

**INTERNATIONAL
SOCIALISTS**

Newsletter

17300 Woodward / Detroit / MI / 48203 / February — 1983

National Meeting and Socialist School April 2 and 3 Detroit, MI

"The International Socialists' National Meeting is likely to be the most important political and social event of the year."
Newspeak Magazine

An I.S. National Meeting and Socialist School will be held in Detroit April 2-3. After six months of testing our regroupment perspective, we feel it is time for the group to come together and discuss its progress so far, the anticipated and unanticipated problems, and where it goes from here.

A document is enclosed in this mailing that outlines the Political Committee's assessment of regroupment.

We have structured the meeting and school so as to discuss not just practical and immediate questions of our work, but also some of the broader issues which we face as part of a struggling left and working class movement. The growing impact of a world recession; the apparent failure of any significant economic recovery; and the sharp decline, bordering on collapse, of confidence in the Reagan Administration among all sectors of society, are affecting every political arena — from Latin America to the politics of the labor movement.

The success of our regroupment perspective depends, among many other factors, on our ability to develop some coherent understanding of these processes and at least some basic strategic ideas on how the left can respond to them. We think the national meeting can help to cohere some of our political ideas as well as organization.

Comrades should make every effort to attend. The participation of each member makes a real difference.

Tentative Agenda:

Saturday, April 2

I.S. National Meeting

- 1) **Assessing the Regroupment Perspective.**
- 2) **New Directions for Labor Paper.** This discussion began at last May's Convention. Report on progress so far, and future directions and ideas.
- 3) **Fraction Meetings.** Anti-war and IBT fractions will definitely meet to discuss Central America and disarmament work. Others can be scheduled as needed.

Sunday, April 3

Socialist School

- 1) **World in Crisis.**
 - a. *Central America.* The status of the political-military conflict and U.S. policy.
 - b. *Mexican Crisis and its Impact on the World Financial Crisis*
 - c. *Theories of Economic Crisis and Their Connection to Revolutionary and Reformist Perspectives.* The theory put forward by David Gordon and others which blames the economic crisis on falling productivity and even 'reduced worker effort' is counter-posed to the traditional Marxist economists. The debate has implications for the solutions the labor movement should seek.
- 2) **Labor and Economic Crisis.**
 - a. *Unemployed Work.* Presentations from comrades involved in this work. Some of the political questions: how can an unemployed movement do aggressive legislative work without becoming a ward of politicians? How it can become an ally of the anti-concessions movement in the face of the pressure to accept concessions to "save jobs"?
 - b. *Approaches to the Concessions Offensives.* Many

leftists are eager for unions to swap concessions for "control over management prerogatives" (e.g., David Moberg, Stanley Aronowitz). This is counterposed to an understanding of unionism which says that you don't make unprecedented gains by showing your weakness (put forward, for example, by Bob Weissman at the labor paper conference). How can we intervene in this debate in a constructive way?

c. *Bargaining Over Investment Decisions.* Can unions wage a bargaining struggle to force corporations to invest in job-creating areas? To re-open closed plants instead of new operations overseas?

Obviously, these workshops will run simultaneously, but a final agenda is not set. Your input and feedback is requested. The meeting will run approximately from 10-5 on Saturday and 10-3 on Sunday. (Monday is a holiday for most.)

We encourage any members who wish to submit amendments or counter documents to the regroupment assessment to do so as soon as possible.

—Political Committee

Detroit Forum

Dan will speak at a Detroit I.S. forum Sunday, February 6 on "Mexico: The Impact of the World Crisis." He will report on how currency devaluations and other aspects of economic austerity visibly affect the lives of Mexican workers, peasants and unemployed. He will also present an overview of the Mexican left, based on discussions with trade union and political activists from several groupings.

A speaker from the Detroit Chapter of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) will present an update on the state of the struggle there and how U.S. policy is regionalizing the conflict.

Nothing
In This Box!

News and Notes

As of this newsletter we welcome a new member to the IS. Edmund, who lives near Philadelphia and works at Princeton. He learned of the IS through Changes and plans to get involved in anti-intervention work. Welcome Edmund.

Congratulations to Gay and Mark for the birth of Daniel on December 7th. Is he reading Marx yet?

Congratulations to Teresa on her acceptance to medical school.

Dan has recently returned from Mexico and is available to speak to branches.

Members are urged to make contributions to "Center for Changes" in lieu of dues. These contributions are tax deductible.

Several of our steelworker members and friends have been very active in two areas: organizing against the concessions being pushed by the USW International and unemployed organizing.

The Mon Valley Unemployed Committee is one of most active and successful in the country, and no longer includes only steel workers. It is organizing a mass lobby in Washington on March 15 and hopes to draw several thousand people. MVUC is coordinating a network of some 20 unemployed groups -- a network which got its start at the conference last November. For more information on the rally call 412-678-1409.

The Midwest Center for Labor Research located in Gary, has put out some excellent material on the steel industry's concessions proposal and on the state of the industry. It has received some foundation money and has an office. Its publications can be ordered from the Center at 4012 Elm, East Chicago, IN 46312,

219-398-6393.

Mike P. debated a UAW staffer on the UAW's "local content" bill at a DSA meeting in January. About 40 attended, more ISers than DSAers. The staffer argued that the bill would mean state control over capital and was necessary if there was to be any U.S. auto industry left. He said that the local content approach was more left-wing than calling for import quotas, which UAW members would be glad to support.

Mike argued that the local content bill does not mandate a single factory to be built or job created in the U.S., and that its effects could not be foreseen. He said that it could invite economic retaliation by the Japanese and pointed out that Japanese workers were already demonstrating violently against Korean imports. In particular he stressed the racist and jingoist nature of the local content campaign. His opponent agreed that this was so but said socialists could and should still back the bill without falling into those traps themselves. Mike said that it was impossible to separate an abstract local campaign from the way the UAW was actually conducting it. It is a substitute for any kind of struggle against companies -- or against anyone except the Japanese.

The ISers present thought that Mike had certainly carried the day -- especially since the staffer conceded almost every point. At least one independent (who had leaned toward local content) agreed. There was a dearth of comment from the DSAers present, except for one who said that it wasn't the UAW leadership's fault that its members were racist, and one who opposed the bill pointed out that the DSA Executive Board had endorsed it.

Changes

Changes

Changes

Changes

Changes

Changes

The December-January *Changes* issue on unity, of which we printed an extra 500 copies, is virtually sold out. Fortunately, we took the precaution of printing an extra 1000 copies of the "Unity on the Left" statement itself, so it is still available and can be ordered from Center for Changes.

For the December-January issue, comrades will remember we asked people to send us names to whom we should send sample copies. The appeal was a considerable success, as over 460 names were ultimately given to us. This is not counting 55 copies which Christians for Socialism ordered to send to their branches. Clearly, the regroupment concept has at least enough appeal to get our members thinking about who should see *Changes*! A positive result, though not enough to build an entire perspective around, to be sure.

A number of returns from that issue have already come in, though it would be unrealistic to expect a mass outpouring based on one issue. Meanwhile, the February issue contains the initial set of "responses" to our statement. (A couple more have since been received as well.) As comrades can see from reading them, they are a mixed bag, reflecting a relatively passive, though not unfavorable attitude toward the regroupment idea and raising a diverse set of political and organizational questions. From my own reading of them, I found *Solidarity's* response to be politically the most distant, despite being friendly in tone — raising a question mark over the con-

ception that it is the working class that is the agency for socialist revolution, and drifting toward the idea (not yet hardened, but clearly present) that forms of cultural struggle are as important as class activity. On the other hand, the most polemical in tone of the responses, by Mel and Marcia Rothenberg, was the most substantive and thoughtful in taking up some of the real problems associated with the regroupment process.

It is always encouraging when people take the initiative to write for *Changes*, especially on fresh topics. In this regard Mike Slott's article on the worker ownership problem was an especially exemplary act. Others are urged to follow suit... for example, there are comrades doing unemployed organizing. What about it?

We are also extremely indebted to Ilene (NY), who took time to write the feature article for the upcoming joint issue with *Solidarity on Socialism and Feminism*. The article takes up some of the critical questions associated with changes in the family and the implications for the left and the women's movement in opposing the right wing. Although at this writing we haven't received the articles *Solidarity* is writing, and several of our own shorter pieces remain to be completed, Ilene's contribution assures that the issue will be of high quality.

We are in the process of firming up plans for the next six to nine months. Please get in touch to give us your suggestions.

—DF

Political Committee Minutes

December 13

1. Regroupment. Report from Dan about trip to Boston and New York. Dan felt that we misjudged the commitment to regroupment expressed at the meeting after the labor paper conference. General feeling that we have to be more sensitive to needs of local groups. Road show, as we envisioned it, not on, but look for ways to move forward locally, on city-by-city basis.
2. *Changes* responses to regroupment article. Dissatisfied with responses. RWH unable to write response due to internal problems. Will continue to solicit responses for an on-going dialogue in *Changes*. Workers Power and Christians of Socialism have promised responses, RWH and PUL are possibles.
3. 1983 Calender. Several major conferences being discussed for '83. DSA, WP, RWH all interested in sponsoring conferences on electoral politics. P.C. to have discussion of our attitude towards various proposals Jan 31. Labor paper plans a West Coast conference in the spring. 20th anniversary of civil rights movement march on Washington — August. UAW Convention — May. Not to mention the '83 bargaining round.
4. Report on meeting with SSFN held in NYC Dec. 5. Carole and Dan attended, as well as comrades from NYC. Large section of SSFN planning to join Socialist

- Party within the year. Rest will fragment, join other groups. See report elsewhere in this newsletter.
5. Trade Union Commission. Decided to reestablish (once again) the TUC. Discussion of personnel.

January 6

1. Assessment of Regroupment. See document.
2. National meeting. Discussion of agenda and date for a national meeting.
3. Report on RWH. Disintegration more rapid than we expected.

January 17

1. Discussion of regroupment document. Investigate SWP debates; David to report.
2. National meeting. April 2-3 selected as date, after polling many members. Long discussion of agenda. I'll spare you the details — read about it elsewhere in this newsletter.
3. Preliminary discussion of branches. Carole to make proposal for P.C. to work more closely with branches.

Next meeting: Jan 31. Agenda: branch functioning, labor paper perspectives, SWP, preliminary discussion on National Meeting topics, *Changes* editorial board and next six months of magazine, etc.

Regroupment Update — Meeting with SSFN

MEETING WITH SOLIDARITY SOCIALIST FEMINIST NETWORK

In early December, Dan L., Carole K., Mel B., Artie S., Frances B. met with Eric C., Paul S., Nancy W., and David T. from Solidarity in New York. It was a comradely meeting which discussed our differing views on regroupment, joint work, attitudes toward other left groups and some political issues. They had met with the Socialist Party the day before which will be reported upon after a report on our meeting with Solidarity.

On the political issues there was much agreement, but on other matters related to regroupment, there was disagreement. The following is a summary of these differences:

1. SSFN's Concerns About Us

- * The fact that many of our members are Leninist, even though we are not proposing that type of organization at this time, is a problem for most of their people.
- * They see us as trade unionists and too narrow in focus. They don't think we have changed much since the early 70's when we were in the party building phase. They want a broader group and see the working class in broader terms.
- * They think we are making a mistake orienting to Maoists.
- * They fear a fight over Leninism (democratic centralism) and industrialization in a regrouped organization.

2. Our Concerns About SSFN

- * They are confused politically, with many different political viewpoints.
- * They are not clear on a very central question, on whether the working class is the agent of revolution.
- * They are on a program of fast merger and will make a decision at their summer conference about which group to merge with or join. The process that we see for regroupment is a long term process which is contrary to their idea and need for making some decision on a faster time schedule.
- * Their view of the left is self-centered. They think the groups we are orienting to are worthless. They think that SSFN is the only significant group in Boston and that there is no left to speak of anywhere in the country. They are particularly opposed to the Maoists groups because of their bad positions on homosexuality, positions most of them have changed at this time.

Evaluation of SSFN and Regroupment

From this meeting it appears that they will most likely merge with the Socialist Party. We should continue to have amiable relations with them doing the special issue of Changes on socialism feminism and doing joint work where possible.

SSFN's MEETING WITH SOCIALIST PARTY (our summary from their report)

They said they found the Socialist Party to be open on lots of questions and only closed on Leninism. They are completely opposed to a Leninist organization and want a multi-tendency organization which is what they have.

It was reported that they have 700 members, 125-150 activists, and the level of political debate is at a very low level with more tendencies than hard, political views.

The SP is interested in discussion of the formation of a new group. A possible merger is a direct threat to some in the SP.

They agreed to start working on a statement of unity, a new constitution or possibly a series of amendments to the SP's constitution. There was some discussion of changing the name of the organization, but the SP was reluctant. SSFN questioned whether they would be willing to have feminist or feminism in the new groups name.

It appears that SSFN is seriously considering joining or merging with the SP and will probably vote to merge or join the SP at their summer conference. It appears that the leaders are more inclined toward the SP than some of the rank and file members.

Dan's regroupment travels

In January Dan traveled to several cities in Iowa, where he gave talks of Left Unity, Mexico and Labor. He will be travelling to Indiana in the beginning of February. Then, from the 9th to the 23rd of February he will be on the West Coast. He plans to go from LA to Seattle meeting where ever he can to talk regroupment.

Mexico Mexico Mexico

I was in Mexico from Dec. 13-23 and spent most of that time in Mexico City where I had some opportunities to meet and talk with representatives of some socialist groups there. I expect to be writing a talk or article on the left and the current crisis in Mexico.

—DL

Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT)

I met with Sergio and Peter who ~~represented~~ agreed to an interview on the condition that the contents not be published, but be for the use of the I.S. only. They were obviously concerned that there be some misunderstanding at a time when there are problems in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and in the Socialist Workers Party. They attempted to disassociate themselves from their member who attended our convention, saying he came on his own.

Regroupment

The group was formed out of the member of four Trotskyist groups all of which were oriented to the U.Sec. They would prefer they said to merge with other Trotskyist groups, but are prepared to seek unity with other currents they work with in the class struggle. They are most interested in the Organizacion Comunista Proletaria (OCP) and the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (MRP), both of which are x-Maoist organizations which do work in poor neighborhoods. ~~The~~ The PRT said they are interested in ~~unity~~ unity with these groups because they pursue a communist policy in the class struggle. (At a party one of their long-time members told me that working with people out of other socialist traditions is entirely new to them.) The main vehicle for regroupment has been the electoral campaign of Rosario Ibarra.

Labor

The main issue in their labor work is the struggle against ~~the~~ domination by the ruling party, PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional). The difficulty is that to be a member of a union you usually have to be a member of the PRI.

Independent unions are usually smashed by the employers and the government (PRI). The PRT's union work is usually done in the form of organizing a broad trade union caucus on the basis of class struggle politics (that is, not on the basis of socialist politics). There is usually some socialist presence in conjunction with this work-- though not always. That socialist presence may take the form of a socialist factory bulletin. In any case they do attempt to bring other political ~~in~~ issues into their labor work: strike solidarity, repression, and solidarity with the revolutionaries in El Salvador and Guatemala. They said that they usually don't raise feminist, gay and lesbian issues in their labor work. However, they have found that they can raise gay and lesbian issues among airport workers and miners. They said they have been pushing their gay comrades to take up the issues of discriminatory firings of gays and lesbians. They take up issues of discrimination against women particularly in the ~~s~~ work in telephone, the metro, and the university.

Women

They said that there has been a decline in feminist activity and that feminist organizations have folded up. Specifically feminist issues are not seen as central at this point. They try to build broader formations of working women on issues relating to work and community questions. (It is more or less what we call the idea of a "working women's movement.")~~s~~ With in these groups ~~s~~there may be some element of feminist discussion; there is more openness in discussions of sexuality as a result of the feminist movement. They organized women for the campaign of Rosario Ibarra, and the support groups had different characters depending on where they were. The Mexico City group was basically feminists and the groups outside of Mexico City were groups of working class and peasant women and not feminist. The PRT~~person~~ spokesperson said that class distinctions are much sharper in Mexico and there are great difficulties in integrating working class and peasant women ~~with~~ and the more middle class women who have ~~f~~ more feminist ideas. Asked how they explain gay and lesbian issues to their members and friends, I was told that they first explain those issues as matters of repression, police repression. Secondly they explain discrimination against gays and lesbians as "unscientific," that is, as prejudice. The more scientific ~~the working class is, the better.~~ Basically however it is taken up as a civil rights question. The PRT organized ~~s~~ lesbians and homosexuals for Rosario and rased other social questions among those groups.

Organizational

The PRT had previously had a cell structure with student or worker cells. They are now giving up the cell structure and going to a geographic chapter. They found that the worker or student cells were too politically narrow. Second they found that with 150 such cells in Mexico City it was too hard to pay attention to them, to organize them. They will now have 17 geographical chapters in Mexico City which will be easier to keep track of. Third, they found that it was too hard in the smaller cells to assimilate the experience of the group. Finally, they are now organizing national fractions in different industries which they hope will compensate for the loss of the worker cells. In the countryside they said that they often have mass influence. They sometimes lead municipal committees of several hundred members. However, the cell of the party consists of only 6 or 7 members. They said that this is because it is virtually impossible to assimilate illiterates to the party, so only the peasant leaders are drawn in.

Publications

The PRT publishes the newspaper Bandera Socialista and the magazine La Batalla (the latter's first number was Dec.82-Jan. 83). Both could be gotten from: ~~XX~~ PRT, San Antonio Abad 254, Col. Vista Alegre, CP 06800, Mexico, D.F., Mexico.

Directions for Anti-intervention Work

Introduction

The following letter was sent to comrades in the NY anti-war work in response to some documents circulating in New York CISPES. The documents in question were written by some independent revolutionary socialists, some of whom we have contact with through our anti-war "joint fraction" in NY. We felt the documents were undoubtedly well-intentioned in trying to pose a left-wing direction for the solidarity movement and to cut through bureaucratic narrowness which seems to exist in NY CISPES. However, we also felt the politics and method in them were quite sectarian and that the I.S. should not be associated with these politics.

Among other things, the documents argued (incorrectly, from our experience) that CISPES (a) doesn't want to talk about the regionalization of the war; (b) is interested in white middle class people, not rank and file workers and minorities; (c) is turning itself into a mouth-piece of the FDR/FMLN; and (d) is very undemocratic in NY.

We regard the first three points as mistaken -- and the proposals made to correct them even more so, in particular changing CISPES' name and program to be a Central America solidarity organization with a virtually revolutionary political program -- although we are certainly sympathetic with the points raised in regard to (d). We felt our letter might be of some interest to comrades who haven't seen the documents. Anyone who would like to see them can contact Mel in NY.

The documents shared with us, written by Michael Letwin et al, from NY CISPES, do not represent a constructive attitude and direction for CISPES. Though we know little of the local situation in NY, our experience with Detroit CISPES has given us some insights to the operating of local CISPES chapters as well as an understanding of the regional and national structures.

The political thrust of most these documents is that CISPES should re-define itself from a Salvadoran Solidarity Committee to something like a revolutionary political organization. Specifically the documents call for re-naming the organization "The Committee in Solidarity with the People of Central America", making support for a broad range of progressive issues expected of members, the introduction of a dues structure, the construction of an elaborate decision making structure and the calling of a national convention in a few months.

We disagree with this approach for several reasons. One is that the role of a solidarity committee is not to be continually "raising the political level" of the organization. A solidarity committee must strive to bring new people into solidarity activity at whatever level they feel comfortable. If this means writing letters to Congresspeople -- so be it.

Trying to broaden the focus by changing the name serves no real purpose. As the documents state, many CISPES groups already take a regional approach in their discussions and newsletters. The three main national solidarity networks, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, are all housed in the same office space in D.C. They work together closely. For tactical purposes the differences between the struggle in Nicaragua (where the U.S. backed government has already been overthrown) and the struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala (where revolutionaries are still struggling against

CISPES

U.S. backed regimes) need to be taken into account. The kind of solidarity actions needed aren't always identical. And, though revolutionaries understand that the revolutions in the various Central American states must all succeed or they will all be defeated, CISPES as a solidarity movement with the people of El Salvador should be opposed to the regionalization of the war, not hailing it as an "opportunity." If NY CISPES has a particular problem with "regionalization", perhaps sending away to the CISPES National Office for literature on the subject might generate some discussion.

CISPES' membership in the World Front in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador is taken up in great detail in the document "CISPES and Central American Relations." The irrelevance of this issue is overwhelming. Their concern is that some of the Points of Unity in the World Front platform are not the kind of thing CISPES members would all agree to. This may very well be true. However, the inclusion of CISPES in the World Front has not altered the CISPES Points of Unity here in the U.S. The World Front does not give orders or direction to CISPES, and its value to CISPES is 99% symbolic. Or to look at it another way, would it have been constructive to refuse to join the World Front because of some clause about Cuba? We don't think so.

In the conclusion to this document^{the} authors put forward a proposal that states; "that members of CISPES be required to give unconditional but not uncritical support to FMLN-FDR and/or other Central American revolutionary organizations." This formulation about "unconditional but not uncritical" is wrong on both counts. First off such phraseology is meaningless to people outside the left. Secondly, there is no reason why CISPES should not continue to be defined by its present Points of Unity, which call for the "recognition of the broadly based opposition group, The Democratic Revolutionary Front -- Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FDR/FMLN) as the legitimate representative of the Salvadoran people." The Points of Unity also call for the "recognition of the right of the people of El Salvador to self-determination, including the right to determine their methods and form of struggle."

CISPES members should be free to have whatever political analysis of the liberation movements they like. CISPES as a solidarity organization should not see any form of "criticism" as part of its role.

The document "Building the Central American Movement" calls on the organization to attract minorities and working people. The document outlines the weaknesses of a white, middleclass, moralistic anti-war movement, and implies that CISPES has these problems because we are not taking militant actions and reaching out to workers and oppressed minorities.

In Detroit CISPES we have run into this kind of simplistic "left" equations before. Members of the RSL spent some time introducing position papers etc. arguing that we needed to get working class and minorities active in CISPES, and we had to stop catering to white middle class liberal politics, by holding more militant picket lines etc.. The assumption being that "working class" people were not involved, and that because the working class is the agent for revolution, they are -- by definition -- more militant and attracted by more militant activities. Wrong!

Many of the Church activists in CISPES are working class people. Who, incidently, are more often attracted (though not always) by more conservative activities like letter writing campaigns.

An understanding of the role of the Church in the Central American Solidarity movement seems conspicuously absent from the documents (except for one perfunctory mention of its conservative role). This serves to re-enforce our impression that the politics of these documents are based more on knee-jerk

CISPES

militance than a real understanding of how to build the solidarity movement.

As one of the documents outlines, arguments about social service money going to the military and the job flight to the 3rd world can be made. However, while these arguments are politically important, it must be recalled that the amount of military aid going to El Salvador is significant for El Salvador, but is a very small part of the overall military build-up under Reagan. Likewise the number of North American jobs lost to Salvadoran cheap labor markets is virtually non-existent (especially since the civil war has crippled industry.) So the idea that CISPES could, if it only wanted to, shift its focus to recruiting "working and oppressed people," simply because it is in "their interests" is quite utopian.

One task of revolutionary socialists within a solidarity movement, of course, is to bring working people and oppressed minorities into the movement. It is not our task to lecture the movement about how important this is, or to engage in demagoguery about it. If CISPES is presently perceived as a "white left" group, it is pure illusion to think this will change just because it endorses and participates in Black, labor or women's rights demonstrations. Even though it should!

The notion put forward in the same document that CISPES' independence from the major parties is not/or will not be maintained is ungrounded. Very few chapters carried out any activities related to the November elections. There is no basis for hyping this issue at this time.

"Building the Central American Movement" also discusses endorsements and participation in broad coalitions as a way of building CISPES. In particular it mentions how NY CISPES did not endorse the Cherry Hill demo. The document implies that the FMLN/FDR representative present was out of line for stating a preference against it. Our reading is that the representative acted in a completely principled way, stating an opinion but not trying to impose any kind of discipline or heavy-handed pressure. The rule in NY CISPES, 75% vote to endorse a controversial event - that prevented endorsement of the Cherry Hill demo - is quite questionable, but does not reflect upon the FDR/FMLN representative. We feel it would have been correct for the NY CISPES chapter to endorse the demo.

The proposed national structure and call for a convention are both good ideas in theory, but are very impractical. CISPES nationally does lack democratic structure. Many activists are well aware of this, but the documents seem to seriously underestimate the difficulties of creating such structures. Such structures require a very large budget, and the call for a dues structure is not adequate. A nationwide convention would cost thousands of dollars; at a time when the National Office cannot afford to put out a national newsletter (the ALERT), such plans seem impossible. Secondly, the dues structure implies a higher level of organizational commitment on the part of CISPES members than currently exists. Many CISPES groups across the country are actually long standing local solidarity organizations that have affiliated with CISPES for networking benefits. These groups, along with other local CISPES committees already bleed members dry for funds.

The documents portray CISPES as a monolithic organization with orders written in stone coming down from the National Office. Our experience is that CISPES is very de-centralized (perhaps too much so). The National Office does what it can, but activities are carried out on the local level. If local activists have no interest in a certain campaign then they do not participate. The National Office functions more as a network center, as a clearinghouse for information and coordinator for national events (March 27th).

CISPES

Lastly, though it isn't explicit, we feel that the documents convey a certain "thrust" toward the formation of some kind of organized left caucus in CISPES. Such a formation would be counterproductive. CISPES is not large, stable nor diverse enough to withstand such a development at this time.

It is important to understand that the relationship of the organized left to the Central American solidarity movement has not been entirely healthy. There is a strong tendency for sectarian left infighting to be carried into the solidarity movement, with negative results. (This has occurred, for example, in the May 3 vs. May 9 coalitions in 1981 and the Third World and Progressive Peoples coalition struggle with the June 12 Rally committee this year). Some of the problems which are raised in the documents regarding the functioning of NY CISPES may well be traceable to this phenomenon as well. Granted, in the real world the solidarity movements exist in a left milieu and cannot insulate themselves from left politics, including their more negative aspects. But the tendency for the solidarity movement to become a forum for ideological infighting is decidedly one to which we should not contribute. We have plenty of vehicles through which to express our viewpoints.

From what we can understand of NY CISPES, it is clear that these documents are trying to address some real problems. The difficulty in getting new people active and involved and confusion about how decisions are made, probably indicate a conservative cliquishness in the chapter. However, these are not problems that require the formation of a cliquish -- equally alienating -- left caucus. The hours spent writing and producing these documents could have easily provided many evenings of child care for CISPES meetings and outreach work. This is the level on which the tasks of building the solidarity movement must be confronted, not by re-defining the Points of Unity.

Ultimately the central political question in U.S. politics over Central America will be consistent opposition to all U.S. intervention versus a liberal imperialist effort to clean up the form of the intervention. The point of building broad solidarity with the Salvadoran struggle today is to create a configuration of forces so that CISPES can win that struggle.



NY Joint Anti-War Fraction Report

Branch members have been fairly consistently involved in anti-war groups, although work has been on quite a low level since the movement hasn't been able to pull out of a big slump. Chris and Mel are members of the NY Mobilization for Survival's Disarmament Task Force, and Chris is a representative to the NY Mobe Coordinating Committee. We have proposed the outline of a program of actions, mostly propagandistic. Response is positive but energy is low.

Peter is chairperson of the NY University Central America Solidarity Committee, which has a formal relationship to CISPES but doesn't function as a CISPES chapter — the NY CISPES Steering Committee failed to come through with resources for campus work and then discouraged students from taking their own initiatives in CISPES' name (from fear of sectarian domination). Artie, as an NYU student with limited time, will function around this group's activities in a more auxiliary role.

To connect ourselves better to the main centers of anti-war work, particularly CISPES, the branch decided to initiate discussions on the development of anti-war movements with activists in these movements to whom we are politically close. We saw this need for joint work among revolutionaries as both a reason for regroupment and a step toward it. The discussions are taking the form of a joint anti-war fraction with Workers' Power, Solidarity, and independents (other groups potentially will participate). Both WP and SSFN have functioning groups in CISPES.

The joint fraction has met twice and everyone has been enthusiastic about its usefulness. So far the main problem we have addressed has been NY CISPES' failure to build an anti-intervention movement. CISPES' activities here have been increasingly oriented simply towards fund raisers, relationships with church officials, union bureaucrats etc. According to our friends in SSFN, WP and independents, a justified fear of sectarians has led to

CISPES' avoidance of other activist groups, refusal to consider El Salvador in the context of the anti-Reaganomics struggle, and a thoroughly bureaucratic styled functioning which leaves all initiative in the hands of a small leadership and stifles democracy.

How a small group of revolutionaries can address this problem without becoming a sectarian opposition clique or forming an impotent counter-organization is not easy, but a potentially exciting positive suggestion has been made by David of SSFN. It is high time for a non-sectarian campaign, at first educational, — around the U.S.'s regionalization of the war in Central America. CISPES no longer thinks in these terms, but it is not necessary to split CISPES to do this. Autonomous support groups — such as the relatively independent Columbia U. CISPES chapter and Peter's NYU group — can coalesce to begin such a campaign on the campuses. Beyond a kickoff forum on the Columbia campus, the idea is embryonic, but our joint fraction can play a role in clarifying its conception and direction. Perhaps the Mobe (a genuinely multi-issue group) would lend its name and some resources to the campaign.

Ideas like this can hopefully bring more people around the fraction. Individual RWH members are interested although organizational problems make it difficult for them to make a group commitment. We are discussing with the PUL their current attitude towards disarmament (the official position is against unilateral disarmament and for a "reasonable" US deterrent nuclear force!) to see if they would be compatible with the fraction. Members of the various Central America support groups will be invited. The group's activities, if it succeeds, can be a helpful supplement to the Solidarity Committee, whose members do not work jointly in the same external arenas and which is becoming primarily a forum and newsletter group.

—Mel

DETROIT ---CISPES

In Detroit David F., Foss and Adela are active in CISPES. The Committee has taken on two projects recently. First to protest Reagan's certification of improvement of human rights in El Salvador and second to raise money for medical aid for El Salvador.

The certification protest took the form of holding banners over freeways a couple days after certification. Of the commuters that signaled any responses, the majority seemed supportive of our banners which read "U.S. OUT OF EL SALVADOR."

The medical aid fundraising, to begin this month, hopes to both raise concrete aid for the FDR/FMLN, as well as give CISPES a vehicle for outreach. The funds will be channeled through Medical Aid for El Salvador (Ed Adner's thing), which sends the money to Mexico, where they purchase supplies and then smuggle them into the FMLN zones of control in El Salvador. The respectability of Ed Adner's Medical Aid organization should prove an asset for outreach. Though Detroit CISPES has a seasoned core of activists, getting new people involved remains difficult.

The Detroit District of the I.S. plans to have a fundraising party for Medical aid this month. (Any excuse for a party!)

—Foss