

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 21, May 6, 1977

Present: Barnes, Blackstock, Breitman, Garza, Lovell, Miah,
Seigle, Stapleton, Waters

Guests: Brundy, Heisler, Jaquith, LaMont, Matson

Chair: Waters

AGENDA: 1. Trotskyist Organizing Committee
2. Women's Liberation Work Perspectives
3. Membership

1. TROTSKYIST ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Waters reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve draft of letter to Trotskyist
Organizing Committee. (See attached.)

Carried.

2. WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORK PERSPECTIVES

(Clark, Cole, and Reid invited for this point)

Jaquith initiated discussion.

Discussion

3. MEMBERSHIP

Seigle reported on proposal to admit M.S. as a
member at-large in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Discussion

Motion: To approve.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.



14 CHARLES LANE,
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10014
(212) 242-5530

May 6, 1977

Harry Turner
Trotskyist Organizing Committee
P.O. Box 831
New York, N.Y. 10008

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your letter of March 21 and the materials you enclosed. We had not seen most of them previously and we appreciate your making them available to us.

After reading through Socialist Appeal and your internal information bulletin, TOC Reports, however, it seems to us that your proposal to open unity discussions with the SWP is not in harmony with your stated political positions.

As far as we can determine, the basis of your proposal is your belief that the SWP has taken a "left turn." In your opinion we are now paying more attention to trade-union activity; we now raise the demand for a labor party within the unions; the SWP now emphasizes the "nature of the epoch as one of imperialist decay"; we consider the Transitional Program to be valid and applicable; we have achieved substantial growth; and democratic-centralist practices enable political and organizational disagreements to be seriously raised and discussed within the SWP.

While stating these rather general and abstract points, however, your internal documents and newspaper indicate that you disagree with the SWP on virtually every concrete political question around which we are engaged in struggles today.

Unless there has been some significant evolution in your positions since last fall when the most recent issue of Socialist Appeal was apparently published, the Trotskyist Organizing Committee holds the following positions:

1. "The SWP is no longer a Trotskyist Party" (Socialist Appeal, Vol. 1, No. 8). It is a "petty-bourgeois, left-social-democratic protest movement" (Socialist

Appeal, Vol. 1, No. 6). Elsewhere the SWP is described as a centrist party.

2. The Fourth International does not exist. It was destroyed during World War II, and the formation reconstituted after the war was a "centrist, federated, organization, made up of centrist, national, parties which had, in one or another degree, broken from revolutionary Marxism during the war." ("Dialectics and the Socialist League," TOC Reports No. 5.)

3. There is no progressive content to Black and Chicano nationalist consciousness. You oppose the call for the formation of an independent Black political party or an independent Chicano political party and oppose the SWP position of urging a vote for Raza Unida Party candidates running against the Democratic and Republican parties.

4. You do not support busing as a means to desegregate the schools and are opposed to demanding that the government enforce desegregation and protect Black children whose lives are endangered by racist opponents of desegregation. You state that busing is supported by "the dominant section of the ruling class" because it serves "further to divide the working class along racial lines." On this issue the SWP (and CP) are "'socialist'-opportunists [who] expose themselves as budding bureaucrats who are, in fact, alien and hostile to the working class." (SA, Vol. 1, No. 4.)

5. You are opposed to demands for preferential hiring for oppressed nationalities and community control of the schools by oppressed nationalities. You define these as "petty-bourgeois movements." (TOC Reports No. 9.)

6. You oppose the fight to ratify the ERA on the grounds that "the ERA will accomplish only one thing: eliminate protective legislation for women." You consider it a diversion from the "real fight" by women to defend their jobs and living standards. (SA, Vol. 1, No. 6.)

7. Although you think it is generally positive that more opportunities are opening up for political work in the trade unions, you clearly disagree with the SWP's orientation. You state that we lack a working-class line in the unions and that the SWP "tailends the bureaucrats." (SA, Vol. 1, No. 7.)

You offer your opinion that these and other political differences between us are "of a tactical and not of a fundamental nature." We disagree. The differences enumerated above are not solely tactical. They are so sharp and extend over such a wide range of issues that they obviously reflect fundamentally different conceptions of the tasks of revolutionists today.

You write that you are prepared to function as "loyal members of the SWP" and to carry out its program, "even those aspects of it with which we disagree." We assume that you are making this statement in good faith. However, in the absence of substantial areas of agreement on the political tasks and perspectives of the party, the prerequisites for functioning as loyal members of the party simply don't exist.

Even with the best of intentions, it would be increasingly difficult for you to carry out activities with which you completely disagreed, day after day, month after month.

Party loyalty is based on a deeply held confidence in the party, and in its capacity to lead the American working class to victory. Your political disagreements with the Socialist Workers Party on virtually every issue we face today preclude such confidence in the party or in its program.

We are aware that in several cities members of the TOC are working with the SWP on one or two projects around which there is some agreement. We consider this to be positive and hope it will continue. If our future work demonstrates growing areas of political accord, we are sure that we will be able to broaden our collaboration.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters

Mary-Alice Waters
for the Political Committee

March 21, 1977

Trotskyist Organizing Committee

P.O. Box 831

New York, N.Y. 10008

March 21, 1977

Mary-Alice Waters
Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014

Dear Comrade Waters,

I am enclosing the following materials for the Political Committee in response to your request for additional information about our organization:

1. Our document, "Perspectives and Tasks of the Trotskyist Organizing Committee," May 1975.
2. Our newspaper, Socialist Appeal, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 - 8.
3. Our internal information bulletin, TOC Reports, Vol. 1975, Nos. 1 - 9, Vol. 1976, No. 1.

We are ready to provide any additional materials which the Political Committee might wish to see in the course of the discussion. We would, of course, also appreciate the receipt of similar materials from you which have not already been made available.

About our organization -- our numbers, their location and activities:

The Trotskyist Organizing Committee originated in a split from the Class Struggle League in May 1975, with the rejection of our perspectives and tasks document and in opposition to the CSL convention majority's course toward the Trotskyist Organization which identifies with Varga's LIRQI.

We are a small formation with members in San Francisco, Minneapolis, Texas and New York. Our largest local, that in San Francisco, has 4 members. Our comrades have varied organizational backgrounds:

Earl Owens and I were expelled from the SWP; he in 1965 along with Tim Wohlforth and Fred Mazelis to form the American Committee for the Fourth

International, I in 1964 with other members of the Spartacist group. Hugh Fredricks and I left the Spartacist League in 1968 to initiate Vanguard Newsletter, later to be joined by Comrades Owens and Charles Andrews. Earl Balfour of Minneapolis left the SWP in 1972 with other members of the Leninist Faction to form the Class Struggle League. Cde. Andrews came to Vanguard Newsletter from a De Leonist background. Sam London, at one time with Shachtman's Workers Party, was also a member of the Spartacist League, and for a short time, Workers World. As you will no doubt recall, Cdes. Owens, Fredricks, Andrews and I were signatories to the recent statement condemning the slanders circulated by the Healy group against Cdes. Hansen, Novack and the Socialist Workers Party. As the foregoing indicates, our members tend to be mature, ranging in age from the mid-30's to the late 50's. We will, of course, provide you with more precise statistics about our total membership at a later date.

We have been primarily involved in trade union activities. Cde. Owens is the president of a San Francisco municipal employees union affiliated to the SEIU. Cde. Andrews and other comrades in the San Francisco local are heavily involved in work with the taxi drivers union there. Cde. Balfour is a tool and die maker. Cde. London is active in the hospital workers union, District 1199. I am a New York State public service employee, active in the State Workers Rank and File Committee, editor of its bimonthly newsletter, State Workers Voice, and presently in nomination for the CSEA statewide post of Education Department representative for elections to be held in May-June. I have also enclosed the back issues of State Workers Voice.

As you will note in the November 14, 1975 issue (Volume 1975, No. 9) of TOC Reports (which served both the purposes of providing information to our members and as an internal discussion bulletin), we first began seriously to discuss a turn to the SWP at that time. Thereafter, the discussion on this question continued by letter and telephone finally to result in the "Declaration of the Trotskyist Organizing Committee," a copy of which was sent to the Political Committee on February 7, 1977.

As you will also note, the materials which we have sent you contain political positions which have differed and several which continue to differ sharply from those of the SWP, e.g., the ERA, busing, the continuity of the Fourth International. We consider these differences to be of a tactical and not of a fundamental nature. They also contain sharp characterizations of the SWP. As the materials also indicate, we have held basic positions in common and have drawn closer together on many questions. We believe that major obstacles to unity have been overcome under the pressure of objective developments. We make no apologies for the past. As we have stated in our declaration, we believe that it is necessary to unite to build the future.

As we have also stated, we are prepared to function as loyal members of the SWP in accordance with the democratic-centralist norms of a Leninist and Trotskyist organization. Organizational loyalty requires that we accept the democratically-arrived-at line of the organization and carry out even those aspects of it with which we disagree, that we build the organization on the basis of its line, that we raise our unresolved differences in organizationally and politically appropriate conditions, times and places, and in a non-disruptive manner, i.e., that we function as disciplined members at all times.

Our seriousness can best be tested in practice. Until discussions can be held and during the process of discussion, we would hope to be involved in those ongoing activities of the SWP in which we can play a positive role,

e.g., the SWP mayoralty election campaign in New York City and campaigns elsewhere.

We believe that, if unity can be achieved, other organizations and individuals identifying with Trotskyism will be encouraged to unite in the SWP and under the banner of the Fourth International.

We eagerly await your reply.

With fraternal greetings,



Harry Turner

encl: Perspectives and Tasks of the TOC.
Socialist Appeal, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 - 8.
TOC Reports, Vol. 1975, Nos. 1 - 9, Vol. 1976, No. 1.
State Workers Voice, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 - 3, Vol. 2, No. 1.