

# whatever became of the new left?

by Dick Flacks

Sitting in at the SDS national council meetings in Ann Arbor a few weeks ago, I found myself increasingly disturbed by the sense that a certain spirit which once seemed to prevail at SDS meetings was largely missing. As I listened, in fact, to the interminable wrangles over phraseology in resolutions, observed the perfunctory attitudes of the assembled, felt the irrelevance and evasiveness of much of the discussion, I began to wonder -- "whatever became of the New Left?"

Part of the problem is that SDS national council meetings -- and, indeed, SDS national program in general -- don't represent the reality of the organization. The decisions and activities of SDS occur at local levels -- in the chapters, projects, regions -- and at that level organizational life is rich, developing, relevant. At the local level, SDS has probably never been better off -- new activist leadership is emerging, a variety of increasingly effective action is occurring, there is an everwidening group of people, on campus and off, who identify with SDS and what they take to be its perspective.

But the malaise at the national level is also real. It is reflected in these bad meetings -- not bad because boring (SDS meetings are always boring) -- bad because speech-making, abstract debate, "statementism," ideological posturing by new ultra-"leftists" (who always seem to make it to NC meetings), rhetoric, factional maneuver dominate over concrete political decision-making, discussion about resource allocation, consideration of actual organizational problems, cool political analysis, reasonable and open interchange, search for underlying bases of agreement. The last set of qualities used to be what SDS meetings tried to be like; the first set makes the NC look like a caricature of what people used to explicitly try to avoid.

The malaise at the national level has more serious consequences than the quality of meetings. It is reflected in the extraordinarily starved financial state of the national office, for example. More fundamentally, it is

reflected in the fact that SDS has ceased to be the pace-setting initiator in the Movement in terms of program and thrust at the national level. I think the initiative was lost after the membership failed to approve the anti-draft program last Winter; since then, SDS, as a national organization, has failed to develop any substantial national program which could provide a focus for Movement energy. This is not to say that local groups are not initiators -- witness the impressive "anti-rank" protests this Spring. But for nearly a year now, SDS people have been unable to speak with their earlier assurance about where the Movement should be headed and what SDS is doing about it.

One obvious reason for the stalemated condition of the organization is its fantastically increased size and internal complexity. Only two years ago, the SDS membership was largely bound together by ties of personal friendship. It was a high consensus group, with a few well-defined "tendencies;" and its main common mission was pretty clear -- to build the organization, develop its resources and constituencies. The April 1965 March on Washington and the subsequent visibility of SDS changed this radically; the organization has been literally swamped by thousands of new recruits from every part of the country, exhibiting an astonishing range of political viewpoints, aspirations, degrees of sophistication.

But if SDS has lost the initiative on the Left, who has picked it up? The answer, for the most part, is that the left -- "new" or "old" -- is more stalemated and fragmented on the national level than SDS.

The signs of this are readily apparent. The anti-war movement can still produce impressive demonstrations and courageous acts of protest -- each such action serving as minor key accompaniment to a steadily more accentuated *marche militaire* . . . Political discussion in the journals of left opinion seems to have settled down to an incredibly repetitive and unbelievably irrelevant debate among various self-appointed experts on the "new left" and

attendant issues . . . The Communist Party and related groups seem to be striving for a restoration of something like the Popular Front -- as if this were the major lever for changing the structure of power in the US . . . And there is an enormous preoccupation with matters of style, and with precise measurements of the degree of "leftness" or "selling out" of people -- measurements based largely on such evidence as: adherence to correct slogans, the ability to be insolent, distance from established institutions and organizations, and other signs of outward grace. The new calculus produces such results as: "the grape strike is a sell-out," "The Scheer campaign was a sell-out," "The Hazard miners are squares," "Having older people join SDS only dilutes its radicalism," "Participatory democracy is a lot of twaddle." (References on request.)

If there has been any creative initiative recently it has been the emergence of SNCC's newly-articulated program. This effort -- to develop centers of independent political action in the Black Belt, to develop a base in Northern ghettos, to build ties to the international student movement, and to develop black consciousness -- is a badly-needed fresh strategy for black radicals. But SNCC's emphasis on black organization points up even more sharply the fragmentation and stagnation of the (mostly white) Left. SNCC is implicitly saying -- we will set out our priorities -- and you white radicals will have to set yours.

So the impasse on the left is endemic and not restricted to SDS.

What accounts for it?

First of all, the war. This Vietnam war has been a most important radicalizing experience for a lot of Americans. It has helped to build the Left. But people on the Left can't responsibly worry about much else as long as it goes on. And the more they accept responsibility for trying to end the war, the more militant they become -- and the more they sense their own impotence, isolation and alienation from the larger society. The result, to oversimplify, is a

large number of militant radicals, less and less able to think clearly and undistortedly about their role in the society and its transformation. Everything is made much worse by the fact that the war is intensifying and not going to end soon -- something which I think most of us would not have believed even a few months ago. The war helps to build the radical movement, but the necessary obsession to work to end it is, in many ways, incompatible with achieving such a movement. That is one source of the current paralysis of the left.

A second reason for paralysis is the effect the war and other events have had on some of the things we have felt and perceived about American society.

If you think back to the summer of 1963 perhaps you will remember how clear (relatively) the radical's role seemed to be at that time. That was the summer of the nuclear test ban treaty and the August 28 March on Washington. That was the time when "Blowing in the Wind" was the number one pop hit -- a fact which seemed symbolically important at the time. For SDSers and others on the left there were some sharply defined strategic tasks to be done and a locatable place to stand. It was to be a time of domestic reform in the context of declining Cold War. But the reform would be circumscribed. It would not cope with the growing unemployment generated by automation and the rising youth population. It would not achieve disarmament and the conversion of the defense economy to peaceful pursuits. It would not relate to the rising misery of the Third World -- misery which was becoming clearly revolutionary all over the place. But it would create sufficient openness to change to allow a radical movement to build on these issues, to appeal to new constituencies with alternative programs -- programs for democratic planning, economic conversion, a new agenda for America. The tokenism of the New Frontier, and the coming end of the Cold War would buy time for the emergence of the New Left as a real political alternative in America. That was

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## intellectual elitism and the failure of teaching

I have been involved in SDS for a good number of years now, and I am increasingly disturbed by two interrelated phenomena -- our inability to make explicit decisions or have organization-wide discussions, about priorities and direction for SDS; and the almost total lack of internal education within the organization. These two problems are interrelated, and both revolve (as I indicated in my paper for the December Conference) around an unwillingness or inability of the leadership to exercise self-discipline and to commit themselves to education.

Aside from a lack of a program of internal education, the most important evidence of these problems is the totally inadequate nature of National Council meetings and conventions. I missed the NCs and Conventions between summer 1964 and spring 1966; maybe these were better than those prior to summer 1964 or the recent NC in Ann Arbor, but from the reports I heard I rather tend to doubt it. At these national meetings, decisions don't get made, discussions are not had and thus issues are not made clear, and people are not involved in making the decisions which affect their (organizational) lives. I would suggest three important reasons for this.

1. The first -- and most important -- I call (perhaps somewhat harshly) intellectual elitism. By this I mean what I indicated above -- that the intellectual elite of SDS does not see teaching as one of its most important functions. Aside from the lack of commitment to a thorough internal education program (which is the most important feature lacking in SDS program), the most important way in which this elitism manifests itself is in the lack of what I call thinking out loud or in public. As I was closely connected with the bureaucratic end of the organization for the two school years 1962-1964, at a time when the intellectual centre of SDS was in Ann Arbor, I knew that discussions and thinking were constantly going on among the most politically sophisticated and knowledgeable members of SDS, but this never filtered down at all -- not even to work-list members, much less to the membership at

large through inclusion in the SDS Bulletin (the forerunner of NLN) of papers by and exchange of correspondence among the intellectual elite. This has been substantially true ever since; New Left Notes includes some such material, but much too little for the level of thinking which has been reached by our most advanced members.

This is compounded by another error of omission -- the poor planning of national meetings (NCs and Conventions) and the failure to use such occasions to educate the attenders. (This is in part closely tied to the first item above, in that a policy of thinking in public would prepare members for national meetings much better.) Not only are such meetings not set up with the needs of the 'ordinary member' in mind (an accusation explicitly made in the aforementioned Dec Conf paper), but once in session they display an incoherence and undirectedness which leads, at best, to consideration of trivia and, at worst, to disaster. Furthermore, the intellectual elite completely fails to fulfill its role of teachers: all too often they simply fail to attend or take part in such meetings, wanting not to control proceedings but seeing non-participation as the only way to meet that responsibility. The alternative, and I think correct, policy would require discipline and judiciousness and patience -- features few of us on the New Left display in overwhelming quantity --: that "work style" would limit the elite's contributions to comments meant to point out the significance of a particular issue and some of the particular question's ramifications, without seeking to find the 'correct line' on that particular issue.

2. There is a second important aspect of national meetings which can only fairly again be laid at the feet of the SDS leadership. Those NCs and Conventions which I have attended have been too full of plenary sessions at which either the syndromes Todd Gitlin talked about (the Pathology of the NC) prevails or (worse?) chaos reigns. NCs and Conventions should be built around small group meetings, for both educational and business purposes, with plenaries playing

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# new left notes

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## open letter from nat'l office

CHICAGO, Ill.

Someone (I think it was Bob Speck) once observed that each one of us who was working in the National Office was quite ill-suited for his or her job there, that we were cramped and alienated by the monotonous office routine and the large quantity of dull work which is vitally necessary to keep an organization like SDS going. This is, it was suggested, the reason for the large turnover in office staff.

If anyone was ill-suited to be in charge of the finances of the National Office it was me. Receiving bills, paying bills, billing others, writing checks, keeping the books -- this was my task. It is a great source of pride for me to know that in this position I functioned adequately. I worked on finances from the beginning of May up to and for a short while after the June NC.

I then switched over from office finances to working on a limited number of very important fund-raising projects. From the beginning of the month of July, however, a number of personal problems (primary among these being my position with my draft board) cropped up which diverted my attention and energies from my work and caused me to function quite inadequately. This was gravely detrimental to the projects for which I was responsible and -- in many ways worse -- added to the demoralization of the entire staff. It is the recognition of

this profound failure on my part which causes me to hand in my resignation.

I've absorbed a lot while I've been here, I've gotten much valuable experience, I've come to know and feel close to many people. In so many ways this summer has been very good for me; I've grown a lot. But in many ways I don't belong in the National Office and should never have come.

I'll continue to be involved in this struggle for a warm democracy, a beautiful socialism, in which all have the right to live and grow. I love to read and think and talk and sing. I love to make things. I love to be with people and touch them, to share. I'll try to make these things more a part of my involvement, to work as creatively and meaningfully as I can.

Finally, I'd like to salute my comrades in the N.O. For \$30 a week they put up with a hell of a lot and, for varying periods of time, manage to keep things going pretty well. I feel that it is the responsibility of those of us who have become familiar with the workings of the national organization to work out realistic suggestions for an N.O. structure which can be more fulfilling for members who come to work within it. In the meantime, I move that N.O. workers be awarded the Medal of Honor (the Order of Lenin? of Debs?) by acclamation.

For bread and roses,  
Paul LeBlanc



# university of chicago to hold draft "conference"

## the invitation

Miss Jane Adams  
National Secretary  
Students for a Democratic Society  
1608 West Madison Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60612

Dear Miss Adams:

The University of Chicago will hold a major Conference on the Draft, December 4-7. Enclosed are copies of a letter we have sent to editors of student newspapers and presidents of student government, and to Deans of Students, which are self-explanatory, and also describe the purpose of the conference.

I am writing to ask for your assistance in obtaining the participation of appropriate young people as panel participants or as audience participants.

Thank you for your cooperation. We look forward to an early reply.

Sincerely,

Sol Tax  
Professor

For the Planning Committee

TO: Presidents, Student Government, and  
Editor, Student Newspaper

The University of Chicago will hold a major Conference on the Draft, December 4-7. Some 150 scholars, educators, military specialists, members of Congress and the Executive branch, and leaders of national civic, religious and special interest organizations will take part. Experts from abroad will analyze the experience of other selected nations. We are cooperating with President Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Selective Service.

The conference assumes that some form of military establishment will exist, for which manpower will have to be obtained through:

1. Some form of selective service, possibly within
2. A system of universal or national service, or else by
3. A system of economic motivation which could maintain a voluntary, professional armed force.

Our problem then is to describe and to analyze the entire range of alternatives and to ask in each case how feasible it is for the military, yet how suited to our democratic system; and how each affects the national economy, social structure and education.

## more on student strike

### BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

Communication to the N.O. from the boondocks of Virginia's Black Belt.

Re the Aptheker proposal for a November 4 student strike: Let me begin with a preliminary quibble. The second paragraph of the proposal states that the "strike will serve notice on campus military recruiters and CIA researchers that the nation's campuses are 'off limits' for their activities. . . ." This appears to be somewhat ambiguous. If the intent is that colleges should not contract with the military and the CIA to perform their work, that is well and good. Such intent would be in the interests of academic freedom. But if the intent is to bar military and CIA people from advocating their particular views on campuses, then I think that is destructive of academic freedom. A free university should be free for all views. I think that this statement in the proposal ought to be clarified so that participants in the strike will know what they purport to advocate.

For much the same reasons as Greg Cal-

Conference participants are divided into two groups:

1. About forty will contribute papers and be major discussants as central panel participants. Their expenses will be borne by the conference budget.
2. About 80 others will be invited to participate, largely as audience with opportunity to comment and raise questions.

We hope to include in the first group three or four young people, as panel participants, to contribute the views of youth, especially those of students. They will be included because they have engaged in serious study and analysis on the draft, or of some of its aspects. It is assumed that their studies have resulted in written papers, whether or not published. We are putting together a "Fact Book" to be distributed in advance, in preparation for the conference, and we need your help in identifying students who have made such contributions. Our committee will decide (on the basis of the papers) which of them should then be invited to join the panel. For these, of course, the Conference will provide travel and living expenses.

Quite apart from these, we would like to invite as audience participants, 10 or 15 young people who will take part in the conference at their own expense (about \$65. for the three days, exclusive of travel). It is our hope that they will be assisted in defraying these costs by the institutions from which they come.

We ask your assistance in seeking possible participants, in both categories, from your university.

The nomination of a panel member should of course outline the work done, and preferably include a copy. The deadline for such nominations must be September 15, to allow time for study and selection.

As you can see by the attached, we are requesting the assistance of your Dean of Students to aid you in the selection of nominees. If students from your campus are invited as audience participants, I hope also that the Dean can help them obtain the money needed.

Thank you for your cooperation, we look forward to an early reply.

Sincerely,

Sol Tax  
Professor

For the Planning Committee

vert stated in NLN, I oppose the elitist organization of the strike and the undemocratic way in which the proposal has been advanced. Therefore I would oppose the National Secretary being a signatory to the call. If SDS does not endorse the proposal in its present form -- and I would hope that it would not --, it ought not to call for any action on November 4th in order to avoid confusing its identity and activities with other groups. It seems to me that SDS should recognize its pre-eminent political position in the New Left by initiating its own regular anti-war activities. The Convention should consider such a regular programme and should mandate the NC to formulate the specifics of each event. A regular schedule of anti-war events would provide SDS with the initiative in radical politics, and would allow SDS to formulate, advocate, and advance its own perspective without finding that perspective lost in the melange of views that inevitably spring forth with events like the November 4 proposal.

Steve Wise

## nac report on conference

Conference on the Draft, December 4-7

The letter to Jane and the memo to Presidents, Student Governments, etc. should be printed as it.

It is clear enough from the letter and memo what the conference is up to, so no comments are needed in that direction. First of all, the NAC was clear that SDS should go forward with plans for a draft conference which doesn't evade fundamental issues; the Inter-Universities Committee and the AFSC are also working in this direction and some communication has been established.

At the same time, we felt we could use the Chicago conference as an opportunity to raise, and raise, and raise the issues. And since the conference probably will get lots of attention, the points we wish to make will get lots of attention, too. There seem to be two alternatives to utilizing the conference as a platform. One would be to boycott it. That would hardly be noticed unless we took some direct action, and that, in turn, would require that the U. of C. people think such action clearly desirable, and second, that we make the boycott visible by a picket or other demonstration at the conference site, and that's not exactly a national SDS program. That may well come to pass, but for now some of the Chicago SAR people have a voice in selecting participants, and the organizers seem to be open to questions somewhat more fundamental than their prospectus indicates. At the very least we'd be on better ground, if we ultimately do take direct action -- picket, distribute omitted papers, etc. -- if we first see how far they will open their conference.

The second alternative might be to hold the kind of conference we wish at the same time. This runs the risks -- also gives the opportunities -- of press competition. But we'd damn well have to have stuff to compete with, and that sort of competition can easily be slanted hard against us, and also not be very edifying.

If we do try to open this little clambake, there seem to be two levers: participants and papers. Beside writing to college editors, student government heads, etc., the committee is writing to Deans for recommenda-

tion of participants. People can lobby to be sent by their schools -- starting now -- which probably will be easy enough in many places since there's not likely to be any crush, and you can always demand equal space or make it a campus issue. Also, SAR people should be able to push into the conference a number of movement representatives -- including SDS people if the NC approves. My impression is that Cobb is being invited.

One impression is that they have very few papers of any sort at this point and so are open to anything solid. So a good, documented piece on how ghetto draft boards are lily-white or on the exclusion of Negroes from southern boards would likely be welcome. Also historical-sociological pieces on the effects of conscription on other societies and our own. Motivations of military people. Systematic study of class discrimination in the draft. Content analysis of statements about "universal service" showing basically militaristic premises. I'm sure people have lots more creative ideas, many of them worked up or written out. Part of the point of such papers would be to say what they say, but part would also be to get in and have the opportunity to speak one's piece on all subjects.

More fundamentally, they would accept a paper or papers asking questions about their premise: a military is necessary. For example, a military for what? controlled by whom? Within these questions most of the political issues SDS wishes to raise could be raised (though likely not the moral issue: why armies at all?). Such a paper would be worthwhile to lay the groundwork for raising political questions at every turn, which will be necessary since the game, especially of the liberals, will be to play the non-political "technicians," simply implementing policies, just obeying orders, Adolf, just obeying orders. And one main point of people being at the conference will be to prevent their doing that.

Maybe this doesn't sound as exciting as a boycott and demonstration, but also maybe the U. of C. is providing us with a big golden megaphone into which we can loudly tell it as it is.

### LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

I would like to submit my views for your consideration and NAC's, and hopefully in time for a pre-NC NLN, on the student strike proposal.

I oppose striking before the elections because:

The labor and expense would be better employed in more specifically electoral action.

b. Much more important, a pre-election strike would have electoral impact in inverse and adverse proportion to its effectiveness as a strike. Strikes on the eve of the 1955 and 1959 British General Elections caused a swing from the left and a student strike here would have a similar effect. Jingoists at present have reason to be apathetic; a strike would solidify and draw out a maximum jingo vote to "show them Reds". Swing voters, the potential bloc of support least likely to respond to a radical

appeal, would be scared off and rally to the hawks. The election of the worse evil (in my district a man who proposed invading the DRV even before Ky) would result in many cases.

I propose:

a. That a strike be postponed until after elections.

b. That it be held as soon as possible after the 90th Congress convenes noon, January 3, 1967, to put pressure directly on Congress.

c. We can't pull out enough people to shut down any schools, and I don't believe in withdrawing from circulation for a day anyway. Why not a sit-down in classes, offices, buildings connected with the war machine, etc.; agitating against the rank, draft, and war and for university reform? This could happen spontaneously so authorities couldn't prepare for it.

Yours for the revolution,  
Larry Clawson

### NEW LEFT NOTES

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the sort of analysis which led SDS to undertake the ERAP projects; to develop program around the issue of economic conversion; to support such projects as the "Triple Revolution." It was an analysis which was sufficiently appealing and explanatory to provide the basis for broad consensus within SDS, and among others on the left, too.

In retrospect, we can see that the American elites moved away from domestic reform and welfare corporation and toward imperialist adventure as the central and immediate way of coping with their problems. The Vietnam war, and not the war on poverty, characterizes the "new era." The result: A booming economy. A decline in the spirit of reform. A fantastically increasing defense budget (we, back in 1963, were expecting a 25% reduction in defense spending within 5 years). Serious setbacks for Third World revolution. And, around the corner, repression of dissent; a more conservative Congress; patriotic mobilization of the people.

Some other things have happened as well. SDS people have learned that the development of a "movement of the poor"—though possible, and perhaps, occurring—can't be the main task of the thousands of middle class youth who have become radicalized. That effort requires certain kinds of people, willing to make very extended and total commitments, possessing particular kinds of social skills. SDS has learned, too, that publicity and mass media exposure is not an unmixed blessing, that while it helps in recruitment and fund-raising, it also seems to lead people away from strategic thinking, and toward action with high public impact and symbolic value.

In summary, then, SDS as a national organization has been unable, recently, to provide substantial strategy and political content for the New Left. Its malaise is part of a more general confusion on the left. This situation is traceable to the prolongation and intensification of the Vietnam War, which has made the movement much more sensitive to the international scene, but has rendered the domestic strategy of the left largely irrelevant; has increased the size and heterogeneity of the movement but thereby diluted the possibilities for effective political dialogue and decision making; increased the militancy and alienation of the left, but thereby distorted its capability for rational political analysis; made the new left an important source of political opposition in the US, but one lacking a defined set of strategic goals around which national program can be organized.

Such goals need to be constructed out of the fragile bases for consensus which now exist in the Movement. They must represent ways to help overcome the fragmentation of the left, while keeping alive ideological debate and mutual criticism within the movement. They must represent goals which are credibly achievable, and if not achieved, nevertheless help to build the movement by developing new constituencies, educating and radicalizing large numbers of people, extending and deepening radical ideology. They must be goals which do not isolate the left from the mainstream of American political life, but rather help to break up that mainstream and develop the possibility for new alignments to emerge.

Let me sketch what I see as some such objectives.

1. We must assume that the war in Vietnam is very likely to continue and to expand so long as the present Administration is in power. A replacement of Johnson with another President makes the ending of the war very much more likely (without necessarily changing the basic character of US foreign policy). A very high priority for the short-run would be the defeat of Lyndon Johnson in 1968, by whatever means (e.g. opposition at the Democratic convention, a Republican victory, a third force capable of drawing votes away from Johnson, an LBJ abdication). I do not believe, personally, that the war will be ended in any other way; I also do not believe that the war will go on indefinitely restricted to Vietnam; finally, I think the American left will be one of the many casualties in a prolonged and expanded war. The rational grounds for ending the war are so compelling that virtually any successor to Johnson would do so, in my view.

It is too early to tell what, precisely, would be the best way of trying to defeat LBJ. It is not too early to develop the idea that this can and must be done, and that the variety of "peace" candidacies and campaigns

of 1966 are the first step. We should commit ourselves to critical support of all insurgent campaigns—i.e. all campaigns which disassociate themselves from LBJ and from aggressive policies in Vietnam. We should not be so concerned about the specific slogans, styles and policies of candidates, if the campaign offers the chance for developing an organization opposed to Johnson and potentially likely to participate in an effort to defeat him. We should announce now a national campaign for a new President.

This sort of effort is short-run at best. Alongside it, I think we need to state at least three other medium-range strategic objectives for the American left.

2. *The breakup of the urban machine.* A main barrier to the development of a new politics in cities is the existence of a variety of political machines—the defining characteristic of which is that they achieve the allegiance of potentially radical constituencies (Negroes, labor, middle class intellectuals) who vote Democratic, while primarily serving the main corporate interests of the city.

The new thrust of the Negro movement, as well as community organizing efforts of SDS and others, represents a break with this pattern, but all these efforts have not been sufficiently explicit in their aims. The time is ripe for a variety of experiments with "independent political action"—based in both middle and working class neighborhoods, and developing around a program that would make a concrete difference to people in the cities. The effort to develop an explicit political opposition rooted in urban neighborhoods should be seen as an experiment, testing the possibilities for a new party on the national level—but such a new party should, under no conceivable circumstances, be attempted without painstaking experimentation at the grass-roots level, without strongly rooted local organization. Nor should the latter be bound by rigid formulas about what is politically "correct." In some areas, primary fights within the Democratic Party are the appropriate radical strategy; in other areas, such efforts would be most inappropriate or retrogressive. It is up to activists in their communities to make the decisions which suit them on such matters.

These efforts should be distinguished from "peace" campaigns aimed primarily at expressing or focussing popular opposition to the war. The latter seem justified on their own terms, but should not be mistaken for

long-term efforts to build political organization and tie together diverse constituencies. Moreover, the best offices for the peace movement to campaign for (e.g. Congress), are probably the least relevant for urban insurgents interested in establishing a political base.

3. *The development of a foreign policy opposition.* The war situation has demonstrated to a far greater extent than one thought likely, that there are publics in America that care about international issues. These are primarily in the universities and surrounding communities, in certain kinds of high-income suburbs and similar areas. These publics are increasingly dissatisfied with the present foreign policy establishment and its vulgar imperialist posture. They are listening and responding to the peace movement with respect to Vietnam, but in longer-range terms are primarily responsive to the Fulbright-Kennedy program of limited cold war detente, overseas development, "welfare" imperialism. I think it would be of importance for the left to develop its own foreign policy program (as well as critique) and to inject that program into the consciousness of those publics, through action projects, community education efforts, publications, etc. Perhaps a national conference of radicals concerned with foreign policy would be an important step in formulating such a program.

4. *The abolition of militarism in the US.* It is time for a new abolitionist movement in America. The existence of a gargantuan Defense Establishment is steadily corroding American democratic institutions and generating considerable discontent in various segments of the population. Despite the power of the defense corporations, the military and other components of the "Complex," it is my view that the militarized sector of the society is the most vulnerable element in American corporate capitalism. It is vulnerable in part because the values and ideology emanating from it run counter to the cherished beliefs of many groups in the society. It is vulnerable because it absorbs a tremendous proportion of the advanced technological resources of the society, preventing technological advance in more rational and humane directions. It is vulnerable because it presses for a foreign policy which is irrational for the long-term interests of the rest of the national elite. It is vulnerable because it projects a future which is in direct opposition to the aspirations of millions of American young people.

The original abolitionists helped develop

a consciousness that slavery was an illegitimate institution in American society. The development of that sort of consciousness is a conceivable task for present-day radicals, with respect to the military-industrial complex and its manifestations. Such an effort would include action to convert defense industries to non-military purposes and to end the nuclear arms race once and for all. It would argue that the problems of American domestic life cannot be solved unless such conversion takes place. It would argue that the technological resources released by a reduction in defense spending can only be utilized by publically controlled institutions which plan in democratic fashion. A movement against militarism would further work toward the abolition of such institutions as conscription, the CIA, military cooptation of universities. It would argue that such institutions are subversive of democracy and, like slavery, are illegitimate in the U.S.

In short, a movement against militarism initiated by radicals would pose two fundamental questions for the society. First, shall we continue to expand our international military commitments or shall we work seriously to build a decent society at home? Second, shall technological advance continue to serve the aims of death and be controlled by a corporate and technocratic elite, or shall it be used to enhance life and be controlled by the people as a whole?

It is my view that it is through struggle over these questions that the issue of socialism will finally become relevant in this society. For, unlike many other major issues in America, it really is the case that "only socialism" provides a democratic solution to these questions.

But my most fundamental intention is not to argue that the four strategic objectives I have sketched are necessarily the ones we must adopt. At bottom, I am saying that we have some such set of objectives more encompassing than ending the war, but more concrete than our vague references to "building a movement" or "letting the people decide." It is my view that our objectives must be centrally and specifically political, although the adoption of these need not prevent continuing efforts to build counter-communities, to develop radical forms of self-expression, to formulate new modes of education and communication, to continue to engage in long-range ideological and utopian thinking. These less directly political activities are absolutely essential if the movement is not to be absorbed by the "one-dimensional" culture. But in my view they cannot be a substitute for a political strategy aimed at affecting the structure of power in the society in immediate ways. The latter is necessary if the movement is to have coherence and social relevance; and more important, it is critical if we hope to keep the society relatively open, to buy more time, to prevent the worst. Moreover, unless we are in the political process we will most surely fail to understand what the society is all about, and fail to make contact with the people who are potentially capable of making change.

It seems to me finally that in addition to formulating strategy, SDS has a special responsibility now. As it did with ERAP in 1963, once again it is time for SDS to call students to engage in organizing. SDS should respond to SNCC's challenge to organize whites, by doing that—that is, by creating a number of new full-time organizing efforts in various communities. Such projects should be aimed at establishing left political organization among adults. In some places these might be "committees for independent political action;" elsewhere a "Citizens for a Democratic Society" chapter; in another place, a "New Left Club." I am suggesting that SDS create an adult radical movement, by calling on students to catalyze it. The local organizations so developed would have their own dynamic, and need not necessarily be related to SDS in any direct sense; on the other hand, SDS might want to change its name so as to involve non-students more directly. I do not think an "adult organization" will be created from the top down; nor do I think a national attempt to convene a new radical organization, party, etc. will work. But it does seem plausible to me that the commitment of full-time student organizers would enable such a thing to begin and grow at the grass-roots.

Anyway, the Iowa convention of SDS is a chance for the New Left to find itself again.

Don McKelvey

Dick Flacks

## intellectual

(continued from page 1)

a minor role, devoted to pooling the observations and decisions made in the small groups. By small I mean a dozen or so. To be sure, small groups are no panacea; to be successful, they need prior preparation in the form of working papers, a tight (i.e. well worked out) agenda, and prior discussion and thinking in chapters and among members generally. The greatest problem I see in this approach to structure is in conducting NC business. But I suspect that a greater degree of consensus—and certainly a greater degree of participation (and after all, the process of participation is probably at least as important as the product of resolutions)—would come from such a structure. Also this would serve, hopefully, to focus thinking on the real business of NCs: the need to prioritize national resources among a number of available programs. SDS is such that there is no such thing, usually, as a national program, and shouldn't be. But there is a strong need to discuss strategy and tactics and organizational direction in the light of objective conditions—and these are matters virtually never taken up at NCs now.

3. A third reason for the inadequacy of SDS meetings is the almost total lack of discipline which is so evident on the New Left. This means lack of planning of meetings (i.e. agenda), which means really an inability to limit agendas to small number of central issues; getting stuff written throughout the year but especially before national meetings; knowing when it's important to speak at meetings and discussions and—especially—when it's not; in general, being constantly serious about the business to be done at the particular meeting. At the same time, it is necessary to be sensitive to the prob-

## elitism

lem that newer people in the organization need the 'space' in which to work through questions which older people have long since dealt with; a mutual discipline is called for there, and this is where the judicious socratic comment mentioned above can be most helpful. I don't know what good it does to say all this, or how to urge discipline upon people. I'm certainly opposed to externally imposed discipline (i.e. organizational discipline); I think discipline does no good, and lessens the capacity to think critically, when imposed on people from outside. But I do think it's important to point out the almost total lack of discipline, in the hope of developing a mutually reinforcing spiraleffect.

A last comment. While I agree with much of what Clark Kissinger says in his NC working paper (NLN, 10 June 66), I disagree that a Convention document is called for now. For the reasons mentioned above—especially lack of preparation throughout the past year—such an effort would either be like that which produced America and the New Era (where through total lack of prior preparation the document simply was not discussed by the convention) or the subsequent year (when an effort to have an organizational strategic statement completely flopped, and the Convention virtually broke down, only barely to be salvaged). Of course I agree with Clark that the "de facto ban on the written word" must be exorcised, but the best way to start is precisely not with an attempt to have a Convention statement, but with a reversal of the intellectual elitism which is a basic cause of that ban, and of the generally low level of political understanding in SDS.



# sds or mds

CHICAGO, ILL.

This paper is submitted to NLN in the hope that it will promote serious discussion between members, and within chapters, towards the formation of a Movement for a Democratic Society. And, I hope, serious discussion of such a prospect will also take place at the upcoming National Convention.

The pages of NLN, from time to time, contain "feelers" about this topic. The same pages often contain very real complaints to the effect that not enough people are available for the work to be done, that the people available are too busy with action tasks to do the mundane work, or are not qualified to do it. I am thinking here particularly of Bob Speck's "Last Will and Testament". Every issue, of course, appeals for funds, funds, funds.

A great deal of the problem, I believe, is that SDS makes no provision for non-university, part-time university and post-university people.

Speaking from my own experience, a person in the aforementioned categories sim-

ply has no, or at least very few, avenues of contribution to the movement. I am a full-time worker, a family man, an evening school student. I became interested in SDS upon reading the *Port Huron Statement* sometime in 1963 or 1964. When I started evening classes in the Spring of 1965, I tried to make contact with SDS by leaving my name, address, phone number, etc. at the Student Activities Office (Roosevelt University). No word from anyone. Several months ago I joined SDS, "unaffiliated", as a matter of showing support. Again, no word from anyone (except that I now receive NLN, for which I'm thankful). Near the end of the Fall of 1965 semester I button-holed -- I think it was -- Steve Baum. I explained who I was, and my problem (no way for my kind to help out). He agreed it was awful. This Spring and Summer, I switched tracks and attempted to make contact with Uptown JOIN (I live nearby). I've left my name, address and phone number three times so far, offering to help in the job and counselling programs, and to serve as building steward. No word yet.

Is this response to expressed interest the way to build a broadly-based, influential constituency? I think not. At best, it is a way to maintain an in-group solidarity, a kind of intellectual and organizational incest -- so that the same people show up at event, after event, after event. And, does not this method of operation raise elitist ramifications, a la Marxist-Leninism?

It is nearly impossible, in American history, to point out a single political, economic, or social movement brought to fruition by an isolated in-group, a group without broad middleclass support. Insofar as I can see, SDS does not presently enjoy that sup-

port, and such support as might exist is driven into compromising organizations -- such as SANE -- that hardly share our multi-issue view of "the system", and our radical solutions to contemporary problems. Other possible support, because of feeling isolated, probably goes in for "individualism", dissipation, etc. etc. etc. and is thereby wasted as far as the movement is concerned.

At this point, I would like to offer a very simple assumption, not yet demonstrated -- and not about to be if things go on as now: that involvement in the "real" world of career, family, etc. makes radicals more radical rather than less -- if avenues of radicalism are open to them.

A recent article in the DuBois Club's *Insurgent* began, "It's their system, and it's a bitch". No one knows this better than one enmeshed in the system, trying to make a living for a family, trying to talk sense to people at work and play. Certainly, after a certain amount of defeat and frustration, some people will "cool it". On the other hand, the rising wave of strikes by public employees -- for instance -- surely indicates that more and more people are fed up with playing the game by the rules. The ever larger crack between Reuther labor and Meany labor evidences the same. The question is, will these radicals, or potential radicals, go the way of reformism for lack of anything better? Or, mustn't SDS provide a channel for this budding thought and energy?

"Part-time" radicals, possible MDS people, could make a great contribution, if given the chance. First of all, people in the "real" world of jobs, career, marriage have some time and a lot of discipline, for the mundane organizational work that "full-timers" fall short on. Secondly, people at work have ready cash -- now being scattered buckshot fashion all over the radical landscape (or being spent on drink etc. because of receiving too many appeals from too many worthy

causes). It ought to be easier -- given organizational affiliation -- to kick \$10.00 loose from a working MDS member, than \$1.00 from an unemployed SDS student. Thirdly, perhaps most important -- possible MDS people have numerous contacts at work, in labor, clubs, neighborhoods etc. that need to be reached. SDS people cannot reach these areas, and will hardly be listened to if they do reach them (so status stinks, but it's there and must be confronted).

This "pitch" should not be misconstrued. I do not mean that an MDS can be created overnight, by fiat. And, I do not mean to imply that an MDS will be merely an "older" version of SDS. People with kids to feed cannot go to jail with impunity, or throw away jobs. But because someone cannot do everything doesn't mean that they want to do nothing.

Nevertheless, the possibilities of an MDS should be explored. Membership lists could be combed for inactive, "at large," and unaffiliated members. These members could be contacted to learn why they have such status. A "handout," pamphlet, or some such thing, could be written, displayed at lit tables, mailed to possibilities -- giving "the word" on an MDS, given adequate response. Maybe a newstand journal could be put out on a quarterly basis to reach the (so far) unreachable. The National Convention could pass and circulate a resolution on this matter.

Possibly I am mistaken. Maybe the whole idea of an MDS would be a bust. However, the challenge and opportunity are great. Many organizations practically exist (and exist well) on volunteer help. Also, it seems that SDS, for sometime now, has been talking more and more to itself, and -- consequently -- the danger of isolation is becoming greater and greater. We cannot let this happen, recalling what has become of radical groups in the past that became isolated and in-bred.

Gregg Nesemeier

## boycott

I think Art Rosenblum's idea on the boycott is an excellent one and that such a boycott, if even moderately successful, would shake the hell out of the financiers now controlling this country and our lives.

There are several reasons why such a boycott would be desirable and would be workable:

1. SDS, like most other new left groups, has reached an impasse. Demonstrations are pretty much a drag from overuse. We have summer projects, etc., but we really have nothing going which would effectively challenge the dominating powers of this country which now flout our will. A boycott, if organized on an international scale, would, for the first time, hit the Establishment where it hurts the most -- the bank account. For the first time, also, the new left groups would be taken seriously by the Establishment and the Middle Class.

2. It would form a unified front of the diverse groups which are pretty much isolated from one another -- both Marxists and "non-ideological groups" would form, effectively I think, a union based on a common goal.

3. It would show the little man, no doubt frustrated by this time, that he CAN do something about the war (and poverty and discrimination, etc.). With a list of boycotted goods before him, he can buy those items not on the list without fear of reprisal or loss of a job, and yet at the same time aid in challenging the dominant powers.

4. Most important, it would strengthen the new left movement on an international basis, putting it on a more permanent base than did the International Days of Protest, whose goal really was limited to demonstrations of opposition.

5. Even if the boycott failed, it would contribute towards a more permanent union of New Left forces on a wider geographic scale and lead to later, possibly more successful actions.

By organizing a boycott, we have very little to lose and much to gain.

Such a boycott will take highly co-ordinated planning. Research will have to be done to determine which of the enterprises are the major contributors to the war effort, and which other enterprises are their subsidiaries. Priorities of boycotts will have to be drawn, so that areas of limited manpower can nevertheless lead an effective boycott against the greatest suppliers of goods (eg. gasoline, food supplies, steel, etc.) to the war. Plans will have to be drawn for contingencies as the boycott progresses; for example, what to do if the government tries to step in and stop the boycott (by say, arresting the leaders, etc.), if workers get laid off by the boycotted industry, or if red-baitings get going on a large scale of the participants of the boycott.

If anyone would be interested in getting this boycott going, I would also like to hear from them (my permanent address is below), especially those living on the west coast or those living in Canada, Puerto Rico, or other non-American countries heavily dependent on American imports.

Would it also be possible to print the address of Art Rosenblum in the next issue of NLN?

Paul McDowell

(Art is the NO printer.)

Write c/o NO.

### special convention

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## National Convention CLEARLAKE, IOWA

August 27th  
To Sept. 1st

## nac minutes

National Office, August 8, 1966, 5:30 PM.

Members Present: Jane Adams, Aerlyn Weissman, Paul LeBlanc, Paul Lauter, Mike James, Earl Silbar. Calvert arrived late.

Others present: John Campbell, Roy Dahlberg, Norris, Rothstein.

AGENDA: 1. Finances-SDS-JOIN, 2. Convention money and allocations, 3. Staff - John Campbell, 4. Draft conference, 5. Cleveland peace committee, 6. Subpoenaing of people by HUAC, 7. HR 15678, 8. Delegates to meetings and conventions, USYC, SRL, NSCR, 9. Mailing list request from CCAP, 10. REP's percentage on Convention booklet.

1. Finances. Problems exist between SDS and JOIN. SDS has raised a good deal of money on what JOIN is doing. JOIN borrowed \$800 and only repaid \$500. Need not to compete, but work out problem of fundraising -- merge lists and use by alternating arrangement.

Suggested that NO should be supported by membership except for major national actions which require special funding. Table until NC. Emphasized necessity of setting up national scheme for supporting NO.

2. Convention money and allocations. Dahlberg says that 150 stipends are needed for Convention for REP, Projects, National and Regional office staff, and others. The Convention program and post-convention issue of New Left Notes requires \$1500 plus mailing. Dahlberg given discretionary powers to give tentative money commitments to people for convention. SDS people given priority. Full-time people automatically accepted -- others determined by NAC. Dahl-

berg requests that fundraising by first priority -- withdrawn because we are all working our brains for ideas for money.

3. Staff. . . 1. Fundraiser -- Maybe Dahlberg 2. Chapter correspondence - Open 3. Bookkeeping -- need replacement for Weissman 4. Literature orders -- Nick Norris 5. Printer Rosenblum 6. Membership -- Condit 7. NLN editor - Calvert 8. Nat'l secretary Adams 9. South Africa-Teplick until September 1 in NO. Need national man-about-country.

5. Cleveland peace committee. Lauter will be going as AFSC. Contact Cleveland people to get someone to go.

6. Subpoena. The call for a demonstration should be referred to the NIC. Dahlberg will call NIC and NY regional office.

7. HR 15678. Silbar is preparing statement on this bill.

8. Delegates. Booth should be called to see who USYC is and then perhaps a delegate should be chosen from the West Coast. NSCF convention in Chicago. Stan Teplick and Greg Calvert and Jack Kittridge will go.

9. CCAP request will be handled by giving them names of people to whom letter can be sent.

10. REP will be given 50% of money from ads which they bring in over the cost of publishing.

Adams gave a report on her trip to SNCC executive meeting in Atlanta. She was finally able to speak to the meeting on the South Africa program which SNCC has since decided not to co-sponsor with SDS.

Paul LeBlanc announced that he would be resigning effective the end of this week.

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