

VIEW POINT

Hurricane or hot air?

The most significant aspect of the surrealist contretemps created by the Weatherman microfaction of SDS last week was that the rest of the movement had the revolutionary wisdom to stay away.

It amounted to a movement-wide boycott of left adventurism in practice. After months of organizing and propaganda, with the prestige of SDS's name behind them, the kamikaze-camp leadership of Weatherman was only able to draw a few hundred people into the trap they had set for themselves and the movement.

The Weathermen will probably rebut that this proves the rest of the movement is not willing to die for the revolution. The real point is that if American radicals must die it shall be in genuine struggle for the people, not for a bit part in a penny dreadful Keystone Kops melodrama.

In staging their "kick-ass" fantasy in Chicago Oct. 8-11, the Weatherman microfaction demonstrated it was not only isolated from workers, blacks, Latins and youth in general but from the overwhelming majority of the radical movement in particular.

The political reductio ad absurdum which was Weatherman's effort to "turn pig city into people's city" proved once again that bourgeois "left" adventurism is no substitute for revolutionary organizing and struggle.

The main fault with adventurism is that it totally isolates revolutionaries from the masses necessary to win a revolutionary struggle. At this particular moment, adventurism contravenes precisely what the radical movement must view as its primary objective—reaching the people and bringing them to our side. It is impossible for Weatherman to engage in practice in concert with this necessity. Weatherman is attempting to create a second "Vietnam" behind enemy lines based on an organizing technique of cajoling whites to support the revolution through propaganda of the deed intended to impress upon the American workers they had better choose the winning (revolutionary) side or face defeat. The group holds that most white workers benefit from imperialism and that conscript GIs, as well as police, are "pigs." Such a philosophy leads the Weathermen to confuse the enemy with the people and to a "fight the people" mentality in fact if not theory. This results in a substitution of self for the people which, coupled with the necessity for exemplary revolutionary deeds to substantiate the second Vietnam position, propels Weatherman into totally one-sided confrontations it cannot win or into seemingly pointless "revolutionary" escapades. This is the

essence of "left" adventurism, the converse of right opportunism.

Regardless of Weatherman's deserved isolation and small group mentality, the fact remains that through the inexcusable folly of SDS as a whole the Weatherman microfaction is in bureaucratic control of the largest white radical organization in the country.

This organization, capable of bringing tens and hundreds of thousands of people into militant action, had its only national action of the year shaped by a tiny group of adventurers. Thus, what could easily have been an extremely relevant demonstration of solidarity with the Vietnamese liberation struggle and an important opportunity to help build the radical left in the U.S. degenerated into a low grade, camp version of Bonnie and Clyde with a cast of dozens.

Another byproduct of the Chicago fiasco is the ammunition Weatherman has given to the anti-communists, anti-militants and "moderates" on the left who will no doubt use the Weatherman example and the fight against "left" adventurism as a cloak for pushing revisionist, liberal and right opportunist politics.

SDS may be in a shambles but it is not yet destroyed, despite the Weatherman leadership. The chapters still exist throughout the country, though a considerable number of them are breaking with the national organization. The major problem is that there is no grouping within the organization with a significant national following.

The only other faction in SDS which can be considered a rival to Weatherman for leadership at this point is RYM-2, which initiated an alternate demonstration in Chicago with support from the Black Panthers and Young Lords. While the demonstration was good, it hardly drew support from outside Chicago and not much inside, either (though this, in part, may have been caused by the reluctance of many to participate in any action while the Weathermen were in town). The hard-line dogmatism of RYM-2 at the SDS convention and in the brief few months since—the alternate Chicago action was an exception—and the sectarian practice of some of its leadership does not seem calculated to inspire a national following.

Even if SDS ultimately does pull together again it shall have missed a major opportunity to grow in size and political consciousness this fall—an historic moment in America as millions of people are gravitating to the periphery of left politics through the burgeoning antiwar struggle. Were there a solid national radical youth organization this could be known as the season of the heroic

organizer instead of the heroic fool.

Until SDS either unifies or dissolves, the great bulk of SDS members will continue to play instrumental roles in the radical movement. The national leadership of SDS was never absolutely essential to the functioning of the organization (though never before has a national leadership sought to destroy the student movement).

It is to be hoped the chapters are not too demoralized to continue the struggle or so weakened as to fall prey to liberalism or to the blandishments of any number of sectarian parties. Even if alienated from the national leadership these hundreds of chapters have crucial roles to play in injecting anti-imperialist consciousness and demands into the expanding antiwar struggle and in continuing to radicalize students and all youth. Unburdened by ties to the Weatherman leadership, tens of thousands of revolutionary students could increase their activities on the local level, organizing militant actions; working with black and Latin proletarian organizations; getting involved in people's struggles such as welfare, health and housing; building ties to the working class; continuing to disrupt campuses; developing socialist consciousness and building a revolutionary communist movement.

In other words, thousands of radical young men and women no more need a Weatherman to tell them there is revolutionary work to be done than they need one to tell the difference between hot air and a hurricane. By refusing to play tin soldier in Weatherman's ideological Land of Counterpane the SDS membership indicated it well understood the difference.

It is also to be hoped the whole radical movement has learned some lessons during the organizational rule of Bonnie, Clyde and Our Gang. First, "left" adventurism is the quickest road to irrelevance. Second, sectarianism, dogmatism and opportunism are no substitutes for developing a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideology suitable for America. Third, there is a compelling need for a broad, radical anti-imperialist movement not dependent on a student base (students simply cannot be expected to carry the entire revolutionary struggle alone with a handful of black and Latin organizations). Fourth, no mass radical organization can afford to have an organized microfaction in opposition to the politics of the great majority of members take bureaucratic control.

Bob Dylan was wrong: we do need a weatherman to tell which way the wind is blowing—but not this kind of Weatherman. And we must adjust sail accordingly or continue to be blown off course.