

Democratic Socialists of America
National Political Committee
Minutes of Meeting of September 13-14, 2008

Present: Theresa Alt, David Duhalde (visiting Saturday only), Virginia Franco, David Green, Mike Hirsch, Barbara Joye, David Knuttunen, Frank Llewellyn (National Director), Simone Morgen, Eric Rosenberg (Youth Organizer), Michele Rossi, Joseph Schwartz, Tim Sears, Herb Shore, John Strauss, Maria Svart (YDS Coordinating Committee; Saturday morning only). Absent: Corey Walker, Chris Maisano (YDS CC).

Barbara Joye chaired Saturday morning.
Maria Svart served as timekeeper.

National Director's Report

Frank Llewellyn, National Director, made a few additions and clarifications to his written report, but most discussion was deferred to the component parts later in the agenda. David Knuttunen moved to adopt the report; John Strauss seconded, and the vote to adopt was unanimous.

YDS Reports

Erik Rosenberg, Youth Organizer, and David Duhalde, former Youth Organizer, summarized their written reports. Questions and answers and then discussion followed. Erik will send basic outreach documents that YDSers are writing (NAFTA and higher education brochures) to the NPC as well as post them on the YDS website. Herb Shore suggested putting them on the DSA website as well or making them linkable. Barbara Joye suggested announcing them on DSANews.

Erik requested that NPCers reach out to professors in their areas and ask them to publicize YDS. He also requested that the NPC draft a short organizing guide for young activists on how to set up a DSA local.

The Student Labor Action Project (SLAP) has agreed to endorse the Renegotiate NAFTA campaign. David Duhalde will try to get USAS and CIW to endorse as well. He is willing to work with the Local Development Committee to identify former YDS activists who could start locals.

The reports were thoroughly discussed and many ideas raised.

Budget and Finance Committee Report

David Knuttunen summarized the Budget and Finance Committee Report, which shows the typical trend toward a deficit for the year. There was extensive discussion with suggestions for new fundraising. David Knuttunen and Frank need to discuss what kind of reporting we want, and then it may be possible to get help from Michele Rossi's brother in implementing a system.

David Duhalde moved to accept the report; Simone Morgen seconded, and it was accepted unanimously.

Lay of the Land

Joe Schwartz pointed to his article in *Democratic Left* and repeated the main points. He concluded that Obama needs to combine an economic populist message with values. DSA ought to be looking at where we have members in swing states and send DSAers from other areas to those crucial places.

Mike Hirsch presented his proposed election piece but suggested tabling it to after the Program discussion. A discussion on the election situation followed. Locals and youth asked what they could do legally; Frank will send out information on how to work legally through the PAC.

YDSers have been mobilizing for campaign work, and DSAers might join with them.

Tim Sears chaired Saturday afternoon.

Program Committee Report

David Knuttunen summed up the Program Committee Report, which presented how shifting circumstance had led finally to the committee advocating concentrating on Renegotiating NAFTA. After extensive discussion in which many alternative ideas were suggested for incorporating more Obama campaign work, the report was tabled until David Kn. could write up a new resolution and present it Sunday.

Local Development Committee Report

Barbara Joye noted that information about the state of locals is in the written report; some of these local reports will appear in the Fall issue of *Democratic Left*. Four organizing committees, Cleveland, Pittsburgh North Central Florida and Marin County, have completely ceased to function and can be dropped from the list. Theresa Alt moved to decharter the clearly nonfunctioning San Fernando Valley local. David Green seconded and this passed unanimously. The Local Development Committee will consider whether attending the National Convention will be required for continuing status of a local. The committee's report was accepted.

Electronic Resources

Herb Shore reported on both the website and the discussion on DSAMember about the purpose of the listserv and whether it is useful. Extensive discussion followed about the listserv and the need for a keylist.

Joe moved that within two weeks the National Director is to circulate to the NPC a list of NPC members and other constructively active members; NPC members can then propose others to be on the list, and then the Director will create an unmoderated DSA activist email discussion list to allow the Director and NPC to organize the national and local DSA work. David Knuttunen seconded. More discussion followed. Almost all voted for the motion; only Theresa Alt voted against it.

Mike Hirsch announced that he no longer wanted to be the administrator of DSAMember. There was discussion about how to handle the situation.

David Knuttunen moved that the National Director with all deliberate speed find a volunteer on or outside of the NPC to take over the job of moderating DSAMember. The motion passed unanimously.

Labor Blog

Tim Sears reported verbally on Talking Union, DSA's labor blog. Statistically it has been very successful in terms of views and posts, although it could use more original material. Tim will put his report in writing after the meeting.

Environmental Listserve

David Knuttunen noted that the DSA Environmental listserv existed, but nobody was posting to it.

Electoral Resolution

Tim Sears, Mike Hirsch and Frank Llewellyn agreed to be a drafting committee for a new electoral resolution. They will draft it in one week, and it will then be discussed on the NPC listserv.

Political Education Committee

Michele Rossi summarized the committee report. It includes the suggestion that there be such retreats every year when there is not a Convention. There was extensive discussion of the DSA/YDS retreat. Then we discussed how to get more out of the Economic Justice Agenda and the need for better literature and paraphernalia in general.

Theresa moved to accept the Political Education Committee report, and it was accepted unanimously.

David Green chaired Sunday morning.

David Knuttunen moved to add David Duhalde to the Local Development Committee; Tim seconded, and the vote was unanimous for this.

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

After a half hour the NPC reconvened.

Program Committee, Continued

David Knuttunen presented a motion which, after some discussion and friendly amendments, read as follows:

DSA's main program focus through the rest of 2008 will consist of (1) working to help ensure the election of Barack Obama and (2) continuing work on the Renegotiate NAFTA petition drive.

Work on the Obama campaign will include:

- 1) email blasts and other communications issuing from the National Office attacking McCain/Palin and explaining the necessity of voting for Obama,
- 2) encouraging locals to do DSA-day volunteering en bloc for the Obama campaign,
- 3) circulating pro-Obama/anti-McCain literature that YDS is developing to non-youth DSA members,
- 4) encouraging DSA members to write anti-McCain letters to the editor for their local newspapers, and provide them with sample language and tips on getting published;
- 5) if YDS organizes volunteer efforts for Obama, especially in swing states, urge them to open their actions to a multi-generational component, and if they agree, inform DSA members of the availability of this option;
- 6) materials from DSA on reasons to support Obama shall reference the Economic Justice Agenda whenever possible.

Work on the Renegotiate NAFTA campaign will follow the strategy laid out in the Program Committee report to the September 2008 NPC.

Locals and at-large DSA members will be encouraged to work on both campaigns to the extent of their ability, but the Obama campaign will be the priority until the election.

Work on the NAFTA campaign will emphasize the relationship of NAFTA and the Economic Justice Agenda.

The NPC realizes that, should Obama fail to win the November election, the viability of the Renegotiate NAFTA campaign may require radical reconsideration.

The NPC charges the Program Committee with meeting shortly after the election to discuss how the results impact on the program going forward including the Economic Justice Agenda.

The motion carried unanimously.

Georgia Resolution

Mike Hirsch had edited Bogdan Denitch's draft of a resolution on Georgia to make it more readable. Numerous amendments were suggested, but eventually the whole resolution was questioned. Joe moved and Michele seconded to refer it to the Steering Committee, and the vote to refer was unanimous.

Personnel Committee Report

Michele summarized the written Personnel Committee report. Theresa moved to adopt it; Simone seconded, and it was adopted unanimously.

International Work

There was discussion of DSA's international work on the Socialist International and outside of it.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the National Political Committee will be January 24-25, with January 31-February 1 as backup date, in case Corey Walker is unable to do the 245h-25th.

Democratic Left

John Strauss noted that the summer issue is in the mail, and the deadline for the fall issue is September 15. There was discussion of the written report and suggestions for new authors, a sidebar on mythbusting, and letters to the editor.

Tim moved to accept the report; David Knuttunen seconded, and the report was unanimously accepted.

National Convention Site

Frank recapped the section of his report that gave details on various possible sites. There was discussion with suggestions.

John moved that we agree on Chicago and that Frank explore union hotels without meeting facilities so that the convention can be held within the city. This passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned with an evaluation.

Submitted by Theresa Alt