

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, No. 27, June 14, 1972

Present: Breitman, Britton, Camejo, A. Hansen, Horowitz,
D. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Rose, Shaw, Sheppard,
Stone

Consultative: Dobbs, Kerry, Novack

Visitors: Hawkins, L. Jenness, Miah, Scott, Seigle, White

Chairman: D. Jenness

AGENDA: 1. African Liberation Day
2. Latin America
3. Chicago Railroad Fraction
4. Administrative Committee Report
5. Stalinists

1. AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY

Hawkins reported (see attached).

Discussion

2. LATIN AMERICA TOUR

L. Jenness and Shaw reported.

Discussion

3. CHICAGO RAILROAD FRACTION

Lovell reported.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Scott reported on Socialist Activists and Educational Conference.

Motion: To request a voluntary assessment from each party member
of \$8.00 to help cover expenses.

Discussion

Carried.

Sheppard reported on recommendation of Philadelphia branch to
extend critical support to the campaign of Tony Monteiro for
Congress, who is running as a Communist Party candidate.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Philadelphia
branch to extend critical support to the campaign of Tony Mon-
teiro for Congress, who is running as a Communist Party
candidate.

Discussion

Carried.

Seigle and Jones reported on petitioning in Pennsylvania to
achieve ballot status for Jenness and Pulley.

Sheppard reported on the request of the Providence,
Rhode Island YSA local to run YSA member Patrick DeTemple for
U.S. Senator on the Socialist Workers Party ticket.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, No. 27, June 14, 1972 (continued)

Motion: To grant permission to the Providence, Rhode Island YSA local to run YSA member Patrick DeTemple for U.S. Senator on the Socialist Workers Party ticket.

Discussion

Carried.

Sheppard reported on youth plenum.

Motion: To delegate Jones and Stone as Political Committee representatives to the youth plenum.

Carried.

5. STALINISTS

Sheppard reported.

Discussion

Meeting adjourned.

[The following excerpts from the report and discussion of the African Liberation Day demonstrations have not been edited by the participants.]

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John Hawkins

First I want to go over some statistics on the demonstrations and some statistics from our intervention, just to refresh comrades' memories on the thing. There were 20,000 - 25,000 marchers in the demonstration in Washington, D.C., for African Liberation Day. In San Francisco, estimates range from 3,000 - 5,000, and in some places, the estimate is as high as 10,000, published in the African World. In Toronto, our comrades estimated that about 10,000 people demonstrated that day. In Antigua and Dominica, police estimates were 5,000 and 8,000 people, which is a very impressive total number of people who marched that day in support of the African liberation struggles.

Sales were good and indicated the political nature of the people in attendance at the demonstrations. In Washington, D.C., we sold 205 copies of the ISR with a special sale we were carrying out for 25 cents. It was a special issue with Joe Johnson's article on the prisons. And we sold over 300 copies of The Militant at the demonstration and over \$190 worth of Pathfinder literature. In San Francisco, with a much smaller force of comrades to carry out the sales, they sold over 100 Militants and over \$250 worth of Pathfinder literature. We distributed a lot of campaign platforms, a lot of Black struggle brochures and got 64 endorsers for the campaign in D.C. I don't know exactly how many endorsers we got in San Francisco. Combine this with the 410 endorsers that were gotten by the Afro-American team that was out for three weeks helping to build this demonstration as well as carry out campaign work, it's quite an impressive number of endorsers that we got out of our work around this demonstration.

The demonstrations themselves were significant mainly because it opens up a whole new front of action here in the United States against the foreign policy of this government. It was the first successful national action called by any Black nationalist organization. And it was a united front of these organizations which carried it out. It sort of paves the way also for continued actions around the whole issue of Africa. It points the way toward united front actions of this sort around other issues. People who put out African World have pointed out in one of their editorials that this same sort of united front tactic should be used in building actions around other issues.

The demonstration itself has indicated the depth within the Black community of Pan-Africanist and nationalist sentiment. And it confirmed our analysis of the deepening nationalism within the Black community. One of the things that surprised me was the large turnout for these demonstrations, given the way they were built, because the

committees weren't organized in the fashion that we would organize an antiwar demonstration. This indicates that there is a great sentiment within the Black community of support for Africa and that Pan-Africanism is gaining a whole new layer of supporters within the Black community.

I think another thing that demonstration indicates, the way it was consciously carried out, is the fact that the antiwar movement has had a certain amount of impact within the Black community. That is, it has a certain amount of impact upon a certain layer of activists. People saw politically the linkup between the African liberation struggles and the war in Vietnam. There were slogans that were carried on the demonstrations, speakers at the demonstrations, signs that were carried, slogans that were chanted and news releases that were put out by the coordinating committee, that linked up the struggle in Africa with the struggle of the Vietnamese people. Organizationally, the demonstration was carried out in much the same fashion. The organizers of the demonstration saw the need to build a single-issue mass action coalition and formation in order to carry out this demonstration. I think that we can safely say that the fact that the African Liberation Day demonstration occurred opens up the possibility for explaining to a whole layer of Black youth the necessity of struggling against the war in Vietnam also. Just the fact that people mobilized around defending Africa opens that up to us.

The demonstration was significant, especially for us, for a couple of reasons. It was an example of our strategy of mass action that we can point to, that is, we can use this whole demonstration in pointing out to people the need to build mass demonstrations. It's something that we can use concretely in our campaigns and other propaganda work to begin to point out the necessity of building mass actions around our perspective, our transitional program for Black liberation, around the concrete needs of Black people in this country. The composition of the demonstration was significant for us also in that it confirmed our whole orientation towards the youth and college students in particular. Most of the people who actually did the organizing for this demonstration were students from the campuses. These coalitions, where they functioned to any extent in an effective manner, were mainly made up of college students who went out and organized the demonstration from their campuses, organized their campuses to participate in the demonstration, used the facilities of the university and the budgets they had to get buses to go to the demonstration. In addition, the main bulk of the people who were there were young.

I think that the African Liberation Day demonstrations, while they're not yet a sustained campaign of mass action -- and what happens now is sort of up in the air -- it does open up the possibility for further mass actions growing up around an end to U.S. involvement in Africa. Such development would help to further politicize the Black community and draw new layers of youth into action. It could provide us with the opportunity to become involved in the organizing and building of such a movement and, consequently, it would provide us with an avenue for recruitment of young Black

activists.

I just want to point out some of the things about these coalitions and what they were like and how the demonstration got built by the other forces which were involved in it. In general, places where it was built, the people who were mainly involved in it were students. The places where the demonstration building went best were New York, Los Angeles, Berkeley-Oakland, Cleveland and in Minneapolis, where we have a Black comrade, a bus was sent to the Washington, D.C., demonstration site. And in Chicago, where students were participating in organizing the demonstration, they sent a couple of buses to the demonstration. In those areas, where it was mainly an open coalition of forces building the demonstration, we were able to intervene and we were able to have some impact on the course of things. That is, in New York, B.R. Washington was able to become head of one of the committees to build the demonstration, I think he was head of the community organizing committee. He organized people to go out on mass leafletting brigades, to post up posters around the community. In Los Angeles, our comrade attended the meetings of the coalition, but couldn't be that active in it. In Berkeley, they asked our comrades to speak as representatives of the coalition at meetings to get people to attend the demonstration. The team that we sent out, in the several places that they visited, they were told by the people on the campus that they were the most active builders of these demonstrations where they went. They went to several campuses, and actually functioned as a part of the coalition to build the demonstration in New Orleans, and helped them build several build-up actions for the demonstration. In these places where there were student coalitions organizing the demonstration, our comrades were able to get involved in it and able to build it.

In Philadelphia, it was some Black economic development organization and CORE that built it and in Detroit there was the Pan-African Congress that built it, that mainly wanted to sit on it and make it their pet project. In those areas, it was very difficult for our comrades to become involved in building the demonstrations.

Other than the nature of the coalitions in the local areas, there are some other factors that came into play as far as our work in building for the demonstrations was concerned. That is, the demonstrations -- the building for them -- came in the middle of the antiwar upsurge. The attention of the branches was correctly geared into building a response to that. To begin with, we had a small number of Black comrades and this experience, to a certain extent, was new to the comrades. That is, comrades have often been excluded from any sort of activities that go on.

The fact that these coalitions were organized in a rather unorthodox fashion was something that most comrades noticed. I think that in some areas, comrades tended to be a little bit sectarian about that. But, in general, I think the whole experience was a good one and that, through it, we have a better feel for forces that are around in the Black community in many areas, we have working relations with some activists who are interested in mass action, and we've begun to establish ourselves as activists within the Black liberation struggle.

The only one of our opponents that was actually involved in building the demonstrations was the CP and the YWLL. In a couple of places, they were the actual organizers of the demonstration -- two campuses in Ohio. At these two campuses in Ohio they were the ones who built the demonstrations. The CP's intervention at the demonstration was very small. They had a small literature table and several people selling the Daily World. They didn't pass out any of their campaign literature. In the conference that was held before the demonstration, called by the Congressional Black Caucus, there were several members of the YWLL and the CP participating as well as one CPer giving a presentation at that conference. This conference was called by the Congressional Black Caucus on Africa the two days preceding the demonstration. I think, generally, that their whole orientation toward this thing is going to be much the same as it is in the antiwar movement, that is, trying to subordinate the whole thing to some Democratic Party candidate. This conference that was called by the CDC was generally along those lines, although they had it the African-American National Conference on Africa. Their whole main idea behind calling this was to gain a stamp of approval for some legislation that they're trying to push through in Congress right now. They're probably going to pose this more and more as an alternative to mass action. They didn't want to build this into a mass conference, or any sort of a decision-making conference, although they publicized it as such. Tony Thomas talked to one of the organizers of it and asked them why they did that. They said that they wanted to make sure that it was manageable. They remember what happened at Gary, it seems. They charged \$25 for students to attend and \$30 for any non-students to attend, in order to keep it so they could manage the whole thing.

The question of what the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee is going to do is sort of up in the air. The objective basis for continued actions around the issue is there: the whole upturn the whole African liberation struggle is going through is bound to have some impact on this country and people are going to be willing to move on it. The demonstration just indicates the fact that there is sympathy there and people have begun to make plans for some sort of continued action. They've announced plans for a May '73 African Liberation Day demonstration, for a week of solidarity with Mozambique in February of next year. The forces that are involved in this committee are very divergent forces. For instance, there's the Congressional Black Caucus and their role is not going to be one of promoting mass actions around this issue most likely. The reformist nationalists -- Baraka and forces of that sort -- are probably going to tend to want to gear into election campaigning more in the fall than demonstrations of this sort. Which leaves, basically, the forces around the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) that put out African World, the other students who organized for the demonstration and Owusi Sadauki, who commands a great deal of respect because of his role in building the demonstration. Those forces, along with ourselves, are probably going to be the ones who want to continue building some type of continuing action around this in the fall. They're going to be having a steering committee meeting of the African Liberation Day committee on June 21, in order to decide on further actions for the fall.

Malik Miah

I just want to make a couple of observations on the action itself. One, this action was built entirely by the Black press in the Black community. One reason you didn't see much material in the white bourgeois press was because the organizers consciously went out and built the actions through Black community papers, Black radio stations and so forth. That's quite significant in that it got 25-30,000 Black people out. They made it very clear that they consciously did this. As a matter of fact, I was down in Florida the week before the action and we happened to be listening to a Black radio station and they were announcing the demonstration and urging people to go. I'm sure that was the case all across the country. That's very significant in itself, the way the demonstration was built. As well, a lot of support actions were built beforehand, not organized directly by the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee, but by independent groups that just popped up on different campuses across the country. A lot of groups in the South -- students had organized on the question of the different separate regimes in Africa, the chrome shipments in Louisiana. There was a big demonstration of 2,000 students at Harvard on the question of Guld Oil in the middle of April. It was quite significant. A number of little actions like this occurred which we weren't all aware of, but they did happen as part of the building of the African Liberation Day activity. More than likely, that will continue, whatever the African Liberation Day committee does on a national basis. That is, Black students and Black groups across the country will probably continue to show solidarity with the African liberation struggle.

One of the important things about the demonstration which was raised which is very important for us, as well as what the Gary convention raised previously, it raised a number of very important questions for the Black movement. One, the question of mass action, which is one of the most important questions. The idea that Blacks have to go out and struggle in the streets and put pressure on the government to gain any demands they're fighting for. That whole question was thrown out in this demonstration and everyone who participated in the demonstration understood that the solidarity and organization at the demonstration was quite high. People saw that by organizing in that manner, they could have some effect. They particularly learned this lesson from the antiwar movement, seeing that street demonstrations had occurred in the past. One thing we want to continue to educate on is the question of mass action for the Black movement, that most Blacks have not participated in the antiwar movement, they have not participated in any mass demonstrations and they don't understand the importance of continuing to do so. We can play that vital role with our election campaign and educating around that question.

Another important thing that was thrown out in the demonstration was the question of united fronts in building coalitions, which that demonstration was -- a coalition with over 50 Black organizations and many prominent individuals. No Black groups were excluded from participating and supporting the demonstration. That's the type of organization that we want to support and continue to build committees like that on campus, going out and getting sup-

porters and committees to build actions, not just around the question of Africa, but also on the question of other issues that arise in the Black community, other struggles that occur, and how you should organize around other issues.

George Breitman

From John's report, I gather that the majority of the organizers of this demonstration were from the campus. I thought I gathered, but I'm not sure, that he thinks a majority of those who participated were not? Or was there a distinction in this respect?

John Hawkins

No, the majority of people who took part in the demonstration were young people, probably students from the campuses and the high schools. A majority of the organizers on a local scale, where the thing really got organized, were college students. That isn't reflected, though, in the makeup of the steering committee that called the demonstration. The steering committee consists of 50 individuals from organizations that are mainly adult organizations, and just individuals like members of the Congressional Black Caucus, Huey Newton, Angela Davis and people who are fairly well-known from the Black struggle. The people who actually built the demonstration were mainly from SOBU and other Black student organizations around the country. And the main bulk of participants were students, too.

George Breitman

What is your impression about the proportion of our Black comrades who are on the campus, both party and youth?

John Hawkins

I don't know. Malik would probably know better.

Malik Miah

I don't know. Less than half. Probably a third, maybe less than that.

Doug Jenness

John, have you or any of the Black comrades who were involved in this on a local level, met with or talked to Sadauki or any of the other key national organizers of the thing, and discussed with them what their perspectives are, given them any suggestions or ideas of what we think, to call a conference, or anything like that? Do we know what their thinking is, what their projections are?

John Hawkins

During the period when I was down there the week before the demonstration, I had discussions with several of the people who were working on the demonstration. The person who was coordinating

their office there and one of the other people involved in it. Mark Smith, who is their office coordinator, and Cleveland Sellers, who used to be a SNCC worker. I raised the idea with them of calling a conference. I raised this several times in discussions with Mark Smith about the need to call a conference, like the antiwar movement calls. The only projections that I could clearly get from them of what they're actually planning to do was another African Liberation Day demonstration in May and a series of demonstrations and the steering committee meeting on June 21. The people who are actually working in the office of the committee, realize that the forces that work within the steering committee are moving in different directions. They realize that the Congressional Black Caucus and the other forces that are around aren't going to go along with this. How they plan to surmount this and actually carry some sort of campaign is something I couldn't answer right now. We should look into that, but I talked with Mark Smith after the demonstration occurred and got just the same answer. The steering committee on June 21 is going to decide this sort of thing. Their thinking may have changed on what they want to do in order to continue this thing through the fall, but so far they seem to be relying on this steering committee meeting to call actions. One other thing is that I don't think -- although it would be good if they had a conference to call this, it would involve more people in making the decision and it would probably ensure that the demonstrations or some sort of activity did occur in the fall -- I don't think that's the real central thing. The central thing is that they call some sort of actions on a national scale out of this. That would be the most helpful thing that could happen -- if that came out of a steering committee or out of a national conference. As Malik pointed out, things like this are going to continue to occur, but whether or not they call another national demonstration or coordinated national demonstrations is up in the air. One thing is that having a national focus like that gave a certain impetus to the local developments that did occur, because most of those demonstrations that were called by students as build-up actions for it, around the Rhodesian chrome and around the Harvard thing, were looked at as building actions for the May 27 demonstrations, and all those people were connected in one way or another with the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee. So, it could have an effect, it would have an effect on what's actually going to take place if another national series of demonstrations were called by these people.

Joel Britton

One of the main things that happened at this conference on Africa called by the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington the day before the African Liberation Day march on May 27, was a debate really, over perspectives for the African revolution, because there were representatives there from various nominally independent governments and also representatives there who tended to be much more radical from the various liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. The representatives of these guerrilla organizations rather sharply differentiated themselves on a number of questions from the representatives of the independent states. Some of the questions involved the question of the United Nations, the question of giving concrete support to these African liberation

struggles and not simply go to the U.N. and try to get some kind of resolution passed. It also involved the question of the role of U.S. corporations, U.S. investments in Africa with the representatives of some of these independent countries demanding that U.S. investments be shifted from the settler states, like South Africa and Rhodesia, to their countries, and others getting up and pointing out that the solution to Africa's problems did not lie in U.S. investments in their countries. Whenever you get into that kind of situation, that kind of conference, those kinds of discussions with these diverse elements, the idea of general overall solidarity with Africa can become an abstraction and can be dispersed in all directions. In other words, people can mean many different things by some kind of abstraction of solidarity with Africa. I think this points up one of the things that we tried to get across in the editorial in The Militant after the action: the need to focus in on the role of the United States government and corporations in Africa. It's going to put a big priority on educational activities in whatever organizations are going to have continuing actions around this question. What do U.S. corporations do there? What is the policy of the U.S. government? Exactly how and how much does the U.S. government finance Portugal's wars against the people of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau? In exactly what ways does the United States collaborate with South Africa and Rhodesia? The question of Israel has been a big question of dispute ever since the Gary convention and since they watered down the resolution that was passed there. This is an issue. I noticed this in the African World publication of SOBU, where they're starting to pick up on that more and point out the links between Israel and the white settler states in southern Africa. There's all kinds of divisive questions involved that were highlighted by Roy Wilkin's trip to Africa and were highlighted by this conference in Washington.

Aside from the fact that it's the correct thing to do to zero in on the policies of the U.S. government, it's going to be the only thing that's going to be able to unite people around an action perspective. People can have all kinds of different analyses of the African revolution and perspectives, but maximum agreement could be gotten around various policies, especially of the U.S. government.