

Political Committee Meeting No. 7, November 6, 1975

Present: Breitman, Hansen, Jenness, Lovell, Seigle,
Sheppard, Thomas

Visitor: Lyons

- AGENDA:
1. Coalition of Labor Union Women Convention
 2. National Organization for Women Convention
 3. Militant Coverage of Election Results
 4. Kansas City Election Campaign
 5. Letter from Peace and Freedom Party
 6. New York City Expansion
 7. Letter from Peter Gellert
 8. Membership
 9. YSA Representative to Political Committee
 10. Convention Material Publication

1. COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN CONVENTION

(N. Brown, L. Jenness invited for this point.)

L. Jenness reported (see attached).

Discussion

Agreement to initiate a campaign and caucus for the CLUW convention to fight for discussion of CLUW's position on discriminatory layoffs and action campaigns around the ERA and jobs for all.

2. NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN CONVENTION

(N. Brown, L. Jenness invited for this point.)

L. Jenness reported on NOW national convention and our participation (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. MILITANT COVERAGE OF ELECTION RESULTS

(L. Jenness, Morell invited for this point.)

Seigle reported on outline of proposed article on election results

Morell reported on SWP 1975 local campaigns.

Discussion

Agreement on Militant coverage.

Motion: To approve the report

Carried.

4. KANSAS CITY CAMPAIGN

(Morell invited for this point.)

Morell reported on the proposal of the St. Louis branch that Paul Schmittlein, a party at-large member, run for congress from Kansas City, Missouri.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the St. Louis branch that Paul Schmittlein run for election on the Socialist Workers Party ticket in Kansas City.

Carried.

5. LETTER FROM PEACE AND FREEDOM PARTY

D. Jenness reported that the campaign committee received a letter addressed to Camejo from a member of the Peace and Freedom Party in Los Angeles proposing that Camejo run in the California Peace and Freedom Party primary.

Discussion

Motion: That Peter not run in the Peace and Freedom Party primary and that a letter be sent informing them of this.

6. NEW YORK CITY EXPANSION

D. Jenness reported that the New York Local Executive Committee is proposing to a local membership meeting that a branch be established in Queens.

Discussion

7. LETTER FROM PETER GELLERT

D. Jenness reported on letter from Peter Gellert (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the proposed letter by Jenness to the Houston branch organizer (see attached).

Carried.

8. MEMBERSHIP

D. Jenness reported on the recommendation of the Upper West Side branch that P.E. be readmitted into membership in the party.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Upper West Side branch that P.E. be readmitted into membership in the party.

Carried.

9. YSA REPRESENTATIVE TO POLITICAL COMMITTEE

D. Jenness reported that the YSA National Executive Committee has elected Gersh as representative to the Political Committee. She replace Clark who has been assigned to the Militant.

10. CONVENTION MATERIAL PUBLICATION

D. Jenness reported on status of publishing material from the convention.

Meeting Adjourned.

Report on CLUW NCC Meeting and Preparations for
the Convention

by Linda Jenness, November 6, 1975

The last NCC meeting before the CLUW convention was held in Chicago October 31-November 1. As at the last meeting, there was no quorum, so the body became "advisory" with no authority. There were 60-plus voting members present and a couple of dozen observers.

Our comrades attempted to open up the agenda for the CLUW convention so that discussion could take place on some of the primary issues facing CLUW, instead of centering solely on the constitution as Madar's agenda proposes. (The CLUW national office has sent this out to all CLUW members. However, if you haven't seen one let me know.) We also tried to prioritize the disputes over the proposed constitution, the most important one being the question of selection of the NCC.

None of these questions were resolved. However, verbal agreement was gotten that the Houston CLUW could formally present an alternate agenda (copy attached). This is a step forward over having to raise it from the floor. There are also indications that Madar is willing to compromise on selection of the NCC and will go along with the proposal that the NCC be composed of representatives selected both by union caucuses and by the chapters.

We are now faced with a convention of CLUW, less than a month away, with the majority of CLUW's leadership wanting to avoid discussion of the key issues facing women workers -- especially the issue of discriminatory layoffs -- and wanting no plan of action to emerge from the convention.

We need to carry through the fight to open discussion at the convention around the issues and to put forward a plan of action that can build CLUW and make it the kind of organization that will attract union women to its rank and fight in their interest.

In order to do that we have to do the following:

a) Draft up a statement that can be used to gather together as many forces as possible at the convention who want to discuss CLUW's position and activities on discriminatory layoffs, ERA, and unemployment. This statement should begin by saying that the constitutional questions are, of course, important and must be discussed and settled at the convention. In addition, however, there are some crucial issues before CLUW that must be discussed at the convention.

The first and most important is the position adopted by the CLUW NCC last summer on discriminatory layoffs. This central question is being widely debated within the labor movement and within CLUW. Panel discussions, debates, and educationals

have been held about it by CLUW chapters in several parts of the country. Two chapters have adopted resolutions disagreeing with the NCC positions. The importance of this question is such that the entire convention of CLUW must have an opportunity to discuss it thoroughly and, if a majority agrees, to reverse it.

Secondly, the defeat of the state Equal Rights Amendments in New York and New Jersey requires renewed efforts to fight for the ERA. A national campaign by the labor movement must be organized, in coalition with other forces, to stop the right-wing attack on the ERA and to assure its ratification in 1976. CLUW is on record in support of the ERA and has been since its inception. Now we must plan an action campaign around the ERA.

Thirdly, CLUW recognizes that the massive layoffs must be halted. CLUW calls for a shorter workweek with no reduction in pay and a massive public works program in order to provide a job for every worker. CLUW must discuss how to go on an action campaign around this program.

In order to discuss these issues and adopt a plan of action, the convention agenda must be opened up so that time is allotted for these crucial discussions. The agenda proposed by Houston CLUW provides for this time and should be supported.

b) Between now and the convention we should go on a campaign to get this proposal supported by as many individuals and CLUW chapters as possible. The more people and chapters who sign and endorse it, the more authoritative it will be. This includes approaching the October League and International Socialists and trying to get them to go along with it. Indications are that at least with the October League this is a possibility.

c) This statement will be the basis for calling a caucus meeting on the Friday night of the CLUW convention for all who agree with it and want to fight around it. There is a real possibility that this caucus meeting can be of respectable size and authority.

The work that we can do between now and the convention is of the essence in carrying out this fight.

This fight cannot hinge on whether or not we can win the fight at the convention. Win or lose, we can show the women there that there is a group of people who have a clear idea of how to build CLUW, a reasonable proposal for the priorities for CLUW, and are interested in discussion and debate of the issues. We will win some to this proposal and others will remember what we said.

As many of our CLUW comrades as possible should plan to attend the convention. We will also need to get everyone we know and work with in CLUW to the convention. CLUW directors should let me know as soon as possible which comrades and friends from their area are planning to attend. You will receive information as to the time and place of the fraction meeting on Friday, December 5, and on housing arrangements soon.

The next issue of the Militant will carry the first of two articles explaining the issues involved in the coming CLUW convention. The next issue of the paper will also carry a round-up article about the affirmative action panels and discussions that have been taking place around the country.

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ALTERNATE AGENDA PROPOSAL

Friday, 12-5-75

- 3-5 p.m. NCC Committee meetings to prepare reports
- 7 p.m. Regional meetings: discuss rules, dues, constitution and program

Saturday, 12-6-75

- 8:30-9 a.m. Agenda Approval
 - 9-9:30 a.m. Greetings - welcome
 - 9:30-10:30 Rules Comm. and Credentials Comm. report
 - 10:30-1 p.m. Regional meetings, discuss constitution
 - 1-2 p.m. Lunch
 - 2-6 p.m. General Assembly
Discuss and vote on adoption of constitution
 - 6-7 p.m. Dinner
 - 7-10 p.m. Discussion and vote on adoption of CLUW's program on economic crisis and on affirmative action
- Reports and recommendations from committees and task forces

Sunday, 12-7-75

- 8-10 a.m. Regional meetings, elect regional VPs, discuss officers
- 10-12 General Assembly: regional reports, elect officers
- 12-1 p.m. Lunch
- 1-2 p.m. Installation of officers

Linn McDonald
Chairperson, Houston CLUW
I.T.U.

Debbie Leonard
Member, Steering Committee, CLUW
Houston Chapter, CLUW
OCAW

Report on NOW Convention

by Linda Jenness, November 6, 1975

The National Organization for Women (NOW held its annual convention in Philadelphia October 24-27. About 3,000 people, primarily women, attended the convention.

There was a notable change from previous conventions in the composition of the women in attendance. There was a larger number of students and young working women than previously. Although the number of Black women belonging to NOW is still very small, it appears to have grown somewhat.

The majority of women at the convention were interested in discussing the issues as well as the strategy for the women's liberation movement. They were also interested in some action around the issues. This was shown in a variety of ways:

1) The convention opened with a spirited march to Independence Mall. Spontaneously the march became a march for the ERA. About 1,200 people marched and the militancy and spirit were reminiscent of the WONAAC marches of a few years ago.

2) The receptivity and friendliness to all aspects of our participation:

a) Four hundred single issues of the Militant were sold, and 25 subscriptions. Seventy-five Young Socialists were sold.

b) Pathfinder Press sold \$830 of literature. In addition, Evelyn Reed came to the convention for one afternoon to autograph copies of her book. The admiration and respect for Reed from the NOW participants was evident everywhere. (127 copies of her book were sold.)

c) The Socialist Workers campaign distributed literature and Willie Mae Reid addressed the convention along with several bourgeois candidates on the last day. Although many people had left by the time the "candidates panel" was held, the 400 or so people there warmly received Reid.

d) The Philadelphia SWP branch held a forum Sunday night on Socialism and Feminism addressed by Linda Jenness. The convention was leafleted about this forum and 15 to 20 independents attended. The discussion was serious and friendly. Over the weekend, three women asked to join the SWP and several good friends were made.

e) There was a notable lack of red-baiting or "trot-baiting." Comrades participating in sales, workshops, literature distribution, and discussions in and around the

convention, all reported that our movement was well-known, and that people were anxious to discuss ideas with us. About 25 comrades participated in the convention. There was no other political tendency present.

f) NSCAR had a table which sold \$45 of buttons and collected 75-80 names of people interested in helping with NSCAR or wanting more information.

The proceedings of the convention itself showed a total default on the part of the NOW leadership to deal with, or even discuss the crucial issues facing the women's movement.

The entire convention was consumed with the election of national officers and board members. Even that procedure was chaotic.

The factionalism within NOW for the past year was brought to a head at the convention. The elections were carried out in a bitter atmosphere with absolutely no discussion of the issues involved. The one formal caucus, headed by Karen DeCrow, was called the "Majority Caucus." This caucus had a platform of sorts, which included that NOW should endorse political candidates for public office, a statement on abortion, ERA, lesbian rights, etc. This caucus won most of the seats, including the presidency, by very slim margins.

The press fell into the trap of thinking that those opposed to the Majority Caucus were opposed to the issues raised in their platform. This was not the case. Those opposing the Majority Caucus did so for a variety of reasons, mainly organizational or personalities. The average NOW member at the convention, however, had no idea what the fighting was all about. Most participants were dismayed and disgusted with the disorganization and the fighting.

NOW claims 70,000 members which is probably accurate. The 70,000 includes many women who want to get involved in activities, who are thinking or re-thinking questions of strategy for the women's liberation movement, and who have a new interest in socialism and its relation to feminism. By joining NOW, working with them in coalitions, having our candidates address their meetings, and however else possible, we want to meet, work and talk with them.

At a forum in Washington, D.C. on October 31 on "Affirmative Action and Discriminatory Layoffs" a leading member of NOW spoke along with myself and a representative from Government Employees Against Racial Discrimination. The NOW member's expressed eagerness to work in coalitions with

socialists around the issues represents a stark turn-around for her. It's another sign of a new opening for us.

In spite of the NOW leadership's failure to initiate a national campaign around the ERA at their convention, many individuals in NOW, as well as chapters of NOW, are interested in ERA activities, especially after the defeat of the state ERAs in New York and New Jersey. It is in activity around the ERA, and other issues, that NOW can have its biggest impact.

Between now and the 1976 elections, many chapters of NOW are going to be involved in supporting election campaigns. We should not turn this field over to the Democratic and Republican parties, but aggressively seek out NOW's endorsement and support for our candidates, both female and male. Our candidates can help explain why NOW should not support the Democratic and Republican parties and why NOW needs to form action coalitions with other organizations around the issues, especially the ERA.

There were two other big women's events that occurred the same weekend as the NOW convention. One was the International Women's Year festival held in Cleveland which was addressed by Betty Ford, among others. Estimates are that about 30,000 people attended the event at one point or another over the weekend. Pathfinder Press had a booth and sold several hundred dollars worth of literature.

In Minneapolis the same weekend there was a conference of women professors attended by about 700. Pathfinder Press also had a table there and sold another couple hundred dollars worth of material, with Evelyn Reed's book topping the list.

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Houston, Texas
October 23, 1975

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

Dear Comrades,

Several weeks ago I noticed that the comrades of the Houston branch were selling and distributing copies of El Socialista, organ of the Mexican Liga Socialista, as part of the branch's campaign work.

Since there has been "problems" in the past with distribution of the press of other sections and sympathizing groups, including the distribution of Inprecor, the official organ of the United Secretariat of the FI itself, I inquired of St S., the branch organizer, 1) who made the decision to distribute El Socialista, the branch or the National Office, 2) whether comrades could similarly distribute Ban-dera Roja, organ of the GCI, also a Mexican sympathizing section of the FI, 3) whether comrades who support the positions of the FI, as adopted by its 10th World Congress and its leadership bodies would be required to circulate El Socialista, inasmuch as this is obviously a way of building the prestige and influence if not the actual organization of the IS (a goal I'm not particularly keen on devoting myself to, given a far better alternative, the GCI).

His answers were (respectively): the branch had made the decision, comrades could NOT distribute BR, and that if requested to, comrades supporting the FI majority would be expected to distribute El Socialista. He added that this is not being done as a factional act or a way of denigrating the GCI but that the branch felt the need for Spanish language papers from Mexico given the interest in Mexican politics in the Chicano community and that the SWP agrees with the analysis of Portugal contained in that particular issue of El Socialista.

In July 1974 when I was attempting, as a member of the branch sales committee, to get the branch to distribute Inprecor, which again, is the official organ of the FI and moreover, was voted for by the SWP's fraternal representatives on the FI leadership bodies, I was told that only the National Office could make such a decision.

Which in fact is the case? What is the policy of the Party towards the distribution of the press of other sections? Are IMT comrades in Houston expected to carry bundles of El Socialista with them as other comrades do?

Finally, as an enthusiastic reader of Inprecor, I'd very much like to see its circulation increased in the U.S. I am not aware of any policy by the Party leadership forbidding its circulation by SWP members, just as I am not aware of any decision by the Party to organize its sale and distribution. Therefore, could you inform me if any decision has in fact been made on this question. If none, I would like to request permission to sell and solicit subs for Inprecor, as part of my regular sales of The Militant.

Gellert/page 2

As you know, I am still not a member of the SWP, however since I'm attempting to operate under the direction and discipline of the Party, I am following this procedure as the correct way as I understand it.

Comradely,

/s/

Peter Gellert

cc: Inprecor, GCI, ITNF

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
November 6, 1975

Stu Singer

Houston

Dear Stu,

Enclosed is a copy of a letter the Political Committee received from Peter Gellert, a former member of the Houston branch who has applied for readmission to the party.

Comrade Gellert inquires about the party's policy in respect to the distribution of our press. We decided at our convention to launch a sales campaign and sub drive for the Militant and support the Young Socialist Alliance's efforts to increase the circulation of the Young Socialist. We reaffirmed the responsibility that we've accepted since 1963 of making Intercontinental Press widely available, thus making its publication economically feasible.

This is the only national policy we've established. Concrete division of labor in carrying this out is of course a branch decision. Any proposals of Comrade Gellert for most effectively implementing this policy would be more properly made to the Houston branch leadership.

Comrade Gellert raises the question of Inprecor. To our knowledge, all our bookstores carry Inprecor, the number depending on the demand. This has always been our policy. In addition branch bookstores often have copies of several publications of the world movement available.

The decision of the Houston branch to utilize a publication of one of the Mexican sympathizing groups of the Fourth International to reach Spanish-speaking readers isn't against any national decisions or policies. To the contrary, we think your initiative is excellent and look forward to a report on the results we can share with other branches that are in areas with a large Spanish-speaking population.

If it would be helpful, I suggest that you show Comrade Gellert this letter the next time you meet with him.

Comradely,
/s/
Doug Jenness
for the Political Committee