

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 2, August 30, 1971

Present: Boehm, Breitman, Camejo, Dobbs, A. Hansen, Jenness,
Jones, Lovell, Novack, Sheppard

Visitors: Benson, Bolduc, Jon Britton, Evans, Roberts

Chairman: Dobbs

AGENDA: 1. Draft Political Committee Statement on
Wage Freeze

I. DRAFT POLITICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON WAGE FREEZE

Sheppard reported. (see attached)

Discussion.

Motion: To adopt the draft statement.

Carried.

Bolduc reported on Militant bundle sales.

Discussion.

Meeting adjourned.

14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014
August 30, 1971

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE


Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a copy of a motion adopted by the Political Committee at its meeting of August 30, 1971.

The purpose of this motion is to provide initial guidelines for party activity in relation to the wage freeze. Please ensure that it is read to the branch.

The National Office should be kept informed on the progress of the propaganda campaign outlined in the motion. Information on the sales of the paper to workers and reports from comrades in unions on their local situation should be included. In addition, The Militant should be sent articles on local reactions to the wage freeze, price increases, etc., as the effects of the freeze begin to be felt.

Comradely,


Barry Sheppard

POLITICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT

1. The Political Resolution adopted by the party convention outlined the factors inherent in the world economic situation that are impelling the ruling class to seek to lower the standard of living of the workers. It pointed out that, in the context of a continuation of the Vietnam war, "only two basic options are left to the ruling class if inflation is to be a successful tool to hold hold down the American working class's real share of the national product: move toward a national 'incomes policy,' that is, a national wage-control scheme that would give the government authority to hold down wage gains aimed at catching up with the inflationary bite; or precipitate a recession deep enough to result in a large enough increase in the industrial reserve army to drive down these wage demands." The resolution indicated that the Nixon administration had at first leaned toward relying on the recession (which it had helped precipitate), but that this had not worked, and was not likely to work unless Nixon permitted the recession to deepen to a point where massive unemployment could trigger a sharp political reaction by the working class.

The Nixon administration decided to switch tactics. It opted for the first alternative outlined in the Political Resolution, an "incomes policy." The resolution pointed out that "an attempt to impose an 'incomes policy' could provoke a major reaction by the working class, one taking place in the framework of the general political radicalization that has been developing in the country."

Nixon's wage-freeze decree aims at lowering the real wages of the workers. In order to accomplish this objective, the capitalist class is using the centralized power of the capitalist government to attempt to cripple the fighting power of the unions and strengthen the hands of the bosses.

2. The 90-day wage freeze is only the initial move by the capitalist government. Nothing will be solved within 90 days, and the government has already indicated that some form of wage controls will extend beyond the 90-day period. The government hopes to get the union bureaucracy lined up in support of some form of wage controls, under the cover of some "equality of sacrifice" formula. Despite its protestations, the bureaucracy is incapable of waging an effective fight against the wage freeze and is already tending to capitulate under pressure from the government.

3. This combination of intensified attack on the standard of living of the working class and the incapacity of the union bureaucracy, throws the crisis of leadership of the working class into sharp focus. This will create new receptivity to class struggle concepts among the workers, which will open up greater opportunities for us to reach them with our ideas than any time since 1948.

4. To effectively take advantage of this situation, we project a propaganda campaign around a class struggle program for labor to fight the wage freeze. The central axis of this campaign is the call for a congress of labor, to mobilize the working class for struggle to counter this offensive of big

business. We project that such a congress of labor would not only be representative of every section of the union movement but be broadly representative of the unorganized workers as well. It should include representatives of the oppressed nationalities, women and other allies of labor engaged in social struggle.

The program we pose for such a congress of labor concentrates on the following points: 1) Against any form of wage controls. 2) The escalator clause in all contracts to protect workers' wages from inflation. 3) The sliding scale of hours to fight unemployment. An immediate change in the hours and wages law to institute the 30-hour week with no reduction in pay. 4) Defense of the unconditional right to strike; elimination of all laws restricting the right to strike, and all laws undermining the independence of the unions. 5) Bring all the troops home from Indochina now. Take the billions now spent for war and use them to meet pressing social needs at home. 6) Launch a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

In the specific context of the wage freeze, such a program can become the basis for the formation of a class struggle left wing in the unions. In the process of development of such a left wing, it will have to take a positive attitude towards the struggles, demands and movements of the oppressed nationalities, women and other allies of labor. This initiative is necessary to lay the basis for the mobilization of the entire class including its most oppressed sectors, as well as all the allies of the working class, in joint struggle against the capitalist class.

5. In the course of our propaganda campaign to form a class struggle left wing in the unions we will experience increased opportunities to develop political contacts among the workers. This in turn requires special attention to prospects for winning worker recruits to the party.

6. This propaganda campaign will center of three areas:

1) A major effort to reach workers with The Militant through sales at factories and other places where workers congregate. Special effort should be made to sell subscriptions to workers as part of the sub campaign.

2) Every effort should be made to get speaking engagements for the national and local candidates of the party before union meetings, outside of factories, etc.

3) Comrades in unions, in addition to the above, should raise our programmatic proposals in union meetings, on the job, etc. The national office should be kept closely informed of the mood in the unions, the reception to our ideas, etc., and stories should be written for The Militant as part of its campaign on this topic.

7. We must utilize to the maximum our position as the best builders of the antiwar movement to help it take full advantage of the new opportunities this attack on the working class opens for winning increased labor support for the antiwar forces. War spending is the single most important cause of inflation. A key component of the fight against high prices and the wage freeze is the fight against the war. This fact can be utilized

to reach new layers of the working class and involve them in antiwar actions -- immediately the November 6 action.

The student wing of the antiwar movement should be mobilized to utilize these events and their lessons to reach out to broader layers of the working class to join the November 6 action.