

Minutes of the
Executive Board Meeting
of the
American Committee on Africa

July 14, 1958

Present: Acting Chairman—Peter Weiss; Nelson Bengston, George Edmund Haynes, Elizabeth S. Landis, Frank Montero, William X. Scheinman, Adelaide Schulkind, George W. Shepherd, Jr., Hugh H. Smythe, Robert Trentlyon, Benjamin Wechsler; Staff—Dale Harrison, George M. Houser, John Williams.

Shepherd Leaves for Minnesota: This meeting was the last Executive Board session prior to the departure of George Shepherd—first Executive Director of the ACOA—for St. Olaf's College in Minnesota, where he is joining the faculty. He has promised to try to return to New York for Board meetings as frequently as he possibly can. In expression of gratitude for the tremendous amount of time and energy he has devoted to the Committee over the last five years, letters of appreciation from Roger Baldwin, Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, Homer Jack and Norman Thomas were read into the record. The gratitude of present day Board members was expressed by the Acting Chairman. A brief-case and a copy of Lord Hailey's "African Survey" were presented to George Shepherd by Elizabeth Landis on behalf of the Board.

Executive Board Elections: Edward Gray and John Murra were elected to the Executive Board. Brief biographies of these two new members are attached. A motion was passed to refer the nomination of Joseph Jablow to the Nominating Committee. Another motion was passed to refer to the Organization Committee, for report or action as may be appropriate, any problem which may arise out of membership on the Executive Board of two persons who have been variously associated with the same international union.

A third motion passed which requested that all future nominations to the Executive Board be referred to the Nominating Committee for recommendations prior to the meeting of the Executive Board at which voting is to take place. Nominations are to be submitted to the Executive Director for transmission to the Nominating Committee and should be submitted sufficiently early so that they may be properly acted on in time for the subsequent Executive Board meeting.

Treason Trial Observer: George Houser said that the treason trial observer sponsored by the ACOA left for South Africa in mid-July. He will remain there until August 17 at which time he will travel to Los Angeles for a meeting of the American Bar Association. In September he will return to the East and will be available for meetings and other events to be planned for New York and other areas.

Financial Matters: It was moved and resolved that the Finance and Organization Committees jointly consider the possibility of the ACOA becoming a membership organization.

George Houser said that the Reserve Fund had been set up for two purposes: to accumulate funds for (1) sending the observer to South Africa, and (2) laying aside money to fall back on during the summer months. He estimated that the ACOA would need \$10,000 to get through the summer. He said we had approximately \$1,500 in cash on hand, \$2,500 had been pledged by foundations and individuals, and that the Committee can expect about \$1,000 to come in from other sources throughout the summer. This leaves a \$5,000 gap in the budget, he noted. Therefore he urged that \$2,000 be transferred from the Reserve Fund to the ACOA regular account, and that \$3,000 be borrowed from the bank. The Board so resolved.

Pan-African Conference: George Houser reported that a Pan-African Conference to be attended by leaders of organizations from African territories throughout the continent will be convened in Accra this September or October. This will be the first unofficial Pan-African Conference to be held on the continent and will have great significance. Those attending will be representatives of groups working for independence in many parts of the continent. Houser reported he has received numerous communications suggesting that he attend this historical meeting. He would be gone about two weeks, and private financing is available for the trip.

The Board resolved that George Houser attend the Conference in his official capacity as Executive Director of the ACOA.

Nkrumah Dinner and Book Project: John Williams and Frank Montero reported on plans for the Nkrumah dinner. It was noted that a gift of books and records was to be presented to the Prime Minister at the dinner, and that one publisher has already promised 500 volumes, but many more would be solicited. The Board resolved that the ACOA cooperate with the NAACP and the Urban League on this project.

New Committee Assignment: The Board approved the Chairman's nomination—received by letter—of Elizabeth S. Landis to the Organization Committee to replace Robert Meagher, who is out of the country.

Fall Program: George Houser reported that items on our fall program include the publication of a pamphlet on the Portuguese colonies in Africa, the planning of events in connection with the return of the treason trial observer, the Chirwa tour, and continued efforts on behalf of the South Africa Defense Fund.

Margaret Wrong Memorial Prize: The Committee has received a letter from the Margaret Wrong Memorial Fund asking that it recommend Africans for the 1958 Margaret Wrong Memorial Prize for services to literature and Africa. Members who have suggestions for the prize should communicate them to the Executive Director.

Elections Questioned: Robert Trentlyon questioned the validity of the election to the Executive Board earlier in the meeting of both John Murre and Edward Gray on the basis of the tenth paragraph of Article 7 of the By-Laws, which provides that "Vacancies in said Board of Directors shall be filled by a vote of the remaining members of the Board of Directors for the balance of the term." The Acting Chairman ruled that the elections were valid (citing past precedent and the wording of the entire By-Laws) and held that the proper interpretation of the provision required a majority of the Directors present, providing there was a quorum. He pointed out that the interpretation suggested by Mr. Trentlyon would throw open to doubt the validity of all previous elections. Mr. Trentlyon did not appeal the ruling of the Acting Chairman but stated that he might raise the issue at the next meeting.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Executive Board is on September 22.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES

Edward F. Gray

Edward F. Gray is a special problems officer and a former assistant regional director of Region 9 of the United Auto Workers. He is active in the NAACP, vice president and member of the executive committee of the National Committee for Rural Schools, and is an officer of the western New York Labor Committee to Combat Intolerance. He has worked on special projects sponsored by the ICFTU involving labor visitors from abroad, including representatives of Kenya, Ghana and Jamaica, and helped to arrange Tom Mboya's ACOA-sponsored tour of the UAW. He was a member of the official team sent to investigate the Fulbright labor scholarship program in Britain in 1956. He has many times helped promote ACOA activities within the UAW such as the South Africa Defense Fund. He has many friends in labor circles abroad, and within the ICFTU and Lovestone branches of the labor movement in the US.

John Murra

John Murra is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Vassar College and has a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, where he was an instructor of anthropology for three years. He taught at the University of Puerto Rico for three years and was director in the field of the Rockefeller Foundation study of four Puerto Rican communities from 1947-49. He has also taught African anthropology at Brooklyn College, Columbia University, and in the spring of 1958, the New School of Social Research. He has edited two special issues of the NATION devoted to Africa, and has prepared numerous UN documents on problems in trust territories such as land legislation, population, and constitutional developments. He is a Fellow of the American Anthropological Association, International African Institute, African Studies Association (US), and the American Ethnological Society. In the winter of 1956 he served as moderator of a series of four lecture-demonstrations on African arts sponsored by the ACOA.