

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 52, October 28, 1976

Present: Berman, Blackstock, Garza, D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Lund, Lyons, Miah, Seigle, Sheppard, Stapleton, Thomas, Waters

Guests: Jaquith, Morell, Rodríguez, Wohlforth

Chair: Sheppard

AGENDA: 1. Teachers Committee on Desegregation and Equality in Education
2. NSCAR Conference
3. China
4. Membership Drive
5. Mailroom/Copy Center
6. Subscription Drive

1. TEACHERS COMMITTEE ON DESEGREGATION AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Lovell reported. The trade-union work steering committee has been in correspondence and consultation with several of our teacher members for some time about the possibility of mobilizing the AFT Committee on Desegregation and Equality in Education to collect thousands of teacher signatures for a full-page ad in the New York Times in support of school busing. The consensus is that this is feasible and that we should urge the committee to proceed.

1. The statement that teachers will be asked to sign is being drafted. It will be published at an appropriate time.
2. A letter to all teacher comrades will go out soon explaining how we will organize to help promote this project.

The AFT Committee on Desegregation and Equality in Education is expected to send out a letter to its members in the near future.

We are conducting a survey of all branches for the names and addresses of teacher members in order to communicate directly with them on this project.

This is viewed as a long-term project of several months (depending upon developments in the fight for desegregation of schools) requiring the attention and participation of all teacher members nationally.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

2. NSCAR CONFERENCE

Miah reported (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. CHINA

(Baumann, Clark, and Evans invited for this point)

D. Jenness initiated discussion on developments in China since Mao's death, the reaction of various Maoist groups in the U.S., and the new openings the party has to take the offensive on the question of Stalinism and our analysis of the Chinese revolution, regular coverage in the Militant of events in China and the reactions among Maoists can be paralleled by forums and invitations to debates and discussions.

Discussion

4. MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Seigle reported (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

5. MAILROOM/COPY CENTER

Jones reported on establishment of single mailroom/copy center for all national departments at 410 West Street as part of improving organization of the party center.

Discussion

6. SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE

(McArthur invited for this point)

McArthur reported that nationally the sub drive is on schedule (see Militant). Many branches have made special plans to be on schedule by Election Day. Most areas will have to organize a big effort during the final two weeks to wind up the drive on schedule.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

REPORT ON THE NSCAR CONFERENCE AND OUR TASKS

by Malik Miah, October 28, 1976

The National Student Coalition Against Racism (NSCAR) will be sponsoring the "Third National Student Conference Against Racism" at Boston University on November 19-21. The conference will discuss what strategy to fight racism and outline the major campaigns for the next year. Thus, this is a very important conference not only for NSCAR but the YSA and SWP.

As discussed at an NSCAR steering committee meeting on October 23 in Boston, NSCAR leaders, along with other student leaders, will propose to the conference that a national campaign against racism in southern Africa be launched. Specifically, they will propose that a national day of student protests against U.S. complicity with racist white minority regimes in southern Africa be scheduled around March 21, the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. (This is a likely date for international protests as well.)

Other campaigns that will be discussed are the importance of NSCAR organizing educational and political activities in defense of busing and school desegregation (still the central issue facing Blacks today), opposing the death penalty, and supporting victims of racist frame-ups like Gary Tyler and the Wilmington 10. (A full report on the NSCAR steering committee, including the southern Africa campaign, is explained in an October 28 report by Nan Bailey of the YSA National Office. This report discusses the attack on the conference by the Boston University Administration and information on NSCAR materials, finances and ways to build the conference. A tentative schedule and the proposed call on southern Africa are also attached to the report. Organizers and comrades active in antiracist work should be sure to read this material which was sent to all National Committee members and organizers on October 30.

The YSA leadership is encouraging its entire Midwest and East Coast membership to build and attend the conference. They are also encouraging YSA chapters outside these areas to send representatives to the conference.

We are not recommending a full mobilization of the party in the Midwest or East Coast as the YSA is doing. However, branches east of Chicago should encourage all Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano and Latino comrades to attend the conference. Other comrades involved in antiracist work, including teachers and members of the NAACP, should be encouraged to attend the conference too. (There will be workshops on the racist attack against the NAACP in Mississippi and teachers and school desegregation.) Where possible, branches west of Chicago should also try to send representatives to the conference.

As Nan explains in her report, it is important that branches closely collaborate with the YSA in building the conference. This includes helping to publicize the conference on campus as well as in the community, and helping to raise money for buses and cars.

Because this gathering will be discussing areas of antiracist struggles the party supports, branches should also encourage community activists and leaders, and unionists we work with to endorse and/or attend the conference. Even though the meeting will primarily discuss how students and young people can fight racism, members of the ACLU, NAACP and other groups we collaborate with can gain a better understanding of what NSCAR is and the type of broad-based movement needed to fight racism by attending the educational talks and workshops.

Finally, because of the elections, and other factors, real conference-building work has only begun in most cities. This fact will obviously affect the size of national participation at the conference and it is probable that this conference will be smaller than previous ones. This likelihood, however, does not diminish the political importance and impact the conference can have. It will mark another political step forward for NSCAR. After two years of organizing activities in defense of busing, of victims of racist frame-ups and the rights of the oppressed-- and now its decision to launch a national campaign against racism in southern Africa--NSCAR is viewed by more and more people as the most serious antiracist youth coalition in the country.

*

*

*

There will be a national fraction meeting on Saturday, November 20, prior to the first plenary session. The meeting will probably take place at 7:00 a.m. Therefore, comrades arranging bus and car transportation to the conference should try to arrive in Boston before 7:00 a.m. Once the time and place is confirmed, branches and YSA chapters will be informed. Also, to facilitate the organization of our national fraction we need a list of all comrades coming to the conference as soon as possible. Send this information to Nan Bailey or Malik Miah at the Boston city office address (510 Commonwealth Ave., 4th Floor, Boston, MA 02215, phone: 617-492-1458).

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
November 5, 1976

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS, BRANCH ORGANIZERS AND RECRUITMENT DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

At its meeting on October 28 the Political Committee received a report on the progress of the membership drive launched at the SWP convention in August. The following information should be reported to the branch membership.

With 95 percent of the branches reporting, the statistics show that we recruited 63 new provisional members in August and 72 in September, for a total of 135. This is approximately the same as our recruitment rate during January-March 1976 (which was the highest rate of the last year). If the August-September rate continues through December we will go over our national goal of 300 new provisional members by January 1.

A few other figures which are of interest are the following:

- 22 of those new recruits are Black (16.3%).
- 4 are Chicano (3%).
- 3 are Puerto Rican (2.2%).
- 4 are from other oppressed nationalities (3%).
- 39 are women (28.9%).
- 16 are members of trade unions (11.9%).
- 41 are members of the YSA (30.4%).

During the same two months 82 provisional members were brought into regular membership in the party. We don't know what percentage of provisional members decided not to join the party at the end of three months. However, we have now added a question to the monthly membership and recruitment survey form that should give us this information for future reports. It is, of course, an important statistic to let us know how successful we are in educating and integrating new recruits.

* * *

In addition to the membership reports, a number of comrades have sent in some observations and suggestions on recruitment that are useful. Excerpts from two of those reports are attached.

Similar observations and suggestions from other comrades would be extremely useful, as well as copies of longer reports on recruitment and education. By the end of the membership drive, we would like to have enough material to be able to publish a special issue of the Party Builder so the experiences and ideas on

Membership report/2

recruitment from all the branches can be shared with the entire party membership.

Comradely,

Mary Alice Waters

Mary-Alice Waters
National Office

P.S.- We were not able to send out a report on the progress of the membership drive at an earlier date because of the long delay in receiving the monthly survey forms from the branch organizers. When we will be able to send a report on the October recruitment statistics will depend on when the national office receives the October reports from the branches!

Comments on Recruitment

From Carl Finamore, Oakland:

We do not know what will come of our efforts but we are talking to more Black contacts than at any other time. The recent recruitment of a Black comrade has opened our eyes to some problems in integrating new Black comrades which can be avoided.

The comrade told us about how the Nation of Islam treats its new members or close contacts. They assign individuals to the contact and literally treat him as a close friend, as part of the family. He told us that the reception he received in Oakland would have appeared cold to most of his friends. Yet we did what probably would be considered normal in most branches.

With all proportions guarded, it was clear to us that some conscious assignments were going to have to be made in order to insure that contacts and provisional members received the proper amount of attention. We have instituted the program of contact guides similar to what we did in the YSA 9 and 10 years ago.

But it is not simply a matter of educating the Black contacts and new members, we also have to educate the branch or rather go over again to freshen up the branch on Black nationalism and Socialism and on the evolution of Malcolm X. Our two new Black members pointed out incidents at campaign rallies, branch meetings and fraction meetings which would make revolutionary nationalists feel a bit uncomfortable. Unquestionably, Black contacts coming towards us are particularly alert to any slips in formulations which are totally innocent but open to be misinterpreted.

This is a question of sloppiness, of not being conscious of some of the doubts, and suspicions even, which many Black contacts have. We are going to deal with this by scheduling a series of classes on Black Nationalism and Socialism. We are having a conference on November 12 and 13 with Tony Thomas and Clifton DeBerry. It should draw Black contacts and serve to raise the consciousness of the whole branch.

From Jim Burfeind, Louisville:

We have recruited five provisional members beginning with the convention which gives us a total membership of 8 full and 7 provisional.

One comment on our recruitment work here is on the incredible proportion of the branch's time that is taken up with it. It think we are making the right decision in terms of priorities especially for a very new area like this. We have for example decided that for a two or three week period we will eliminate having two major sales mobilizations a week and concentrate on a slightly longer, full participation Saturday. This is for two reasons. First we felt that most of our members were falling behind in some basic reading we had established for our pre-branch and new members/contact class series. Second we found that because of the sub drive

Comments on Recruitment/2

primarily, but also from other work, that we had a large number of possible contacts that required long phone calls, visits, dinners, socials, special classes, etc. In this case we felt the comrades just couldn't handle both and just were not.

I have been wondering why the NO has not begun sending reports on how the recruitment drive is going nationally. I think comrades around the country would be very interested to know, at least I am. It is not simply a question of the numbers of course, although that seems like it is always a valuable gauge of whether a branch is deciding its priorities correctly. Most importantly some short reports on good ideas on classes or on dealing with special problems would be very helpful. I know I keep trying to remember some of the techniques used by branches that have high recruitment or for example the attitude taken by individual comrades who are very good at it.