

**Democratic Socialists of America
National Political Committee
Meeting of January 24-25, 2009
Minutes**

Present: Theresa Alt, Virginia Franco, David Green, Mike Hirsch, Barbara Joye, David Knuttunen, Frank Llewellyn (National Director), Simone Morgen, Erik Rosenberg (Youth Organizer), Joe Schwartz, Tim Sears, Herb Shore, John Strauss, Maria Svart (YDS Coordinating Committee). Absent: Chris Maisano, Michele Rossi, Corey Walker (all excused)

David Green chaired Saturday morning.

National Director's Report

Frank Llewellyn, the National Director, had circulated a written report and emphasized the political aspects. The committee discussed it and offered many suggestions for future work. David Green volunteered to write a four pillars op-ed that members in the Detroit area would submit to various local newspapers. On a motion by David Knuttunen the report was unanimously accepted.

Youth Report

Erik Rosenberg, Youth Organizer, had circulated a written report and materials on the upcoming YDS conference. He recapped and expanded on it. There was extensive discussion. John Strauss moved to adopt the YDS report, and it was adopted unanimously.

Budget and Finance

David Knuttunen gave the Budget and Finance Committee report (see written report), emphasizing the \$12,000 deficit in 2008 and the need to grow the organization so that it takes in 4% more money. We discussed the report and:

- the possibility of adding an extra staff member or transportation money for an intern to the budget,
 - fundraising through a Debs Club with perks for donors over a specific level,
 - a speakers' tour where speakers donate honoraria to the organization,
 - bringing young people together for dinner with potential older donors,
 - following up on expirations dates on credit cards,
 - timely budget reports,
 - recruiting people on unemployment to work as unpaid interns,
 - celebrities appearing at fundraising parties,
 - gift memberships,
 - levying contributions from locals with ability to pay,
 - providing locals with lists indicating expired and expiring members to be phoned.
- Theresa Alt moved to accept the report; Maria Svart seconded, and it was accepted unanimously.

Maria Svart chaired Saturday afternoon.

Lay of the Land and Economic Statement

Joe Schwartz summarized the three articles he had suggested as background reading on the political lay of the land. Our economic program is:

- nationalize insolvent banks
- EFCA
- fair trade
- single payer
- a green new deal
- keep people in their homes.

There was extensive discussion of this program, tax mechanisms to enable it, and sound bites to promote it.

Virginia Franco moved to adopt the statement on the economic stimulus written by Joe. The statement was adopted unanimously. Joe volunteered to rewrite the statement as two one-page flyers which he will send to Mike Hirsch for editing and then to Herb Shore to put up, in time for locals to get it out by February 15.

Program

David Knuttunen recapped the written Program Committee report, expressing some satisfaction with election statements and work but dissatisfaction with the small number of signatures we got on the Renegotiate NAFTA petition. We will need to be flexible in picking issues.

There was extensive discussion of what would make work on these issues more effective, segueing into a general discussion of how to make our organization more effective and whether we could do organizing training at the next national convention. It was agreed that materials on many issues are needed and that the Program Committee is responsible for putting them up on the website. The Detroit local will look into a role for DSA, possibly as an "anchor", at the 2010 Social Forum there. The February 11 bailout conference in Washington is a deadline for our bailout materials. The Feb. 14-22 Congressional recess is relevant for EFCA and all issues.

John moved to accept the program report with its recommendations. David Knuttunen, as author, accepted an amendment to add bank nationalization. The report and recommendations were accepted unanimously. David Knuttunen moved to maintain Renegotiate NAFTA as first priority and have a flexible approach to other program ideas, so that the organization can act on them as they become relevant to the politics of the moment. All were in favor.

Personnel Committee Report

David Knuttunen reported for the Personnel Committee that the national director's overdue annual evaluation will be ready by the next NPC meeting. A questionnaire will go the NPC list; NPCers are to respond to the address on the questionnaire within two weeks of receiving it. Questionnaires will also go to local contacts and contacts outside of DSA. Maria said that a subcommittee of the YDS Coordinating Committee would be

formed to conduct interviews to evaluate the youth organizer. Joe added that the youth organizer evaluation begins with the organizer's written self-evaluation. Non-youth members of the Personnel Committee will interview Erik and interview Frank about Erik. Joe moved to accept the Personnel Committee report, and it was accepted unanimously.

Dates for future NPC meetings are June 6-7, 2009, and September 26-27, 2009.

Tim Sears chaired Sunday morning.

Fundraising Plans

Two plans for raising funds, the Debs Club for larger donors and a bequest campaign were discussed. Other ideas under consideration were youth-donor dinners, speakers willing to donate fees, a levy on locals, and logo items for sale. The Debs Club idea specifically was referred to Budget and Finance, to be defined by the next NPC meeting.

Most NPCers committed to making a bequest, however small, to DSA.

David Knuttunen moved to refer all fundraising ideas to the Budget and Finance Committee, subject to prioritization and triage by the Committee and staff. The ideas were:

- * fundraising through a Debs Club with perks for donors over a specific level
- * speakers' tours where speakers donate honoraria to the organization
- * bringing young people together for dinner with potential older donors
- * following up on expiration dates on credit cards
- * celebrities appearing at fundraising parties
- * gift memberships
- * levying contributions from locals with ability to pay
- * providing locals with lists indicating expired and expiring members to be phoned
- * swag
- * bequest campaign.

The motion passed unanimously

Maria volunteered to head a "swag" committee. A committee consisting of Maria, John, Tim and Joe was authorized.

Responding to Erik's request, Joe volunteered to resend his list of speakers that YDS chapters could invite.

Budget

Theresa moved to adopt the budget as proposed. Tim moved to add \$1000 for interns at the discretion of the Youth Organizer. John seconded it. David Knuttunen further moved to amend this to a weekly cap of \$60, above which spending would need approval. The amendments were friendly, and the budget, as amended, was approved unanimously.

Discussion List

Joe moved a proposed discussion list of 70 active members. The National Director and list committee will develop a statement of purpose, Anyone proposed by the National Director of an NPC member can be added by four votes; anyone can be deleted by four votes, and such votes to exclude an individual will outweigh any number of votes for inclusion. The committee will figure out whether to passively subscribe list members and will implement the list within two weeks. List members may not forward posts except their own. David Knuttunen will moderate the list. Most voted in favor; Theresa Alt opposed.

Gaza Statement

Joe had proposed a statement on Israel's bombing and invasion of Gaza. There was extensive discussion and much disagreement. Joe then proposed a more limited statement consisting only of paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9, to be used as a basis. A straw poll gave three for, two opposed and two explicit abstentions.

Joe then moved that the document be referred back to the Steering Committee to be based on the six paragraphs, with the understanding that people can submit more material and that the final document should go to the whole NPC for approval. Most voted for; Theresa against.

The National Political Committee of DSA adjourned to allow time for a meeting of the Board of the DSA Fund.

The National Political Committee then reconvened, with Barbara Joye chairing.

National Convention

Theresa volunteered to update the rules and calendar, and Tim volunteered to review them.

Frank suggested that the Steering Committee be the Convention planning committee. In the absence of a vote, this stands.

There was discussion with a number of suggestions made, including one for activist training. Key Chicago people are: Bob Roman, Tom Broderick, Michael Baker and others.

Democratic Left

The report of the editorial committee was accepted.

Political Education

Mike reported on plans for two panels at Left Forum. Joe noted that the committee had worked on literature. Mike volunteered to go through ten years of DL looking for still-timely materials, also to write things YDS requested a year earlier.

Herb will send out the two short versions of the Economic Justice Agenda, and if there are no objections, will consider them adopted and post them.

Local Development

Barbara Joye reported on work done by the Local Development Committee for articles in *Democratic Left* and the list of locals on the website. There was discussion of where and how new locals could be developed. Barbara Joye and Simone Morgen will co-chair the committee, which also consists of David Green, Virginia Franco and David Duhalde. The report was accepted.

Electronic DSA

Herb offered to try to make the home page of the website look nicer and the page for giving money. He asked for help from people who know web design.

Environmental Listserve

David Knuttunen reported that it is small, by invitation only, and rather inactive. Others should suggest new members.

Healthcare Statement

Herb had proposed a statement on healthcare, which was discussed. David Knuttunen moved to adopt the spirit of the statement and to refer it to the Program Committee to perfect the language when events in Congress make it a priority. Theresa seconded, and the motion was adopted unanimously.

Submitted by Theresa Alt