

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 9, February 15, 1968

Present: Kerry, Novack, Dobbs, Jones, Shaw, Hansen, Barnes, Shepard, DeBerry.

Chairman: Shaw

AGENDA

1. Antiwar
2. Youth Convention
3. International
4. Third Party Movements

1. ANTIWAR REPORT

Jones reported.

There is a call out by National Mobilization Committee for mass actions on April 27; Student Mobilization Committee has a poster and two calls ready. Chicago and the Bay Area have already started working on the action.

Curiously, there have been no demonstrations in response to the current events in Vietnam, the threat of nuclear weapons, or a call by the Vietnamese for demonstrations. This absence comes mainly because the movement is busy working on other projects and because of the difficulty in adjusting on the part of the movement to the idea of NLF victories, i.e., how should an "antiwar" movement relate to these events? The NMC has called for actions and the Parade Committee will discuss calling an action.

On the Democratic Party convention demonstration: the agenda subcommittee for an NMC conference set up by NMC officers 2 months ago is exclusionary. At its first meeting 2 weeks ago Carlos Russell came in with the CP black caucus approach saying not enough blacks were represented on agenda committee and therefore it should not make any decisions. The agenda subcommittee agreed and no discussion of plans for the demonstration took place at that meeting.

Last weekend the committee met again in Chicago; SDS, Resistance, moderates, 1 CP spokesman and Fred attended. Russell had invited 10-20 black CPers to it and tried the parity gimmick. Fred fought alone against the attempt.

Wed., February 14, the steering committee of NMC met in a more representative meeting. Dellinger laid out what really had happened at Chicago agenda committee meeting -- that it had only represented the CP and NCNP, and several decisions were modified.

Four positions are being put forth for the character of the Democratic Party convention demonstration: (1) mass action against the war; (2) disruption of the convention; (3) demonstration to be in favor of P&F ticket and to put forward an alternative; (4) demonstration to be a People's Convention to set up a P&F movement.

Most people accept our position on character but at same time there is strong underlying sentiment among moderate leaders moving toward the 3rd and/or fourth proposals for the demonstration.

CP trying to get organizational control of the demonstration.

All the black nationalist groups are hesitant about having demonstrations at the convention. They feel it would lead to big victimizations and violence. This position leaves the door open to the CP "black caucus."

It has been agreed to hold an invitational conference in late March of 300 people to decide whether or not to have a demonstration to be followed by a post-April 27 open conference to work out the details. Agenda subcommittee has been expanded and made more representative. It will make arrangements for the conferences and for the circulation of position papers on the nature of the demonstration.

All the discussion about the Democratic Party demonstration has tended to distract from the April 27 action. We're trying to put off discussions and decisions until after April 27.

## 2. YOUTH CONVENTION

Jones reported.

This was the largest and most homogeneous convention the youth has held. 342 people registered. All votes on line questions were unanimous. A whole new layer of leaders are developing in the YSA who are not yet on the youth NC; who played a big role in discussion from the floor.

The only sour note was on the draft question from a comrade who thought we should have nothing to do with draft protest.

The youth NC was expanded by 5 or 6 members. It has a number of old-timers on it but close to 1/3 are on the NC for the first time.

At this convention the youth graduated more of its central cadre than before.

National officers of the youth are: National Chairman -- Jones, National Secretary -- Waters, National Organization Secretary -- Bolduc.

Last year only 265 people registered for the youth convention. The average age of people attending was 22 yrs. 5 months. Average length of time in the YSA was 2.2 years. Since the last convention 199 have been recruited; 78 of them since Oct. 21. Total membership of youth is now 403. That's an increase of 135 members since the

last convention. SWP is now a minority in the YSA -- only 41%. There are now 26 high school members of the YSA and 20 Afro-Americans.

There is one local over 60, one over 40, 2 over 30, 3 over 25, and 3 over 20 members.

There was Southern representation at the convention from Atlanta, Austin, Houston, and Norman, Okla. There are 25 at-large members now in the youth.

### 3. INTERNATIONAL

Hansen reported.

Our cothinkers have proposed the following agenda for their next world gathering: (1) Theses on the international situation. (2) Political crisis in China. (3) Strategy of the Latin-American revolution. (4) Orientation of revolutionary Marxists in Europe. (5) Balance sheet of the Algerian revolution. (6) Statutes. (7) Activity report. (8) Election of the incoming International Executive Committee.

### 4. THIRD PARTY MOVEMENTS

Kerry reported.

A move has been made by third partyites from West Coast to extend the movement to NY. They ran head-on into the CP-NCNP third ticketites. Draperites have abandoned their perspective to build separate organization in NY and will go to NCNP convention and work there for their position.

In California have formed P&FP as well as P&F movement. The purpose of the latter is to give representation to the youth under 21 in the convention, etc. They want to agree on a program at the March convention which will be a delegated affair of P&F registrants.

On the question of candidates, they have a problem in California because no one can be candidate who was registered in another party last year.

Already angry letters, etc. are getting into the California press from disaffected people who helped them get on the ballot.

We have a good opportunity to begin to deal with the various tendencies and their maneuvers. Spock was asked by P&FP in California if he was available to be candidate and this is already causing problems for them because he laid down an ultimatum to them which they can't agree to. The Black Panther Party wants them to run Huey Newton and threatens to split with P&FP. Electoral law in California making it extremely difficult for them to proceed.

(See attached reports on local third party movements).

New York Third Party Conference Report

by Les Evans

The success of the California "Peace and Freedom Party" in registering 105,000 voters to qualify for the ballot has stimulated like minded organizations to try their hand at a similar move in New York. This is a report on two meetings, organized primarily by the Independent Socialist Club (the Draperites), to put a "Peace and Freedom Party" on the New York ballot.

The New York third party-third ticket effort is split and two separate organizations are trying to capture the anti-Johnson sentiment. The Peace and Freedom formation is dominated by the ISC and presents itself as the beginnings of a permanent third party with radical positions on the war in Vietnam and the black struggle, but carefully avoiding taking a stand on the system as a whole.

Their competitor is the National Conference for New Politics groups, which are dominated by the CP and aim at a one shot intervention in the 1968 elections for Johnson opponents, but have no intention of founding a permanent party organization.

As far as we can determine the ISC has no principled objection to working in the NCNP group, but the NCNP proposed to call a convention based on organizations that attended the NCNP convention in Chicago in September. Under that formula the ISC would have only a tiny delegation to the meeting and they were afraid, with good reason, of being swamped by the CP.

The Draperites chose instead to jump the gun and begin the formation of local "Peace and Freedom Party" clubs to increase their organizational weight, tabling the decision of whether to participate in the NCNP statewide meeting (now scheduled for May 1 or before), or to go it alone.

They began to line up prominent sponsors and called a press conference Feb. 1 where a number of independent peace and freedom types announced the new organization. Participants at the conference included author Paul Goodman; Dr. Francis Halpern, chairman of the San Diego Peace and Freedom Party; Mike Mac Donald, son of Dwight Mac Donald (who is a sponsor); Prof. Irving Sarnoff; Brendan Sexton, student body president at New York U.; and Stephanie Oursler, chairman of Community Action of the Social Service Employees Union.

Halpern made the main presentation. He said the organization favored immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, black power and self-determination for black people. He described the new "party" as "part of a larger group -- the peace and freedom movement that goes beyond electoral politics." He said he favored a decentralized structure with autonomous local committees and candidates chosen from "movement" organizers as opposed to big-name figures. He declared himself opposed to supporting any candidates of the Democratic Party.

Paul Goodman disputed Halpern, strongly arguing for support to liberal Democrats, especially in local campaigns where the PFP had no candidates.

Mike MacDonald declared, "We all like and admire Sen. McCarthy very much. I think most of us in this new party are going to be Democrats. But Sen. McCarthy has refused to really take a stand against Johnson."

Stephanie Oursler, a sympathizer of the ISC, declared, "Labor needs a new progressive third party. Labor has to reunite with the progressive elements in this country."

When asked whether or not this would be a socialist party, Halpern said, "Socialism is not one of our goals, but we are in favor of social change and we take a pragmatic view. It would not be surprising if after we were elected to power we nationalized some large industries."

Halpern distributed a brochure put out by the San Diego County Committee of the PFP. It called for U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, arguing that, "Once we have done so, we can re-establish our country's moral position in the world of free nations [sic]...."

The following evening, Feb. 2, there was a meeting called to begin forming local clubs by the "New York Peace and Freedom Party Organizing Committee" in downtown Manhattan. About 100 attended, mostly youth (as compared to the NCNP meeting the next night, which was about the same size but considerably older).

About half of those present seemed to be in the ISC. There were also small contingents from Spartacist, the Resistance, and various social democratic groups. There were approximately 15 people present as observers from the SWP, NCNP, and the Workers League (these are included in the total).

Francis Halpern gave the main report, on the California PFP. He said he expected the PFP would win 10-20 percent of the vote in states where it got on the ballot, and would defeat Johnson. He said that, "People can be involved not on the basis of a detailed program but on the basis of ethics and the badness of the Republican and Democratic parties."

Robertson spoke for the Spartacist League. He claimed that, "the Spartacist League was instrumental in setting up Peace and Freedom registration of longshoremens in California." He pledged support to the organization if it would declare itself for socialism and for a class break in American politics. He received little support and was baited by the audience.

The Workers League attacked the formation as petty bourgeois and spoke in favor of forming a "labor party."

A speaker for the Resistance said he thought participation in electoral politics amounted to certifying acceptance of the outcome of the election.

The sharpest debate took place over the question of relations with the National Conference for New Politics. The NCNP was attacked for not making a definitive break with the Democratic Party and planning only a "one shot" ticket instead of a continuing, "movement" based third party. NCNPer present responded that the question of a third party would not be determined for them until their statewide convention in the spring and that the split was artificial and not based on any real political differences.

The ISCers did not raise any political questions in the debate with the NCNP other than the third party-third ticket question. The "Peace and Freedom Party" was presented as the electoral arm of the antiwar and black power movements, which would deliberately correspond to the general political level of that amorphous "movement" and for that reason would not call for socialism or adopt a program more specific than "peace and freedom."

In private conversations afterward, the Draperites admitted that they were afraid of getting into the same organization with the CP, which would happen if they supported the NCNP grouping. Their optimum hope was to involve a majority of the radical youth in the new "party" which would be a vehicle for recruiting to their tendency. If swamped by the CP and the NCNP liberals their strategy is to then at that point begin to interject their "socialist" program to differentiate themselves from the CP, in the hope of making some membership gains before the whole thing is taken away from them.

Attachment No. 2 to PC Minutes, No. 9

NEW YORK THIRD TICKET CONFERENCE REPORT

held 2/2/68 at Henry Hudson Hotel

by Jon Britton

The invitational letter sent out for this meeting was signed by Carlos Russell, Karl Bernhard, and Laird Cummings. The meeting was billed as a "preparatory conference for a N.Y. State independent convention." Russell is on the national board of NCNP. Cummings identified himself as chairman of the New York City New Politics organization. Bernhard is acting chairman of Long Island United for Peace. Russell was not present because, according to Cummings, he had gone out to California to help straighten out some problems with the Black Panther Party.

It was apparent from the physical arrangements made for the conference that the organizers expected only about 40 people to attend. Each organization wishing to participate was supposed to have only one delegate. Although 43 organizations registered at the conference many additional people attended as observers. The total attendance was about 100, the big majority in the over 30 age category.

The conference was opened by Laird Cummings who then turned the chair over to Steve Levinski. Levinski had served as Northeast Regional Coordinator for the NCNP prior to the Chicago convention. Judy Levy from LEMPA (Lower Eastside Mobilization for Peace Action) served as secretary.

The first item on the agenda consisted of everyone present introducing themselves and one person from each organization or locality giving a brief report on their recent activities.

The organizations with the largest contingents were United For Peace of Long Island (15-20), Organizing Committee for a Peace and Freedom Party [which had been initiated two days before by the Draperites] (9), and LEMPA (8-10). The CP had an open delegation of four headed by Gil Green plus a reporter from The Worker. Other organizations (mostly paper) represented were: SE Queens New Politics, Bronx New Politics, Puerto Ricans for New Politics, the N.Y. Medical Committee, Washington Heights New Politics, W. Side CIPA, Citizens of Conscience (Wash. Hts.), Rochester Voters for Peace, Astoria CIPA, Corona-E. Elmhurst-Jackson Hts. Area Peace Council, Chelsea New Politics, Lower Eastside New Politics, Independent Voters Associates (Wash. Hts.), Independent Women's Action for Peace, and N.Y. Resistance.

The composition of the conference excluding the Draperites was overwhelmingly CP and old Guardian type progressives. There were no open young CPers present and no official participation by the DuBois Clubs. There were only 4 or 5 blacks present but no one representing SNCC, CORE or any other nationalist organizations. There were 10-12 people present from Upstate New York.

During the organizational reports Stephanie Oursler tried to explain the purpose and perspective of the Organizing Committee for a Peace and Freedom Party but was cut off after a few minutes on the grounds that her remarks were inappropriate under this section of the agenda. She stressed that the perspective of the OCPFP was a permanent third party totally separate from the Democratic and Republican Parties that had the objective of winning political power in this country. She argued that the third ticket forces were simply oriented toward pressuring the Democratic Party rather than decisively breaking with it. Her remarks and subsequent statements by the Draperites did not take up the war in Vietnam or the black struggle.

The next point on the agenda consisted of reports on third ticket-third party efforts in California, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New Jersey and the Southern states.

The California report was given by Dr. Francis Halpern, chairman of the San Diego County Committee of the Peace and Freedom Party. He reported that two statewide meetings had been held in California since the first of the year in preparation for a state convention which is now planned for the weekend of the 16th or 23rd of March in Richmond. He explained that the perspective in California was the formation of a permanent third party which would engage in year round radical political activity aimed at mobilizing people to "change the system."

According to Halpern, the California PFP was actively encouraging people in other areas of the country to form similar organizations (although he wasn't specific about what was being done along this line). He said there was a realistic possibility of capturing 10-15% of the vote in the presidential election thereby denying Johnson re-election and dramatizing the power of the peace and freedom movement.

He ended by saying there were differences on who should be the national candidates but that many PFPers favored nominating a young "unknown" from the movement, maybe even someone too young to fulfill the constitutional age requirements to show their "disdain" for the system. He said such a candidate could become a national celebrity overnight and made an analogy to Stokely Carmichael who, he said, was unknown until elected chairman of SNCC.

Frank Goldsmith, formerly from Pittsburg and now living in New York, gave the Pennsylvania report. He described the New Politics Conference recently held in Harrisburg. He said a "third ticket caucus" at the conference won unanimous support for its proposals which were that there be a third ticket on the ballot in Pennsylvania and that Gregory and Spock be the candidates pending a national third ticket convention. He said that no new organization or structure had been set up in Pennsylvania but that preparations were going forward through existing organizations for the petitioning campaign. He didn't say which organizations.



The report on Michigan, New Jersey and the Southern states was given by Steve Levinski on the basis of "telephone conversations."

He said that up until very recently the only people in Michigan actively organizing for a third ticket was a New Politics group in Ann Arbor. They have just set up a statewide steering committee and are trying to get groups organized in other parts of the state. As of three weeks ago they had collected about 2,000 signatures on independent nominating petitions, all in Ann Arbor. They haven't yet chosen any candidates but the general feeling is that any candidate should be more radical than King. They are planning to hold a state convention in Detroit February 17 to develop a platform and choose candidates. They have chosen the name, New Politics Party.

Levinski reported that in New Jersey most New Politics people were working for McCarthy. But, he pointed out, because the legal requirements for getting on the ballot were easy a third ticket effort would not seriously detract from the pro-McCarthy activities. And so approval had been given by N.J. New Politics forces to a third ticket petitioning campaign.

Levinski's Southern report was based on a phone conversation with Hosea Williams of the SCLC in Atlanta. According to Levinski, Williams strongly favors a third ticket and has already contacted 60 "key people" from 12 Southern states. Money is now being raised for a meeting of these 60 people. No date has been set. After this meeting these "key people" will then go back to their local areas and hold meetings in preparation for a Southwide convention to adopt a platform and choose candidates.

Levinski reported that Williams and his "key people" were leaning toward King as the presidential candidate, or, if King doesn't run, Rev. Abernathy. They don't rule out the possibility of King running. King has indicated that either McCarthy or Rockefeller would be acceptable to him but is now beginning to suspect that neither of them will be nominated.

Next on the agenda was a report by John Abt, the CP lawyer, on the legal requirements for getting on the ballot in New York state. He used his report to undercut the Draperites by explaining that it was legally impossible to get a third party on the ballot this year, only a third ticket. He based this on the fact that in New York a new party can only become legally recognized by running for governor and getting at least 50,000 votes and there won't be an election for governor until 1970. Abt also explained that anyone signing an SWP petition could not sign a third ticket petition. This was the only time the SWP campaign was mentioned in the formal discussion.

After Abt's report the floor was open for general discussion. This discussion which was very brief again revolved around the third ticket vs. third party question. The line of the CPers and progressives was that there was really no difference in perspective. They were for the building of a permanent independent political movement

too. Also, supporters of a third ticket and supporters of a third party would have to go through exactly the same legal procedure for getting on the ballot this year and so there was no basis for splitting.

The general discussion was cut off rather quickly by a motion by Paul Richter of Lower Eastside New Politics to move on to the next point on the agenda: the convention. This was passed.

A motion was then made by John Abt that a convention be held no later than May 1 and that all decisions relating to organizing the convention be referred to a "convention arrangements committee" made up of one representative from each organization participating at this conference and having the power to add additional representatives.

During the discussion of this motion Francis Halpern from the California PFP made a veiled attack against the CP by saying that "certain people" had split away at the San Luis Obispo meeting held after the New Politics Convention in Chicago and then had actively sabotaged the re-registration campaign. He went on to attack the motion calling for a N.Y. convention as a top-down manipulative procedure and counterposing the building of a grassroots base before any convention is called.

A number of people indignantly replied that they were doing grassroots organizing work and received general applause. Abt's motion was passed.

Then an "organizing committee" of 11 or 12 people was elected whose responsibility was to organize a meeting of the arrangements committee in central New York and ensure that additional representatives participate in that meeting so as to broaden the third ticket effort. Gil Green of the CP suggested that a place on the organizing committee be left open for a representative of the Peace and Freedom Party Organizing Committee. This was accepted.

The final motion made and passed called for the convention to nominate a third ticket including at least candidates for president, vice-president, and senator.

The conference then adjourned.