if guests attend and present their views on the three international points.

MINUTES OF NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

January 2, 3, 4, 1976

Friday, January 2, 1976

Convened by Sheppard -- 10:10 AM

Motion by Sheppard that Hawkins chair the first session.

Carried.

Attendance:

Regular: Barnes, Blackstock, Britton, Camejo, Chertov, DeBerry, Dixon, Garza, Halstead, Hansen, Horowitz, D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Jones, Lipman, Lovell, Lund, Lyons, Miah, Pulley, Ring, Scott, Seigle, Sheppard, Stapleton, Stone, Thomas, Tussey, Waters, Weinstein

Alternates: Morell, Evans, Benson, White, Foley, LaMont, Seidman, Hawkins, Roberts, Matson, McBride, Henderson, Styron, Finkel, Chase, Mackler, Manuel, Rodriguez, Reid, Chainey, Smith, Heisler, Sojourner, Markey, Vasquez, Musa

Control Commission: Brundy, Glover, Scheer

1. ORGANIZATION OF PLENUM

Seigle reported recommendations of the Political Committee on organization of the plenum:

Motion: To approve the following procedural recommendations:

1. That in cases of procedural disputes, discussion be limited to two speakers, one for and one against, and that each speaker be limited to two minutes.

2. That general discussion be limited to ten minutes per speaker and that no one speak twice until all who wish to speak have already done so.

3. That the Presiding Committee consist of Barnes, Horowitz, D. Jenness, Lovell, Sheppard, Thomas, Waters.

4. To designate Eldsvik and Rupp as secretaries.

5. To invite as observers: Control Commission members, heads of national departments, members of the youth NEC, branch organizers, representatives from party organizing committees, and special guests.

6. To give voice to organizers, department heads, and representatives from party organizing committees who are not members of the National Committee during discussion of "Implementation of Party Turn."

Carried.

Motion: To approve the following agenda:

1. Political Report
2. Implementation of Party Turn
3. Party Campaign around Political Rights Suit
4. Portugal
5. Angola
6. World Movement
7. Election of Political Committee

Carried.

Motion: To amend the proposed schedule to add 1/4 hour to the Political Report.

Carried.

Motion: To approve the proposed schedule as amended.

Carried.

2. POLITICAL REPORT

Barnes reported.

Discussion: Miah, Mackler, Garza, Halstead

Recess -- 12:25 PM

Reconvene -- 2:00 PM

Further discussion: Henderson, Markey, L. Jenness, Sojourner, Tussey, Dixon

Motion: To grant Dixon a 1-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Dixon, Sheppard, Stone, Roberts, Pulley

Summary: Barnes

Motion: To approve the general line of the report.

Vote:
 Regular members:
 30 for, 0 against
 Consultative:
 29 for, 0 against
Carried.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTY TURN REPORT

D. Jenness reported.

Discussion: Basley, Seidman, Getz, Dixon, Jaquith

Motion: To grant Jaquith a 1-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Jaquith

Recess -- 6:20 PM

Reconvene -- 7:50 PM

Further discussion: Chertov, Kelly, Lipman, Barnes

Motion: To grant Barnes a 3-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Barnes, Morell, Ring, Manuel,
 Rowand, Matson, Gersh, Britton

Motion by Barnes for the Presiding Committee: To extend the discussion on the Implementation of the Party Turn Report for one hour. To separate the discussion and vote on provisional membership from the rest of the discussion and vote on the Party Turn Report, and to schedule a separate point on the agenda on provisional membership. To provide time for this by deferring the agenda point on the Party Campaign Around Political Rights Suit to a future plenum, and by instructing the incoming Political Committee to print the report the Political Committee had prepared for this plenum in the Party Bullder.

Carried.

Recess -- 10:00 PM

Saturday, January 3, 1976

Reconvene -- 9:30 AM

Motion by Presiding Committee: That Sojourner chair this session.

Carried.

Motion by Presiding Committee: That there be a six-minute time limit for further speakers on this point.

Carried.

Further discussion on Party Turn Report: Heisler, Starr, Vasquez

Motion: To grant Vasquez a 30-second extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Vasquez, Rodriguez, Singer, Musa

Motion: To grant Musa a 1-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Musa, Brundy, Stone, Miah

Motion: To grant Miah a 30-second extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Miah, Finkel

Summary: D. Jenness

Motion: To approve the general line of the report.

Vote:
 Regular members:
 30 for, 0 against
 Consultative:
 29 for, 0 against
Carried.

4. PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Barnes reported.

Discussion: Moriarty, Weinstein, Chainey

Motion: To grant Chainey a 2-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Chainey, Alewitz

Motion: To grant Alewitz a 1-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Alewitz, Henderson

Motion: To grant Henderson a 30-second extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Henderson, Tussey, Camejo

Summary: Barnes

Recess -- 12:30 PM

Reconvene -- 1:35 PM

Motion presented by Barnes: To establish the category of provisional membership. Each new applicant for party membership, upon being approved by a majority vote in the branch to which they are applying (or by the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large), will become a provisional member for a period of 3 months. Provisional members will have the right to attend branch meetings with voice and to receive internal bulletins. At the end of the 3-month period of provisional membership, the branch (or the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large) will decide, according to the provisions in the constitution, on the applicant's membership.

This decision to become effective at the time of its publication by the Political Committee in the Party Builder.

Vote:
Regular members:
30 for, 0 against
Consultative:
29 for, 0 against
Carried.

5. PORTUGAL

Sheppard reported.

Motion by Presiding Committee that Carlos be granted extended time for remarks.

Carried.

Motion by Presiding Committee to give voice under this point to IEC members present as observers.

Carried.

Discussion: Carlos, Thomas, Roberts, Mercedes, Foley

Motion by Presiding Committee to close the speakers list and limit time for remaining speakers on this point to 8 minutes each.

Carried.

Further discussion: Halstead, Styron, Horowitz

Motion: To grant Horowitz a 2-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Horowitz, Waters, Barnes

Summary: Sheppard

Motion: To approve general line of report and statement and to refer the editing of the Portugal statement and its use to the incoming Political Committee.

Vote:
Regular members:
30 for, 0 against
Consultative:
29 for, 0 against
Carried.

6. ANGOLA

Thomas reported.

Recess -- 6:15 PM

Reconvene -- 7:45 PM

Motion by Presiding Committee that Carlos be the first speaker.

Carried.

Discussion: Carlos, Seidman, Garza, Halstead, Miah, Barnes, Pulley, Manuel, Roberts, Dixon, Carlos

Summary: Thomas

Motion: To approve the general line of the report and statement and to refer editing and use of the statement to the incoming Political Committee.

Vote:
Regular members:
30 for, 0 against
Consultative:
29 for, 0 against
Carried.

Recess -- 10:00 PM

Sunday, January 4, 1976

Reconvene -- 9:45 AM

Motion by the Presiding Committee that Chase chair this session.

Carried.

Motion by Sheppard for the Presiding Committee that 1-3/4 hours be allotted for World Movement Report.

Carried.

7. WORLD MOVEMENT REPORT

Waters reported.

Discussion: Thomas, Ring, Mercedes, Halstead, Young, Finkel, Camejo

Motion: To grant Camejo a 4-minute extension.

Carried.

Further Discussion: Camejo

Recess -- 1:20 PM

Reconvene -- 2:30 PM

Further discussion: Rodriguez

Motion: To grant Rodriguez a 2-minute extension.

Carried.

Further discussion: Rodriguez, Vasquez, Barnes

Motion: To grant Barnes a 2-minute extension.

Carried.

Further Discussion: Barnes

Summary: Waters

Motion: To approve the general line of the World Movement Report.

Vote:

Regular members:

30 for, 0 against

Consultative:

29 for, 0 against

Carried.

8. ELECTION OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Barnes reported. (See attached.)

Motion: That the Political Committee consist of 23 members.

Vote:

Regular members:

30 for, 0 against

Consultative:

for, 0 against

Carried.

Nominations from outgoing Political Committee: Barnes, Blackstock, Breitman, Camejo, Garza, Hansen, Horowitz, D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Lund, Lyons, Miah, Scott, Seigle, Shaw, Sheppard, Stapleton, Stone, Thomas, Waters, and YSA NEC representative

No further nominations

Motion: To elect slate.

Vote:

Regular members:

30 for, 0 against

Consultative:

29 for, 0 against

Carried.

Brundy and Manuel lead singing of "The Internationale."

Plenum adjourned -- 3:40 PM

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Saturday, Jan. 3

9:30-10:30 Party Campaign around Political Rights Suit (1 hour)
10:30-11:30 Discussion (1 hour)
11:30-11:45 Summary (1/4 hour)
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2:45- 3:45 Election of Political Committee (1 hour)

Election of the Political Committee

Report by Jack Barnes

Comrades, several weeks ago we published in Political Committee minutes No. 14 the recommendation from the outgoing Political Committee for the new Political Committee to be elected by this plenum. This is to elect a Political Committee of twenty-three members adding to the outgoing Political Committee (whose members are comrades Jack Barnes, George Breitman, Peter Camejo, Al Hansen, Doug Jenness, Frank Lovell, Ed Shaw, Larry Seigle, Barry Sheppard, Tony Thomas, Mary-Alice Waters, and a representative elected by the YSA), the eleven regular members of the National Committee elected at our last convention who are either resident in New York or on assignment directly responsible to the Political Committee.

That would be a Political Committee of twenty-three members, twenty-two regular members of the National Committee plus a YSA representative. The additions would be Nelson Blackstock, Caterino Garza, Gus Horowitz, Lew Jones, Linda Jenness, Caroline Lund, Wendy Lyons, Malik Miah, Bev Scott, Syd Stapleton, and Betsey Stone.

Comrades will remember that at the post-convention plenum in August 1975 we proposed no changes in the Political Committee. We needed a little time to think out what would be the most effective Political Committee for the party at this time. There were several new factors to take into consideration.

It was only at the convention that the final stage in the transition in leadership was codified by the convention delegates when they eliminated the category of advisory membership on the National Committee. What that did on the Political Committee level was to formalize the end of the process by which Joe Hansen, Farrell Dobbs, George Novack, and Tom Kerry left the National Committee of the party and thus were no longer eligible for membership on the Political Committee. It was carrying out this process correctly that dominated our thinking in the period prior to the convention.

But there were several other reasons that we, the National Committee, needed a little time to think.

One, the convention made a major change in the National Committee. The size of the National Committee was increased and there was significant influx of new members in both the regular and alternate membership categories on the committee.

Second, the convention launched a turn that was going to bring about a lot of organizational shifts and adjustments in the party, and we wanted to see what the turn would require of us as far as a Political Committee went.

And third, we needed the experience of the functioning Political Committee itself, to make a recommendation based on some new experience.

The Political Committee elected at the May 1975 plenum had a number of advantages over the previous one for our current needs. It was smaller, it was composed of resident comrades who could meet easily on call, and it got rid of any need for a separate political bureau. And partially because of this the outgoing Political Committee can say it made a positive step forward in the frequency and regularity of Political Committee meetings.

In addition, following the convention we made a series of assignments in the center as we began trying to best utilize the National Committee the delegates had elected.

Malik Miah was brought into the national office to strengthen the central leadership staff;

Wendy Lyons began acting as managing editor of the paper to free Larry Seigle for more writing to improve our propaganda campaigns;

Lew Jones agreed to come back to New York;

Catarino Garza, after discussion, agreed to leave his job and become full-time for the party -- to begin by being the candidate for congress for the Lower East Side branch -- and to have the perspective of remaining full-time for the party after that to drive forward the perspectives we've decided on.

Linda Jenness was released from directing our women's liberation and CLUW work, being replaced by Cindy Jaquith, so that Linda could become the bilingual organizer of the new Lower East Side branch. We hope that a bonus of this shift will be to release a couple of leading comrades from New York to strengthen Chicago so that we can use Betsey Stone as a national field organizer without any special responsibilities of any kind in Chicago.

We moved Caroline Lund from the IP staff into the international office to get ourselves better organized there, the reasons for which I don't have to repeat after today's discussion of the world movement report.

We decided we had to beef up the PRDF staff that Syd Stapleton is responsible for as we increased our estimate of the gains we are going to make from the case, and as we prepare for what we believe can be one of the biggest political trials in American history.

Three other comrades -- regular members of the National Committee in New York and on national assignment -- Nelson Blackstock on the paper, Bev Scott in the shop and national finances, and Gus Horowitz in an international assignment -- agreed to continue their work.

So I think we can say that the comrades in New York elected by the convention to regular membership on the National Committee

who were not previously members of the Political Committee, have been thoroughly involved in our work.

It was with this background that we began our discussions about what kind of Political Committee to recommend to this plenum.

The first thing we discussed, and then rejected, was the idea of a resident body that would include all the members of the National Committee (regular members and alternate members) plus control commission members, resident in New York. There was a very simple reason for our rejection of this idea: it would be a body of forty-two people, and there's no way we can say to the National Committee that a body of forty-two people can be a Political Committee that meets regularly, and discusses issues it has to. It would involve at a minimum a separate political bureau and we believe in practice it would result in infrequent meetings. At this time that is not what we need.

So that left us with two choices. One would be to add to the Political Committee a couple of the comrades from among those I listed. That would have had the advantage of keeping the Political Committee small, and thus a bigger guarantee both for regular and frequent meetings and having a committee the large majority of whose members would be present at all the meetings.

The disadvantage to that course became clear when we tried to decide which of the comrades I listed we should not add. The more we discussed it the more it seemed that the advantage of adding all of them to the Committee outweighed the disadvantages. It would mean that we would incorporate into the Political Committee a significant number of comrades who would be having their first experience on the Political Committee, all of whom were elected as regular members of the National Committee at the convention. We would broaden the Committee; we'd be able to develop and test these comrades in a new responsibility.

No matter how much responsibility you accept there is an added responsibility when you become a member of the National Committee. It's only when you become a member of the National Committee that you become directly responsible for the national direction of the party at its plenums; it's only when you become a member of the Political Committee that you actually feel responsible for the general Political Committee work of the party.

In going over the proposed nominees we came up with two sets of problems, which I should mention. The first problem had to do with Linda Jenness and Catarino Garza. That is, their main responsibilities will be in the New York City and Lower East Side branch organizations, which means that since the Committee has to be able to meet on call and be able to meet frequently there may be this or that meeting that they can't come to. But that seems to us a small price to pay for having them involved and present at most of the meetings, and having the advantage for the Political Committee of having two members who are directly responsible for day-to-day branch and city work. So we thought the positive considerations outweighed the negative ones.

There was a second category, that was, Gus Horowitz, Ed Shaw, Peter Camejo, and Betsey Stone. As things now stand none of these comrades can attend a significant percentage of the meetings of the Political Committee. Gus and Ed are involved in international work, basically based abroad; Peter's our presidential candidate; Betsey's the Political Committee's national field organizer. And of course it is abnormal to elect people to a committee if you don't think they can serve on it. But the more we discussed it the more we decided that we would add them.

In the case of Gus and Ed there's a very simple thing involved. As you know, from the last few hours of discussion, we cannot honestly say today how we are going to be forced to organize our international work in the coming period. We're on the verge of some rapid changes and some swift shifts, many of which are out of our control.

In the case of Peter and Betsey, with some schedule adjustments they will make some meetings, but certainly not the majority of them. There is an obvious advantage to the Committee to have the political opinions of Peter and Betsey, as well as their observations from moving around the country. And it's a big advantage to them to attend whatever Political Committee meetings that they can. In addition to the value we get from Peter and Betsey being on the Committee, they are two of the comrades from the central leadership who have to go out and express the views of the central leadership, either as candidate or as field organizer, day after day. Given that, we thought we should consciously adjust their schedules slightly to make possible their participation whenever we can.

So after thinking through each of these problems, we decided that the best Political Committee to propose to this plenum is the Political Committee of twenty-three comrades that I named.

This means that we will have to be conscious of something else that we think is an obligation of this new Political Committee if elected. And that is we are going to have to formalize the structure of the national office more. There's no getting around the fact that a Political Committee of twenty-three is different from a Political Committee of twelve, and more preparations and decisions will have to be made in a smaller body. There's nothing wrong with this, as long as we are conscious of this as one of the consequences of the decision on the size and character of the committee. The new Political Committee will have to think out having an explicit group of comrades on either an administrative committee or secretariat responsible to the Political Committee whose job will be to organize the Political Committee meetings, the administrative work of the party, and implement Political Committee decisions.

There are three things the new Political Committee must be alert to.

One, as soon as there is a sizeable committee, there's always a tendency for the regularity and frequency of meetings to drop. The new committee must prevent this from happening.

Secondly, there will be several of the comrades who won't really be on call; they'll be out in the field doing work. But the committee will have a large number of comrades ready and present at meetings and, I hope like before, these comrades in the field will be able to be present for a number of the most important meetings, and as often as it's possible.

Three, there's the possibility that an administrative committee or secretariat can start acting as a substitute for the Political Committee. We simply must be alert to that.

There is one final problem with the proposed Political Committee which I think Al Hansen raised. It seems an unusual one as we've been concentrating for so long on the transition in leadership and the evolution of the different forms of the graduation from day-to-day, week-to-week work of the older, central leaders of the party. But something else has snuck up on us. And that is that this is an old Political Committee, not a young one. In this entire list of twenty-three names I read to you only two comrades, Malik Miah and Tony Thomas, are in their twenties. Everyone else is over thirty. We now have a Political Committee that has a smaller percentage of comrades in their twenties than the average Political Committee in the history of the party. But I'm sure that if we expand our recruitment, develop a lot of new branches and more mass work, large numbers of young comrades will come forward and solve that problem for us without any great trouble.

We should always remember that when we elect a Political Committee we're not making any general rules. All we're saying is that we think this is the best team for the immediate future. As opportunities continue to develop and open up in the party and country as a whole, we can feel free with a Political Committee of this size to assign one, two, three or more Political Committee members to go out and help drive forward this process, as we have done in the last year or so.

The motion is that we elect a Political Committee of twenty-three members, including one comrade to be elected by the YSA National Executive Committee. The outgoing Political Committee nominates: Jack Barnes, Nelson Blackstock, George Breitman, Peter Camejo, Catarino Garza, Al Hansen, Gus Horowitz, Doug Jenness, Linda Jenness, Lew Jones, Frank Lovell, Caroline Lund, Wendy Lyons, Malik Miah, Bev Scott, Larry Seigle, Ed Shaw, Barry Sheppard, Syd Stapleton, Betsey Stone, Tony Thomas, Mary-Alice Waters.