

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 39, September 19, 1979

Present: Barnes, Dixon, Hawkins, Jenness, Mailhot, Manuel, Morell, Rodríguez, Seigle, Stone, Waters

Guests: Pulley, Zimmermann

Chair: Mailhot

AGENDA: 1. Coalition of Labor Union Women
2. David Weissman Protest
3. Sandstone University
4. Organization Committee Report
5. Security Policy on Illegal Drugs
6. World Movement

1. COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN

(Jayko and Obradović invited for this point.)

Morell reported on national CLUW convention held in New York September 13-16.

Discussion

Motion: To approve article for the Militant.

Carried.

2. DAVID WEISSMAN PROTEST

(Prince invited for this point.)

Seigle reported on protest by David Weissman concerning his article for the pre-convention discussion bulletin urging the party to support the Workers League campaign for an "investigation" into the killing of Workers League member Tom Henehan in October 1977. Comrades responsible for publication of the bulletin report that this article was received past the final deadline for publication. Weissman charges that it was improperly suppressed. This matter was referred to the PC by the National Committee at the August plenum. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: That the Control Commission be asked to look into this and related matters.

Carried.

Motion: To designate Prince as the fifth member of the Control Commission.

Carried.

(over)

3. SANDSTONE UNIVERSITY
(Prince invited for this point.)

Prince reported on arrangements for acquiring use of building and grounds for party leadership school.

Discussion

Motion: To approve.

Carried.

4. ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Jeness reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve.

Carried.

5. SECURITY POLICY ON ILLEGAL DRUGS

Jeness reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

6. WORLD MOVEMENT
(Pérez invited for this point.)

Barnes reported.

Discussion

Meeting adjourned.

July 18, 1979

For A Change In the Party's Line ^{ON} the Murder of Tom
Henehan

By David Weisman, Lower Manhattan Branch

New York Local

The party's course of action on the murder of Tom Henehan is a travesty of the principled defense work that the SWP has carried out for four decades. His murder has become the first time that the party has responded to an appeal for defense support with sectarian callousness.

Tom Henehan was a member of the Political Committee of the Workers League when he was shot to death in October, 1977. This murder was directed against the working class, an act designed to intimidate and break up the socialist movement.

The murder occurred outside of a dance sponsored by the Young Socialists in Brooklyn, New York. Early in the evening Edwin Sequinog began an argument at the entrance to the dance. He later returned with Angelo Torres and they both assaulted the Workers League member guarding the door, Jacques Vielot. When Henehan ran to the door, Torres silent-

ly and deliberately fired five bullets into him. Sequinog also shot Vielot. At the time of the attack, Torres had never spoken to or met Tom Henehan. He also never attempted to enter the dance.

The Bulletin's account of the murder was based on sworn testimony given to the police by several witnesses. Despite cynical attempts by leading comrades to refute this account, no one has produced a shred of evidence to prove an alternative version. Yet this account strongly indicates a pre-meditated and politically motivated murder. The police response confirms this assesment. Despite the testimony given to them, and their knowledge of the identity of the assailants, the police made no attempt to apprehend them. One even picked up his paycheck the following day! The detective "responsible" for the investigation brazenly stated that he wasn't interested in the death of a "commie". This police cover-up continues to this day.

Following the murder, the Workers League initiated a

campaign for an investigation into this crime. They have won significant support. Thousands have signed their petitions, and many prominent individuals have given their endorsements. These include dozens of leading trade unionists, representing millions of workers, such as Juan Chacon (USWA) and Marvin Miller (Major League Baseball), victims of capitalist justice including Gary Tyler and Sami Esmail, and activists like Aryeh Neier.

Not surprisingly, the Communist Party hasn't endorsed this campaign. The news of the death of a young Trotskyist was probably met with jubilation at the offices of the Daily World. After all, these are the Stalinist butchers of Trotsky and millions of other militants.

The party's response has been astonishing. Despite a long and proud record of defense work, we haven't risen to the defense of the Workers League. George Novack's often cited "An injury to one is an injury to all" doesn't seem to apply. I have been shocked by some of the remarks of leading

members, which range from the crude "they deserved what they got", to the cynical "who cares, it's not our problem"!

Comrades have attempted to "disqualify" the Workers League for defense support because of their political program and their accusations of our complicity. Yet the Militant had plenty of time to speak out in the half year or so following the shooting when the Bulletin made no suggestion of guilt. In addition, since when do we require victims of capitalism to pass a test of political correctness?

The historical record completely condemns the leadership's present course. In the Education for Socialists publication, Against Violence Within The Workers Movement; Barry Sheppard explicitly asserts the right of parties to have investigations of violence directed against them. Cannon's article, "American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism" (in The Struggle For Socialism In The "American Century"), completely demolishes the suggestion that the Workers League

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is outside of the working class.

Most importantly, Trotsky demanded an independent investigation of the murder of a leading Stalinist when the Stalinists accused the Trotskyists! This devastating reply to the leadership's justification for the party's abstention can be found in the article "A Case For A Labor Jury" (from Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-6).

The refusal of the Militant to condemn Henehan's death is tantamount to approval. But this doesn't go far enough for some. The Political Committee initiated a counter-campaign to convince endorsers of the Workers League's call for an investigation to rescind their support! What comrade would want to carry out this despicable task? And does the Political Committee wish to accept responsibility for creating the conditions where killing a socialist becomes easy?

In no way does a condemnation of Henehan's murder or support of the Workers League's right to an investigation

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express agreement with either the policies or slander campaign of that movement. Rather, it reaffirms the party's traditions of principled defense work.

This Oberlin convention must reverse the party's course of action on Tom Henehan's death. I propose:

- 1) The immediate cessation of the counter-campaign to remove endorsers from the Workers League's call for an investigation

- 2) The issuance of a public statement condemning the murder of Tom Henehan and supporting his party's right to an investigation.