

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 19, August 7, 1968

Present: Kerry, Jones, Barnes, Dobbs, Novack.

Visitor: Waters

Chairman: Dobbs

AGENDA: 1. Bay Area Black Panther Party Discussion
2. Halstead-Sheppard Trip
3. French Students Defense Work

1. BAY AREA BLACK PANTHER PARTY DISCUSSION

Barnes reported.

On July 22 the Berkeley branch voted 23 for, 8 against, 0 abstentions to recommend to the FC that the party extend critical support to the three Bay Area local Black Panther Party - Peace and Freedom Party candidacies of Huey Newton, Kathleen Cleaver and Bobby Seale.

It rejected a motion to recommend critical support to the Eldridge Cleaver FFP presidential candidacy: 1 for, 27 against, 2 abstentions.

On July 31 the San Francisco branch divided 20 for and 20 against a motion to recommend to the FC that the party extend critical support to the three Bay Area local BFP-PFP candidacies.

It unanimously rejected a motion to recommend critical support to the Eldridge Cleaver candidacy.

The Administrative Committee suggests the PC begin its discussion on these questions at its meeting following the August 17-18 FFP National Convention at Ann Arbor.

We have asked Peter Camejo, who finishes his Midwest speaking tour on August 12, to attend the National PFP Convention and then return to New York to participate in the FC discussions.

We are circulating to the NC the contributions of the Bay Area NCers made during their branch discussions on this question as fast as we can transcribe them.

This material is being circulated for NC information only, not for general membership distribution or discussion.

The original June 6 and June 18 written contributions by Camejo and Weinstein were circulated to youth NCers since the youth locals were invited to participate in the first joint Bay Area branch discussion on June 23. The discussion was later closed to non-party youth at the July 21 joint Bay Area branch discussion.

Motion: That the rest of the material be circulated also to the youth NC members for their information.

Carried.

2. HALSTEAD-SHEFFARD TRIF

Barnes reported.

Most of Halstead's informational letters cannot be run in the paper due to space limitations. We will mimeograph major excerpts for circulation to the NC members and the branches.

3. FRENCH STUDENT DEFENSE WORK

Waters reported.

The latest information we have is that Alain Krivine and Pierre Rousset and 11 other accused JCR members have been formally indicted on charges of reconstituting the JCR. The trial is set for early September. They all have been given the status of political prisoners and none will be released on bail prior to the trials. We know very little about the other 11 indicted -- i.e., where they are from, whether they are actually JCR leaders, etc.

In terms of preparations for the trial, Schwartz, Sartre and other intellectuals have apparently agreed to testify for the JCR at the trial.

It is obvious that de Gaulle is centering his entire attack on the French students on the JCR itself with the central leadership of the JCR indicted. No other tendency has been indicted. This could be the biggest political trial in France in the last decade.

From newspaper accounts, it appears that the defense is being planned along two lines: (1) that the ban itself is illegal and was designed only for use against right-wing groups; (2) even if the decree could be used against the left, the JCR is not guilty of forming armed militia groups. They apparently do not deny that the JCR continues to exist, as public statements in the name of the JCR continue to appear in the press.

Some young socialists who visited France have decided to formally constitute an American defense committee for the French. Up to now information and publicity has been done through the YSA, SWF, Militant, etc.

The Committee to Defend the French Students has been established with Helena Hermes as National Secretary. Its central demands are the same four as the committee of artists and intellectuals in France headed by Sartre. These demands are: (1) immediate lifting of the ban on all left organizations, (2) immediate release of all political prisoners, (3) free access for all foreign journalists to France, (4) immediate end to the ban on demonstrations and the attacks on the civil liberties of the French students.

The setting up of the defense committee coincides with the U.S. tour of a leading member of the JCR. His tour will be used to gather initial sponsors for the committee.

The defense committee plans to get out several pieces of literature right away: (1) a fact sheet, (2) a list of the defendants and a short biography of each, (3) sponsor cards, (4) reprints of various articles on the JCR, etc. Later a pamphlet will be put out containing the Krivine article on the role of the JCR.

In the Militant this week will be an article by Terry Hillman who just returned from France and an article by Mary Alice Waters announcing the JCR tour and the formation of the defense committee.

On finances, the committee is trying to raise a \$500 loan to initiate its work. Money will be raised on the tour to continue the work.

Meeting adjourned.