

Trinity College

Trinity College Digital Repository

Resist Board Meeting Minutes

Resist Collection

6-1-1976

Resist Board Meeting, June 1, 1976

Resist

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/minutes>

Recommended Citation

Resist, "Resist Board Meeting, June 1, 1976" (1976). *Resist Board Meeting Minutes*. 90.
<https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/minutes/90>

REQUESTS for JUNE 1st MEETING

- ✓ Fellowship - Nyack, NY ✓ *send out ME lit list*
- No 2. Puerto Rican Socialist Party - Larry 800
- \$300 3. Unidos Bookstore - Larry -300
- up to \$250 if nec. 4. LISP - Paul - 595
- (1500 loan) 5. Somerville Women's Health Project - Hilde 300
- Postpone 6. Source - Eileen 300
- " 7. Wildcat - Paul
- 250 8. The Defense Committee - Paul - 899 (300)
- No 9. Women's Counseling Center - Hilde 400
- \$165/3 10. United WREP Workers - Larry 495
- \$100 11. Youth Liberation - Frank
12. Recon - Paul ✓
- ✓ 13. Community Referral Center, Albany, NY - Eileen - *Do they do any political organizing?*
- \$200 14. Santa Fe Community Press - Eileen
- > to Ann 15. Respond - Hilde —
- I check 16. Suffolk Street Papers - Eileen \$220/mo. *Do anything but put paper out? Who reads?*
- \$350 17. National Lawyers Guild - Larry 350/500 *How distribute? How long pay*
- Karmin Bishop Defense Committee requests the use of our list to send out educational materials.

June 15, 1976

Dear People:

The financial situation is terrible. Here are the facts. As of June 3th, our balance was \$475.00. Eileen and I went over the books for the past two years. Based on that review, we concluded that pledges have remained stable at \$1200-\$1500 a month; our grants remained constant at around \$2000 a month. Contributions, however, have dropped drastically over the last 3 months. Normal returns have been \$2000-\$2500 a month. The last 3 months we averaged \$650 a month in contributions.

A small meeting of Boston people was held (present were Eileen, Madge, Wayne, Hilde, Louis and Ken) to discuss ways to get us through the summer. Eileen and I also had met with Bob Zevin the previous week to discuss the financial situation and the future of Resist. We reported on that discussion at the Boston meeting (more on that in a minute). The decisions which came out of the meeting were 1) writing to the Ferrys 2) going through our contributors and sending special letters to large contributors with a draft of the New Call 3) an appeal on the last page of the June newsletter 4) the significance of this financial crisis in light of Resist's purpose and future as an organization will be the main priority for discussion at the July 11th meeting. So far, the Ferrys have responded with a \$3000 check stating that it's their last for 1976. We have yet to get the other letters off.

Zevin's analysis of Resist's financial crisis (in brief) : Since the anti-war movement Resist has slowly lost its funding base, particularly among pacifists. Through the newsletter and/or our funding left errors have been made which have alienated liberal contributors. The Resist board doesn't have political unity sufficient to work together to be a viable organization that can attract people and money. Zevin maintains that there should be a real political focus for Resist, a high level of political unity (which he believes at one time being against the Vietnam war allowed for, despite other differences). His former position that Resist should disband still stands, however, if it hopes to continue he strongly suggests that the financial and political base of Resist be addressed seriously and that people deal with reality and discontinue the myth that Resist plays a leadership role on the left right now. One proposal Zevin made was to institute an entirely new board. Zevin has been hesitant to assert his position because he feared that people would only interpret his perspective as an opportunistic move. Also, Bob has had contact with pledges who left Resist and discussed their reasons with him. He has agreed to come to a meeting if this issue will be seriously discussed.

Eileen and I have done a lot of thinking about Resist's future and shared these thoughts at the Boston meeting. We've been feeling for some time that since Zevin has left no one has replaced his role of safeguarding our financial base. Someone(s) needs to take on this role. We feel that the priority that ~~makes~~ makes sense for an organization like Resist and what can be done best if worked on is funding. We agree with Zevin that liberals have been alienated and therefore Resist's historical role of providing a link between liberals and the left has been seriously damaged. We agree with Zevin that it's imperative right now to reassess and restructure Resist. We don't agree that we should disband and we feel that a board representative of all the groupings on the left could work together and come up with a political focus which could attract people to it. We're proposing that we seriously consider this direction and go about recruiting with this in mind. At the Boston meeting there was a consensus to deal seriously with these issues. There was greatest consensus around the belief that we've been existing with an unrealistic perspective ourselves and that we should put our energy into being a viable funding organization, rather than into political polemics. We need to accept our own political differences and work together to continue an organization that can play an important role in the political life of the U.S. today.

Love in struggle,

madge and eileen

To Resist folks,

When I sat down to think through a response to Madge and Eileen's letter, it initially seemed to me that the major problem had to do with our continuing failure to do well the things we need to do. As is no secret, I've felt that we have made a number of very serious --if not fatal--errors in the recent past, from the Duff article, to the weird pledge letter to the armed struggle fiasco to my own failure to take initiatives in funding areas. And I started to draft a response that emphasized the things we do need to do: have a Newsletter that people read and respect--that is as well edited, precise, and unrhethorical as IF Stone used to be; have a better and expanding pledge system--recruit pledges; have a regular fund-raising effort, not a hit and miss affair; involve both more people that our constituency trusts and the people already in Resist more; develop a much better network of contacts so that we are not so frequently at a loss or in vague disagreement over funding requests; get on simplifying the call and having a basic standpoint that people can identify with. Now I think we have to do all those things, without slipups.

But Zevin's remarks as reported by M&E forced me to think again. I don't know just what Zevin has said--I've not been privy to these discussions and I haven't heard from him (yes, Robert, a minor criticism). But it seemed to me that something like the following is the drift of his thought--and if I'm wrong I'd surely like to get straightened out:

Resist falls between poles. On the one hand, there are the Marxist-Leninist parties, which are trying to build from proletarian constituency, which Resist surely does not have nor, by its nature, can have, and which are of very doubtful relevance to the American scene today or for the foreseeable future. The reasons are many and varied--from dogmatism, to excessive in-fighting, to the pride of sectarianism, to the inapplicability of Leninist models, to the undesirability of applying Leninist models (who wants to live under Stalin?), etc. On the other hand, there is the spectrum of groups like those brought together by IPS in Texas recently, ranging from Tom Hayden to Burlage to ACOH in Arkansas; there is IFCO (Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations); there are regional funding groups like Haymarket, with lots more money. These folks are far better financed, are actually doing things that make for change, are involved in challenging the Democratic left as well as in recruiting a mass base. Resist is irrelevant to them both by ideology--too socialist, which, as a recent article said, is a "red-flag word"--and by smallness of financial base. So it can only be that the communist left relates to Resist as a rip-off of the class of intellectuals, managers, etc., on the one hand, and the broader IPS spectrum as an irrelevance, which no longer even has to be respected on the basis of its direct anti-war actions. All we can do, therefore, is relate to small, aggressively separatist community grouplets, which are a kind of movement-urban equivalent of Vermont dropping out, since they focus only on local life-issues and not on a real challenge to the structures of power.

Is that something like it, Robert? Whether or no, it makes a cogent critique of Resist, at least from one perspective. I want to introduce a third factor, or a slightly different way of looking at this reality. I agree with the critique of the party left--I think it is largely an irrelevance and will continue to be (for various reasons, but fundamentally because the fact is that a cross-class movement for change is necessary in a society as diverse as this and one as capable of preventing the polarization of society into bourgeoisie vs. proletariat). But the overwhelming tendency in the IPS spectrum (admittedly, it was a Conference on Alternative State and Local Public Policies, which attracts standard politicians) is toward incorporation into the Democratic party left (I use that word hesitantly). That's where IPS came from, that's where Hayden and Sam Brown etc. are now, and that's where the power is, as things stand--and the attraction is fatal, in my judgment. For the Democratic party is, obviously, a party of the bourgeoisie and that's not going to change. Moreover, without a left, the tendency of the Democratic Party is itself to drift right, and it is too easy to see the tendencies which we have incorrectly been calling "radical populism" being pulled further and further, like Bayard Rustin, into the Democratic center. Unless there is a coherent and increasingly mass-based force to its left. So that over time that left-liberal spectrum is being challenged, pulled toward a coherent left.

My view is that the potential for that left exists. I think it must be specifically

socialist in outlook and in program--i.e., I think it has to use not only the word but the kinds of concepts embodied in the call. I do not have delusions that Robert will bring that socialist force into being. On the other hand, I think we do not have to be irrelevant. It seems to me that we have a responsibility to try to relate to the socialist part of that IPS spectrum, to ACORN, for example, as well as to CIOG; to the Barings group in Appalachia, as well as to the Vermont Alliance. I think we can and should try to incorporate such people into the board, as well as people like Judy Paluso, from the Grand Jury Project, as well as some from the July 4 thing.

In short, I do agree with Levin that the board should be changed, though I'm not sure that we agree about just how. I'd like to see on it people from the specifically socialist part of that IPS spectrum, people actually involved in substantial organizing efforts, plus people from the independent movement left, most of whom seem to be working in anti-repression, prison, third-world organizing projects. I'd put the boards on both sides of this spectrum: it makes as little sense not to me to involve people in the Democratic Party as in the Revolutionary Communist Party (or whatever RP is now).

Further, I think we need to get off the dime with respect to the women's movement. Even RRM was officially at the Philly thing. We can't be hung up on recruiting only from among those who describe themselves as socialist feminists, which seems to be a fancy phrase at this point for a set of study groups.

But the major reconstruction would, I think, involve a conscious effort to draw people from the left of what has been to the "right" of us, and from the independent, activist wing of what has been out there in the movement.

We may further disagree on the question of a public espousal of a socialist position. There seems to have been a good deal of propaganda coming from Democratic left organs raising socialism as a "red-flag" word recently. Is that fear, or creeping to the right? I don't much care. My guess, and it is just a guess, is that the call, which is specifically socialist, will be welcomed by the kind of constituency to which we speak. (It is, now, too long, involved, etc.; it needs to be dealt with in differing type faces, and the like, to make it readable by people who glance at things, at least to start.) I would be wrong. If Robert is arguing that socialism is an irrelevance, or a bogia-word right now, he could be right. I think it is worth risking the organization on that point. But I think it is worth risking it only if we consciously make the throw of the dice worth something by setting out to enlarge the organization along the lines WH I've tried to describe. If I'm right, then it will turn out that a somewhat enlarged funding base will have something clearly in motion to fund. And a small point will have been won along the path to a socialist organization. If I'm wrong, we will simply pack up our tents somewhat earlier than we might otherwise--though at present rates, not much earlier!

Just another word: I've written this out frankly and without draft, but with a great deal of uncertainty. The thing about the movement I'm sickest of right now is the festing self-righteousness. Ego wrapped in Analysis wrapped in Lenin--like a raisin in a meatball in a grapeleaf. I think we're all guessing a lot right now, and I'd like to be clear that this is a guess. I could trot out my evidence, but finally what's involved is how one set of eyes catches the curve of a small arc of history. So I guess I'm asking for some discussion predicated on that acknowledgment of uncertainty, and without our usual lectures.

cheers,

Paul (and I hope the last copies
of this are readable)