

# Leftists Behind Harlem Protest Step Up Work Under Close Eye

By WILL LISSNER

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the special services squad of the New York Police Department have big dossiers on the Harlem Defense Council and its sponsors, the Progressive Labor Movement.

The files show the movement, which organized yesterday's abortive march, is a hard-line, Left Communist group that has instigated half a dozen disorderly demonstrations in the few years it has been operating.

The so-called council is a paper organization, a catch-all front set up by the Progressive Labor Movement, which operates out of the Harlem center of the movement, called the Harlem Progressive Labor Club.

The club is housed in a loft with wall-to-wall windows, one flight up at 336-338 Lenox Avenue over a store. It is on the east side of the avenue near 127th Street. In the club are 26 portable chairs for meetings.

## In Other Parts of Country

The Progressive Labor Movement has had other centers at 227 East Third Street, 66 West 109th Street, 68 West 106th Street and in Brooklyn. It is also functioning in Atlanta, Buffalo, San Francisco, Berkeley and Williamsport, Pa.

The actual work of the movement — preparing literature and organizing demonstrations, meetings and classes—is carried on in flats in several parts of the city.

Its financing is larger than can be explained by donations from its members, but it is not affluent. Most heavy expenditures are in printing ideological tracts.

The official Communists charge that the movement is financed by the Chinese Communists through Cuba. The movement's leaders admit an affinity with the Chinese Communists but deny any organizational affiliation. No evidence to support the charge has become public.

However, the group's link to the Chinese party was disclosed on April 21 when the F.B.I. and Customs inspectors seized an illegally imported propaganda film of the Communist Vietcong in North Vietnam at the West 106th Street center.

Known leaders of the Progressive Labor Movement include the following:

Milton Rosen, 38 years old, chairman of the group and its chief ideologist.

## Front Man in Harlem

Mort Scheer, about the same age, vice chairman.

Fred Jerome, 25, editor of Progressive Labor, the movement's 16-page monthly magazine.

Miss Genoveva Clemente, chairman of the movement's Integrated Workers Club and organizer of rent strikes on the Lower East Side.

William Epton Jr., 32, former electrical worker. Mr. Epton is a Negro. The others are white.

Mr. Epton is the movement's front man in Harlem, where he was born. He lived for a long time in the basement at 38-40 West 131st Street where, he says, James Baldwin, the author lived on the second floor. He was graduated from De Witt Clinton High School.

Tall, thin, mustached and soft-spoken, Mr. Epton has a mild appearance. Yesterday afternoon he prepared a circular on the demonstration, typing in his small office in back of the movement's meeting room. He is married and has two children, a boy, 8, and a girl, 5. His mother, who disapproves of his activities, still lives in Harlem.

Mr. Epton was the Progressive Labor candidate for councilman at large last year. The movement contends it has several hundred Negro followers with 30 block captains, but observers have voiced skepticism.

The movement's strategist in Harlem is a 24-year-old white youth, a graduate student at Columbia University, who likes to remain anonymous. He organized the demonstration outside the West 100th Street Police station, and on Broadway, in the upper West Side last Nov. 21.

The disorder's pretext was the death of two holdup men, Victor Rodriguez and Maximo Solero, who with a revolver, attempted to escape from police captors and were shot and killed. Puerto Rican leaders went to the scene and told their people to go home.

The movement organized a caucus in the official Communist party in about 1960, when the Chinese Communists broke with Moscow. Mr. Epton, who like several other leaders announces frankly, "I am a Communist," says he left the party in 1961 because it "is no longer a revolutionary party." He took part in founding the movement.

## Rosen Expelled

Its chairman, Mr. Rosen, was expelled from the Communist party in 1962 on charges of "Chinese Communist ideology."

The group set up a mail drop, the Progressive Labor Company, with Box 808 in Brooklyn's General Post Office, and began operations in two flats. One of them belongs to a woman Communist in Greenwich Village East on the Lower East Side, and the other to a woman Communist on West 96th Street.

The movement's first activity was to infiltrate pacifist groups, which later expelled its members as Communists.

It then became active in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. However, its work was limited by the hostility of Negro groups aware of its ideology. Last year the group began working on the upper West Side and in Harlem, where Negro and Puerto Rican workers remained aloof.

Seven weeks ago it began to publish a weekly newspaper in English and Spanish. It publishes a journal, The Marxist Leninist Quarterly, and English translations, in 50 to 60 pages, of Chinese Communist ideological documents.

The Movement organized a trip to Cuba last year for 58 college students. On their return many were called to testify before a Federal grand jury in Brooklyn and later by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Another trip was organized this year, for about 60 students, who said that their expenses were provided by the Cuban Government.