

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 25, November 6, 1968

Present: Barnes, Kerry, Dobbs, Novack, Waters, Hansen, Sheppard,
Halstead

Visitors: Bolduc, Seigle, Jones, Ring

Chairman: Hansen

AGENDA: 1. Antiwar Report
2. European Tour
3. Militant editor and staff additions
4. PC Discussion on elections

1. ANTIWAR REPORT

Jones reported. (Written report to follow)

Motion: To approve the general line of the report.
Carried.

2. EUROPEAN TOUR

Dobbs reported.

Barry Sheppard and Caroline Lund will be making an extended tour of Europe during which time they will be sending in reports to the press.

3. MILITANT EDITOR AND STAFF ADDITIONS

Dobbs reported.

Motion: To assign Harry Ring as editor of the paper.
Carried.

Mary Alice Waters and Gus Horowitz have been asked to come to the party center and join the Militant staff.

4. PC DISCUSSION ON ELECTIONS

Barnes reported.

The PC discussion on the 1968 elections will be held next Wednesday. Ring and Breitman are invited to attend.

Meeting adjourned.

Antiwar Report by Lew Jones, November 6, 1968

This report is a synopsis of a series of discussions on our perspectives for the next phase of antiwar activities.

The fall antiwar actions were called for a time when the divisions in the existing antiwar movement were at their deepest, the pre-election period. No single date for antiwar actions was projected which was accepted by the antiwar coalition as a whole. The Student Mobilization Committee's labor day conference, a relatively small conference, called for a week of activities October 21-27. The National Mobilization Committee, in the aftermath of its widely publicized Chicago demonstrations, called for a week of activity November 1-5.

There was a marked contrast in the success of the two proposed sets of actions.

Most of the demonstrations that took place were held during the October 21-27 week. More cities had actions and larger demonstrations were held then than during the November 1-5 week. The contrast was particularly noticeable in the attempts to reach GI's and draw them into antiwar activity. The Student Mobilization Committee's dates and actions were successful in involving large numbers of GI's in activities against the war.

In almost every area where we have established locals there was a demonstration on October 26, in most cases a coalition effort by the local antiwar organizations. Most of these demonstrations were organized around the axis of attempting to reach GI's.

The SMC dates had an international character to them. There were demonstrations throughout the world during that week. The actions in Japan and England especially were large and successful.

The organizational forms did not keep pace with the success of the actions, however. The maximum that we had hoped for, the rebuilding of the SMC on a national coalition basis, did not really occur. But the SMC did exhibit the ability to initiate and lead a major national action.

In some local areas, particularly on the West Coast, new organizational forms began to emerge, a type of student-GI action committee, which reflected the turn by the antiwar movement towards reaching the GI's and the character of the October actions that took place.

Financially, a fund-raising committee for the SMC was established in New York. The committee is chaired by Florence Kennedy of Women Strike for Peace and Ruth Gage Colby of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. This committee,

established in the heat of the SMC faction fight, was able to raise considerable sums of money. It looks as if this committee can raise significant funds toward adequate financing for current SMC projects.

Reports we have indicate that the November 1-5 week of activities called by the National Mobilization Committee, was largely a failure. Despite good advance publicity, the turnout for the NMC actions was far from what they had projected, and did not measure up to those actions carried out during the October 21-27 period.

In New York, what NMC tried to organize was largely unsuccessful. The largest part of the whole week of activity was the November 2nd demonstration of about 3,000 in the New York midtown area which the SMC helped to build. Their election day actions and GI project at Fort Dix fell flat.

The coalition composing the National Mobilization Committee has disintegrated. The last few meetings of the administrative committee have been unrepresentative, composed mostly of the pacifists, SDS, and SDS graduates, with a scattering of individual independents, ourselves, and the CP. Important groups in the antiwar movement, such as SANE and Womens' Strike for Peace have been notably missing. This reflects the fact that in the NMC, Dellinger, and some of the SDS graduates have taken organizational control and are using the NMC for their own ends, caring little for what the rest of the coalition thinks. In reality, except for the name, the National Mobilization Committee as a national antiwar coalition has ceased to exist. Our job is to demonstrate to others that the NMC is no longer a coalition, but a particular wing of the movement.

The Radical Organizing Committee, the outcome of the group which split from the Student Mobilization Committee, has not been able to get off the ground. A local group which existed in Philadelphia has virtually collapsed. The group in New York remains, but it consists of no more than the same clique with which it started. ROC has cooperated with SDS and NMC in some of their joint projects, but they have not been able to outdo the SMC, even in New York.

On the other hand, the local antiwar coalitions were able to survive the election period, with varying degrees of success. In Philadelphia, the coalition appears to have grown. In Chicago it has stayed pretty much the same. In other areas, the difficulties have not been insurmountable.

The Parade Committee, most important of the local antiwar coalitions, ran into great difficulties, but has managed to survive. The right wing of the coalition became involved in the O'Dwyer campaign and temporarily stayed away from the Parade

Committee. On the other hand, the ultra-lefts, the Yippies, SDS, ROC, and the pacifists pushed their line of desertion and street "confrontations." We found ourselves caught in the middle with no real allies to bloc with in order to call the right kind of antiwar actions. In addition, the pacifists have taken over the staff of the Parade Committee. However, in contrast to the National Mobilization Committee, the Parade Committee is by no means discredited. It is still seen as the center of antiwar organizing in New York. Now that the elections are over there is a good possibility that a Parade Committee coalition can be rebuilt.

The most important development in the fall antiwar demonstrations has been the demonstration of deepening of antiwar sentiment among GI's. For the first time large numbers of GI's have participated in the antiwar actions that took place. The reports in The Militant indicate the depth of this development. The great importance of this development should be clear.

Moreover, the antiwar movement as a whole has made a general turn towards reaching GI's. This turn is not limited to the forces which are organized by the SMC or the NMC, but extends throughout the entire antiwar movement.

SANE, for instance, has formed a new group called LINK, with a political line towards the GI's that is similar to our own in a number of important respects. LINK explicitly proposes legal actions for GI's, advocating only actions that are within each GI's rights. The organization is being initiated in a serious way, with a professional staff and adequate financial backing. It is clear that SANE itself is getting involved in this in a big way. There should be an opportunity for us to cooperate with them on certain aspects of GI work, and this can be of particular value in rebuilding the adult coalition, especially the Parade Committee.

The pacifists and their allies have continued to put forward their desertion line. In essence they are trying to take draft counselling one step further by setting up counselling services for GI's, which would counsel them on how to desert.

It appears that the CP is trying to get involved with the American Servicemen's Union, the organization initiated by YAWF. The ASU gets considerable publicity in the Daily World; the two GI heroes put forward by the CP are Dennis Mora of the Fort Hood Three and Andy Stapp of YAWF, editor of the Bond, the organ of the ASU.

It appears that much of the debate between the various existing tendencies in the antiwar movement will take place over different lines towards GI work. The central debate will probably take place between the desertion line (implicit or explicit)

put forward by the pacifists and their allies and our line of building mass legal actions, defensive formulations, a withdrawal political line and legal defense for victimized GI's. It is unlikely, however, that this struggle over line will be as fierce as some of the fights we have had in the antiwar movement in the past, simply because the question will be answered in action by the GI's themselves. Despite the fact that some GI's will exhibit the same political weaknesses that we have seen in the civilian antiwar movement, the GI's in their overwhelming mass will not support any line which will lead to easy victimization.

It appears that the bombing halt itself will lead to an increase in antiwar sentiment. As the war continues to intensify, as the Paris talks drag on with no end in sight, there will be a continuing intensification of antiwar sentiment. The elections themselves, with no decisive winner elected, with no "consensus" will also continue the atmosphere that helps build the antiwar movement.

The key to future actions will be the Student Mobilization Committee and its line of building actions that are oriented toward GI's and, to the extent possible, involving GI's directly in the organizing of that activity.

With the dissolution of the National Mobilization Committee coalition and the clear solidification of that organization around an ultra-leftist, adventuristic, desertion line, it is clear that the next national action will have to be called by other forces.

The October antiwar actions proved the Student Mobilization's ability to initiate national actions around a correct antiwar orientation. Most of the local antiwar coalitions organized their actions on the basis of the call put out by the Student Mobilization Committee. The success of the October actions should add to the SMC's authority within the various local antiwar coalitions. The form of GI-student action committees which began on the West Coast are likely to continue and become the central cell for the organizing of future demonstrations. But it is too early to project a national organizational form for this development.

The entry of the GI's into the antiwar movement will help us win youth over to our perspective for building mass antiwar street actions using defensive formulations. GI participation in the antiwar movement helps cut across the feeling of isolation and frustration that has so often fed the ultra-leftist line in the past. Some type of GI-oriented action in the spring can be the basis for pulling the entire national antiwar movement back together.

The SMC is initiating a national GI-civilian antiwar action conference to be held in Chicago December 27, 28, 29. The conference will be co-sponsored by a cross-section of GI newspapers

and organizations and by some individual figures in the antiwar movement. There will be a teach-in for GI's on the 27th; on the 28th will be the conference to set the date for a major GI-civilian antiwar action in the spring; the Student Mobilization Committee will hold a conference of its own on the 29th. SMC is planning to organize nation-wide leafletting of GI's to try to get a good GI attendance at the conference. The time of the year and the central location of Chicago should aid in maximizing GI attendance, an important factor in giving authority to the conference decisions. In addition, every effort will be made to invite representatives or observers from all antiwar groups which would be likely to build the next action along the lines that the SMC projects.

Our main task will be to build the SMC conference, to try to make it as large and representative as possible, so that it will have the authority to set the date and character of the next national action. If we are successful in doing that, then the various local coalitions and various local student-GI action committees or SMC's will be able to focus their work around this authoritatively called action.

Another important factor in building future antiwar actions will be the adult coalition, not so much on the national level, but in the major cities around the country, particularly in New York.

SMC is planning to move its national office back to New York, where the real center of the antiwar movement is, and which is becoming the center of GI activity.

The SMC nationally and locally will be the main instrument for building the conference and the anticipated spring actions.

One final point: there is a proposal by the NMC that there be a conference and demonstration in Washington on the weekend of the Presidential Inauguration January 19-21. At this point, the demonstration itself is not called as a confrontation-type demonstration by a small and isolated group. But, nonetheless, the whole idea of the demonstration -- its turn away from the GI orientation, the fact that it doesn't really fit into the perspective of building a massive demonstration in the spring, the fact that it is being called for the middle of the winter which will minimize participation -- all point to its being a peripheral and not a central action for the antiwar movement. Although at this point there is no reason for us to oppose it, there is also no reason for us to build it.