

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, No. 55, April 13, 1973

Present: Barnes, Britton, A. Hansen, J. Hansen, Jenness,
Jones, Lovell, Morrison, Rose, Shaw, Stone

Consultative: Dobbs, Kerry

Visitors: L. Jenness, Reissner, Scott, Seigle

Chair: Stone

AGENDA: 1. May 5 Demonstrations
2. World Movement

1. MAY 5 DEMONSTRATIONS

Jenness reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report (see attached letter).

Carried.

2. WORLD MOVEMENT

Barnes reported that at its April meeting the United Secretariat unanimously decided to poll the IEC members proposing postponement of the World Congress previously scheduled for the end of this summer. There were two proposed new dates for the World Congress. A majority of the United Secretariat proposed Christmas and a minority proposed Easter. Attached is the communication sent to the leaderships of the sections and fraternal sympathizing groups on this.

Discussion

Meeting adjourned.

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

April 14, 1973

TO ALL BRANCH ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

The Political Committee met April 13 to discuss the decision of the National Consumers' Congress to call the May 5 National Day of Protests Against High Food Prices. The PC voted to approve a report calling for active support to, and participation in, the May 5 activities. The May 5 actions can help to provide a national focus to the widespread anger at high prices dramatically expressed in the April 1-7 meat boycott and can be a significant step forward in the fight against inflation.

Through building May 5 contact can be made with the ad-hoc committees and groups which grew up out of the April 1-7 meat boycott. Individual boycott activists and anti-inflation groups can be brought together to set plans and start organizing demonstrations and rallies for May 5. Because there is no structure or staff of the National Consumers' Congress, May 5 organizing committees will have to be established on an ad-hoc basis in local areas. Since there are only three weeks to May 5, such ad-hoc committees will have to meet right away.

As indicated in the articles in the April 20 Militant, active participation in the May 5 plans should be encouraged on the part of all organizations who have a stake in the fight against inflation. Endorsement and support should be sought from trade unions, and from groups opposing Nixon's cutbacks in education, child care and other social services. Antiwar groups and activists should be encouraged to participate, linking the war and war spending to inflation. Student groups and campus activists should throw themselves into the May 5 activities, mobilizing students to spread the word on May 5 on campus, in the communities, at workplaces, shopping centers, etc. Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican organizations, women's organizations, etc., should also be urged to support the actions.

May 5 supporters should be encouraged to make every effort to win support from the trade unions, and to involve the unions in this fight. In some union locals it may be possible to establish May 5 committees. Such involvement can add the strength and power which can make it possible for the fight against runaway prices to deepen and expand. By linking up with the actions against high prices, the unions can greatly strengthen their hand in the upcoming rounds of bargaining, and back up their demands for wage increases and reinforced escalator clauses. Initial leaflets signed by a few union officials or locals can be used to get the ball rolling and get broader endorsement for May 5.

The Communist Party is supporting the May 5 protests. (See the April 13 Daily World.) A Bay Area conference, originally called to oppose budget cutbacks, in which the CP is heavily involved, is taking place this weekend (April 14-15). Supporters of the May 5 actions will be attending, urging the conference to endorse the protests. Further information on the results of this conference will be sent out as soon as possible.

Enclosed is a letter sent out from the YSA national office, and a copy of the resolution adopted by the National Consumers' Congress calling for the May 5 protests.

Reports on May 5 activities, planning meetings, etc., should be sent into the national office. (The April 13 Daily World story refers to a meeting set for May 12 in Chicago. Any information on this meeting available in your area should also be sent in.)

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lew Jones".

Lew Jones
SWP National Office

from the Daily World, April 13, 1973

BOYCOTTERS SET MAY 5 AS PRICE PROTEST DAY

Boycott Leaders Form a Price Rollback Body

By Tim Wheeler

WASHINGTON, April 12 -- More than 300 meat boycott leaders, amid stormy debate at a conference here yesterday, scorned President Nixon's so-called meat price ceilings and formed the National Consumers Congress to lead a "militant operation price rollback." They picked Saturday, May 5 as the date for a nationwide protest action against runaway price inflation, and voted to meet again in Chicago May 12 to chart even more massive protests.

The crowd applauded thunderously in support of a motion demanding the resignation of Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz and vowed to continue their meat boycott two days each week -- Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The crowd also voted down overwhelmingly motions to support a price rollback to the Jan. 10, 1973, Phase 2 price level, on the grounds that this average 10 percent price cut was too little.

From many states

In the huge hearing room of the House Rayburn office building were Black and white boycott organizers from California, Utah, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, Missouri, Georgia, Illinois, Florida, New York, Maryland and Virginia.

A spokesman for small farmers from Kansas addressed the meeting, as did the Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen Union vice president Leon Schachter. Women inflation fighters from New York's District 37, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, were here in force.

Calls for April 18 action

Florence Rice, executive director, Harlem Consumer Education Council, a black woman boycott leader, urged unity with small farmers and added, "Before it's all over, we'll all be on welfare and then you will know what going without meat is all about."

She announced a demonstration at the White House April 18 to demand a price rollback.

Mrs. Alberta Slavin, a St. Louis housewife, blasted Nixon's meat price ceilings as a scheme to pacify and disperse the boycott movement.

Mrs. Jose Alfaro, of Logan, Utah, declared, "Why should we buy President Nixon's ceiling? We should set up our own ceiling. A lot of politicians are waiting for this movement to blow over but we are here to stay and we will prevail."

Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal (D-NY) called the meeting, but his attempt to keep tight control of it failed, when the meeting tabled his resolution in support of the Cotter Amendment to HR 6168, the Economic Stabilization Act renewal bill.

The Cotter Amendment would roll prices back to the Jan. 10, 1973, level of Phase 2 -- or about 10 percent.

Mrs. Lucille Whitley, a Black woman and a member of District

37's Operation Price Watchdog Committee, drew an ovation when she declared, "You have all sweated for this movement. You have given of your time to organize this boycott. Why settle for this? Let's get it done and get what we want."

Vacillations exposed

Rosenthal's attempt to push through the Cotter Amendment exposed the vacillations of the liberals in Congress.

Betty Furness, New York City Commission of Consumer Affairs, caused an uproar by questioning the credentials of those who opposed Rosenthal's maneuver.

This brought an angry roar from the crowd. The meeting was recessed, and when it reconvened, it overwhelmingly tabled Rosenthal's motion.

Small farmer heard

Lin Heiller, of Melvin, Iowa, a small farmer, told the crowd, "I don't like it when a big corporation is formed by the government to compete against me. If the government knocks out the small farmer and the corporates take over, look out for the prices. Hamburger will go skyhigh. I think we should have more family farms.

Mary Lou Wolfe, of Citizens Action Program in Chicago and a mother of nine, urged "direct action" against giant corporations like Swift, Armour and other meat packers as well as against food chains. Her group of over 4,000 in the Chicago area has singled out Jewel Food Stores as the target of a total boycott. These stores, she said, are owned by Darrell Perkins who is also chairman of Nixon's Task Force on the Food Industry.

Rose West, of Denver, who organized the 1966 Denver boycott, won a standing ovation when she presented petitions signed by more than 300,000 shoppers demanding an investigation of price gouging.

A woman from Dade County, Fla. won an ovation when she produced petitions signed by 25,000 in Miami protesting price gouging.

She told the throng that the stream of giant "agrobusiness and agrocombines" to create an artificial scarcity of meat and other produce must be broken. All subsidies to these big corporation farms not to produce must be lifted, she declared, and small farmers should be subsidized instead to encourage greater production.