

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 11, October 25, 1974

Present: Barnes, Breitman, Britton, A. Hansen, J. Hansen,
Jenness, Lovell, Seigle, Sheppard, Stone

Visitors: Scott, Welch

Chair: Seigle

AGENDA: 1. Presidential Ticket
2. Chicago Mayoralty Campaign
3. World Movement

1. PRESIDENTIAL TICKET

Jenness reported on proposals for party presidential ticket (see attached).

Discussion

Motion by Breitman: To nominate the proposed ticket and adopt report.

Carried.

Motion by Barnes: To poll the National Committee on the Political Committee presidential ticket nominations.

Carried.

2. CHICAGO MAYORALTY CAMPAIGN

Britton reported on the proposal by the Chicago branch to make a national effort to seek ballot status for the Chicago mayoralty campaign (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the Chicago branch proposal to provide national help in the Chicago ballot effort as was done earlier this year in Massachusetts and Texas.

Carried.

3. WORLD MOVEMENT

Barnes reported.

Discussion

J. Hansen reported.

Discussion

Horowitz reported.

Discussion

Meeting Adjourned.

Presidential Ticket

Report by Doug Jenness

The National Office proposes that our 1976 presidential ticket be Peter Camejo for president and Willie Reid for vice-president. As indicated in previous Political Bureau minutes, we plan to publicly launch our 1976 campaign at a rally at the time of the YSA convention in St. Louis.

Peter is 34 years old, has been in the Trotskyist movement since 1959, and is an experienced party spokesman and candidate. He is fluent in both Spanish and English. He is a member of the Political Committee.

Willie is 35 years old and has been in the party for about a year-and-a-half. She collaborated with the party and attended national gatherings for about a year before she joined. Her experience in our movement has been in Chicago where she has lived, attended college, and worked for the past 14 years. She grew up in a working class family in Tennessee and attended Knoxville State. Before joining the party she was active in the Black movement and was involved in community housing struggles. She was also active in WONAAC. This past year she's been one of the party's candidates in Chicago and has spoken at forums, campaign rallies, and on radio and television. She's currently on the branch executive committee.

Both Peter and Willie meet all the Constitutional requirements for presidential and vice-presidential candidates, including age, citizenship, and country of birth. This is important because there are indications that state governments are more alert to challenging us on the age requirements and other ballot restrictions than in 1972. We want, if possible, to have a presidential slate that meets all the legal requirements in order to aid our goal of obtaining ballot status in as many states as possible.

In proposing this ticket there were several other things that we considered. One is the ability of our national candidates to explain and defend our program. In the present political situation many campaign issues, such as inflation, unemployment, breakdowns, shortages, and Watergating, the struggles of the oppressed nationalities, etc., all raise complex questions. Our candidates will be called upon to grapple with new and difficult questions and to present our socialist answers clearly.

Another consideration was to have a ticket whose composition reflects the nature of our party and what we are striving to become as well as recognizing the significance of the Black struggle and women's liberation for the working class movement in the United States.

An important new aspect, compared to the 1968 campaign, is the number of speaking opportunities, congressional committee hearings, union meetings and conferences, news interviews, etc., that will be open to our campaign. They will be far more than two people can handle. To help us take advantage of these oppor-

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tunities we plan to include Linda Jenness, Maceo Dixon, Ed Heisler, and Fred Halstead as national spokespersons and officers for the national campaign. Others may also be added. This will also help round out even further the public face of the party during the campaign.

Launching our campaign in two months, even though it will be nearly two years before the 1976 elections, is timely. Nixon's resignation has created considerable discussion and activity among capitalist politicians interested in seeking the presidency. Kennedy's announcement that he's not running has also generated interest in the race, especially among potential Democratic Party contenders.

Signs that other people are already starting to do something about the 1976 campaign is Eugene McCarthy's announcement in August that he is heading up a group called the Committee for a Constitutional Presidency which plans to petition in all 50 states to place an "independent" presidential ticket on the ballot. At the beginning of October Julian Bond announced his intention to enter a number of Democratic Party primaries. Democratic candidates like Jackson, Mondale, etc., are off and running.

In this context, an early launching of our presidential campaigns gives us special opportunities to present our propaganda.

The Chicago branch plans to announce Willie as its mayoral candidate along with a major petitioning drive on November 2. The election takes place next April 5. We will announce Willie as part of the presidential ticket along with Peter at the end of December but will give her mayoral campaign special prominence. The two national focuses for our candidates in the first three months will be a national speaking tour by Peter and Willie's mayoral campaign.

Report on Chicago Mayoralty Campaign by Joel Britton

We have a recommendation from the Chicago branch that an effort be made to get on the ballot for Chicago's mayoral election coming up April 5.

The magnitude of the task requires national help. The undemocratic and restrictive election code requires signatures on nominating petitions equal to a minimum of 5% and a maximum of 8% of the vote in the previous general election, which will be the election coming up in a week or so. It is estimated that we would need a minimum of some 65,000 to 70,000 signatures.

The Chicago mayor's race will be the most important municipal election in the spring with much national interest focused on it.

The machine of "Boss" Daley is having its problems. Last spring Daley had a stroke which took him away from City Hall for a few months, and there has been some speculation that he might not be up to running for another term. He is expected to make an announcement one way or the other soon. A number of top machine figures have been indicted in recent months for corruption in office, etc., and just two weeks ago juries came in which "guilty" verdicts on three of Daley's cronies.

Despite the fact that Ford and others said that the Watergate nightmare is over, it seems to be very much continuing in Chicago.

William Singer has assembled a big staff and seeks to tap the anti-machine sentiment in his bid for mayor.

Then there is a movement afoot, spearheaded by a Citizens Committee for a Black Mayor, to come up with a creditable Black candidate in the Democratic primary in March. Operation PUSH leader Jesse Jackson is associated with this effort, which is viewed as a trial run with an eye toward '79.

All of these aspects of the campaign indicate that there will be considerable interest, both in Chicago and nationally, in this race.

The Chicago comrades point out that this campaign represents a big opportunity for us. A Socialist Workers campaign, especially one that goes for ballot status, could have quite a big impact. It's assumed that the Black Democrats who run would be eliminated in the Democratic primary and won't be on the ballot for the general election. Singer is not expected to defeat Daley or his standin in the primary. That would leave our campaign and a token Republican effort as the alternatives to Daley in the general election.

No independent candidate for mayor of Chicago has appeared on the ballot for decades. Jesse Jackson made the last semi-serious effort in 1971. He collected 9,000 or 10,000 signatures and mounted a legal challenge to the high signature requirement. He lost in the courts.

So comrades think that instead of us running a regular campaign with a legal challenge that we would be better off mounting a petitioning drive for the 5% plus, up to the 8% figure, whatever we can get.

Of course, we are not assured of getting on the ballot, as is true with all petition drives we conduct. But we think that even though the Daley machine will probably challenge our right to be on the ballot, the fact that they are on the defensive in the courts and given the post-Watergate situation in general, that we can put up a big fight and make a lot of gains.

We would start the whole campaign off on a civil liberties basis, appealing to broader forces to support our ballot drive even though they won't necessarily be voting for us if we get on the ballot. People who support our democratic right to be on the ballot. We can reach out quite far on such a basis, as we did recently in Texas.

And, of course, even if we don't get on the ballot, as the comrades in Missouri have proved this year, we can make quite a big impact and run quite a successful campaign and get a tremendous amount of publicity, even once we're denied ballot status.

The Daley Machine has a reputation. The story is told that the election commissioner throws the independent nominating petitions up to the ceiling and those that stick are valid. We'll want to take that story and make it very prominent from the beginning and put as much pressure as possible to make it as difficult as possible to challenge us, number one, and, number two, if they challenge us to make it as difficult as possible to keep us off the ballot.

What help will Chicago require? The midwest party branches and YSA locals will be asked to help out by sending, on a couple of weekends, a few carloads of people into Chicago to help out with the Saturday mobilizations. And we will want to build up a team of full-time ballot organizers.

We would also provide national help on providing speakers for special campaign rallies and educational sessions. When you mount this kind of an effort, as the comrades did in Texas this year and in Massachusetts a couple of years ago, this is very important. It helps keep up the morale and spirit and continue the idea that when we're in this kind of ballot drive, even though it is a very big task, we don't stop doing other things. We don't stop our education; we don't stop reaching out to contacts that we can bring in during the petition drive to hear party speakers and deepen every one's education.

This effort will be conducted on the assumption that we would have to cut back a little on work in some areas -- we wouldn't be able to sell as many Militants as during a big sales drive, for example -- but the branch would continue to sell a regular bundle, hold public meetings and carry out other work.

Chicago Mayoralty/3

Petitions have to be turned in by January 31st. The plan is to start as early as possible in November, hopefully the weekend of November 9, and the idea would be to wind it up in about a month, early in December. We would do it on a blitz basis like other petitioning drives in the recent period. And we would beat the worst of the winter by doing it this way.

So, if comrades agree, what we would do immediately is begin contacting comrades in the midwest, start assembling the team, and start lining up the national speakers.