

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, No. 25, May 26, 1972

Present: Breitman, Britton, Camejo, A. Hansen, J. Hansen,
Horowitz, Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Morrison, Sheppard,
Stone

Consultative: Dobbs

Visitors: Reissner, Scott, Seigle

Chairman: J. Hansen

AGENDA: 1. Antiwar Report
2. Laws on Marijuana
3. Expansion of the Paper
4. Administrative Committee Report

1. ANTIWAR REPORT

Reissner reported.

Discussion

2. LAWS ON MARIJUANA

Seigle reported (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To support the repeal of laws restricting the possession
and sale of marijuana.

Carried.

3. EXPANSION OF THE PAPER

Jenness reported on plans to expand the paper this summer to
28 pages to include more international coverage.

Discussion

4. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Sheppard reported.

Discussion

Meeting adjourned.

REPORT TO POLITICAL COMMITTEE ON LAWS ON MARIJUANA

by Larry Seigle

May 26, 1972

(1) The purpose of this report is to develop a public position for the SWP with respect to the laws on marijuana. Although many candidates and other party spokespeople have expressed their views in public when asked about this, the party has never taken a position on this question.

The issue is posed concretely by the California Marijuana Initiative, an attempt to place a proposition on the California November ballot which would, if adopted, eliminate all criminal penalties for persons over 18 for the "planting, cultivating, harvesting, drying, processing, otherwise preparing, transporting or processing marijuana for personal use, or by reason of that use."

(2) In discussing this question, we should be clear that there are two totally separate questions that we are not raising. (1) We are not discussing our security policy which makes use of marijuana incompatible with membership in the SWP. And (2) we are not discussing at this time the party's position on hard drugs. The traffic in hard drugs is a major social question because of the destructive and demoralizing effects of hard drugs in the ghettos and barrios. This issue is totally distinct from the question of the legalization of marijuana.

(3) According to nearly unanimous medical evidence, marijuana is no more harmful than tobacco or alcohol. This medical evidence has emerged despite consistent attempts to portray marijuana as a sinister and dangerous drug.

This issue has emerged in the context of the youth radicalization and the deepening rejection by young people of the right of the capitalist government to legislate moral questions and to impose by force of law a moral standard.

A large number of young people smoke marijuana and they are aware of the medical evidence which shows that they are no worse off than their friends or parents who smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol. Therefore it is clear to them that making marijuana illegal is an attempt to impose on them moral standards and values that they reject, and they do not accept the right of the government to do that.

(4) This question does become more directly a political issue when the laws are used as the basis for prosecution. As is often the case when there is such massive and open defiance of a law as there is with marijuana, the police apparatus engages in selective prosecution, very often with political persecution their real objective.

Black activists, student radicals, GI organizers -- all have been victimized, some of them quite harshly, on the basis of the marijuana laws.

(5) For these reasons the SWP should call for the repeal of all laws restricting the possession or distribution of marijuana. Specifically we should support the California Marijuana Initiative, while pointing out that it is inadequate in not making it legal to sell marijuana.

(6) In passing this motion at this time, we should make it clear that we are neither proposing nor implying that there should be any increase in our propaganda on this question, nor that the issue itself is assuming major political importance.

We must also make sure that there is no confusion whatsoever on our security policy. Stating our public attitude on these laws should be coupled with re-emphasizing for the party the reasons for our security policy, which is in no way affected by our public stance.