

REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST CAUCUS Newsletter

Number 5



December 1970

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST YOUTH MOVEMENT!

The need for a revolutionary socialist youth organization, open to all political tendencies seeking revolutionary change, was clearly demonstrated by the spontaneous upsurge of students and workers over the Cambodia-Kent State crisis. Whether SDS can develop into such an organization depends both on its internal structure and its ability to put forth a long-term revolutionary perspective. American society cannot be revolutionized through campus based activity, but only through a mass, working-class socialist party. As part of its socialist propaganda, SDS should fight for the formation of such a party. While SDS cannot substitute itself for the Leninist party, substantial sectors of radicalized youth can center their activities around those vital issues - imperialism, chauvinism, nationalism, workers' power - which will contribute to the development of such a vanguard organization.

The last few years have seen increasing fragmentation and exclusionism on the left. Blacks and other minorities have limited themselves to their ethnically exclusive organizations. Many radical women have focussed groups exclusively concerned with the issue of women's oppression. The left is beginning to look like a group of capitalist firms competing for scarce natural resources, as if there were a limited pool of resources available to fight oppression and each political group had to justify its claims on that pool. Thus, SDS has witnessed meaningless debates about whether the oppression of women is as important as the oppression of blacks in American society. It's obvious that the trade union movement would never have been built if coal miners and steel workers had spent their time arguing which of the two groups

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THE PANTHERS, RACISM AND THE RADICALS

The struggle for black liberation has been one of the most dynamic movements in the U.S. for the past ten years. Thus far the highest stage of this struggle has been manifest in the Black Panther Party, which has come under attack from the ruling class for its militancy, particularly its practice of armed self-defense and rejection of government sponsored black power ("pork chop nationalism"). Because of the Panthers refusal to accept liberal crumbs - the Civil Rights Act, Supreme Court decisions, government "good will" - to achieve equality (it is obvious these reforms have achieved little or nothing), the ruling class has found it necessary to increase repression of blacks in general and the Panthers in particular. It is important to realize that this repression is only a test of what is in store for the entire working class - a warning to stay in line or this will happen to you. The ruling class attacks the most exposed and isolated elements first - the Panthers, the student movement, the ghetto. But the message is clear.

Faced with Repression, the Panthers Turn to the Liberals

These attacks on the Panthers have taken their toll and the Panthers have been unable to withstand this pressure. They have reacted by

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 was more exploited. When the left becomes divided along social group lines, it is inevitable that a sense of hostile competition will develop. Many women's liberation activists see working-class-oriented groups as blind to the social oppression of women. Many black militants regard the women's liberation movement as a middle-class diversion or implicit mockery of what they see as their more vital struggle. SDS cannot think of itself purely in negative terms - anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, etc. Our goal is not to fight particular aspects of social oppression, but to end them all by overthrowing capitalism and constructing a socialist society. An end to the oppression of blacks and other minorities, the abolition of the "second sex" position of women in society, as well as an end to the exploitation of workers cannot be achieved through pressure group politics, but only through socialist revolution. If the left and SDS is not to become a collection of competing interest groups, it is necessary to affirm that struggles against particular forms and aspects of oppression must be part of an overall strategy to establish a socialist world order.

Why Proletarian Socialism?

Progressive Labor members have often argued that SDS should support workers' struggles because workers are the most oppressed section of American society. This is not true. Groups such as welfare recipients, sharecroppers, convicts, and reservation Indians are poorer and more degraded than the typical factory worker. Workers' struggles are decisive not because workers are "worse off" than other groups, but because private property and the exploitation of labor is the central axis on which this society rests. Social power depends on control of productive resources. Only the working class is capable of destroying the power of the capitalist class and reconstructing society for the benefit of all of humanity.

If one speaks of being "pro-working-class", one should want the working class to have power and not simply endlessly fight their exploiters. Workers' power, whatever one may call it, is socialism. To describe oneself as "pro-working-class", without having a socialist perspective, is, at best, to be an advocate of trade union militancy, and, at worst, to accept the permanent exploitation of the working class.

The "Socialist Issue" in SDS

SDS should define itself as an anti-imperialist, anti-racist socialist youth organization with a working class perspective. It has been argued by Progressive Labor that SDS should not call itself socialist since everybody in SDS does not have to be a socialist. In fact, this is dishonest since the overwhelming majority of SDSers are socialists and many of our leaflets and articles talk about imperialism and capitalism, thereby implying a socialist analysis of society. Agitation against the ruling class and for workers' control must play an important part in our program. This does not mean that every SDS member will agree with it. Taking a stand in favor of a socialist solution to the oppression we fight will not prevent us from recruiting many newly-radicalized young people who do not yet understand the need for a socialist perspective but want to participate in SDS. Having a set of secret positions which we do not forthrightly acknowledge is more likely to drive them away.

SDS's fear of the word "socialist" is made ridiculous by the example of the Young Socialist Alliance, a group which is to the right of SDS on every single issue, and yet calls itself "socialist". Despite its being politically to the right of SDS, the YSA is able to pretend to be more radical than SDS by its willingness to break with capitalist ideology. The YSA has been quite successful in recruiting newly radicalized youth who see that the only solution to the problems of war, racism, and misery caused by capitalism is socialism.

As already noted, for the past few years most SDS members have considered themselves socialists - and revolutionary socialists, at that. Why then has the organization failed to come out for socialism? Most of the responsibility falls on the shoulders of Progressive Labor (PL), the current SDS leadership. As self-avowed Leninists, one would think PL would take a lead in fighting for a socialist perspective in SDS. Instead, they have done everything in their power to oppose one. A major reason for this is a desire to keep SDS at a low political level
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so that "really serious" people who want to be socialists are more attracted to PL, the self-styled revolutionary party.

Members of PL in SDS usually act as if PL were the mass party of the American working class, to which every serious socialist in SDS naturally owed their allegiance. Apart from its incorrect and continually changing politics, PL's claims to be a working class party are downright laughable. PL has far less than 500 members, the overwhelming majority of whom are students or college educated white collar workers. PL doesn't lead as much as a single trade union local anywhere in the country and couldn't get one percent of the vote for any electoral position anywhere. Lenin advised the British communists, who were twenty times larger and fifty times more proletarian than PL, to join the British Labor Party, the party of the British working class, as a revolutionary faction.

There is no real working class party in this country. One has to be built. Members and supporters of Progressive Labor would do a genuine service to the cause of the American revolution if they gave up their self-deluding posturing and joined with revolutionary socialists, in SDS and elsewhere, to build a workers' party, in reality and not merely in name.

For Non-Exclusionism

Non-exclusionism is one of SDS's most valuable assets and one which its membership must constantly fight to protect. The former SDS leadership almost destroyed SDS by trying to turn it into their own "party"-type organization. Recognizing the need for some kind of democratic-centralist vanguard party, they decided to purge "outside cadres" (particularly Progressive Labor) from SDS and turn the large and politically heterogeneous organization into a party with their politics. While it is clear we need a vanguard party which has the correct Marxist-Leninist program, we also need SDS as a non-exclusionist group of many tendencies and independent radicals in which each tendency can seek to win adherents to its politics and to convince a majority of the SDS membership to follow its leadership. In this way, SDS can continue to attract newly-radicalized youth who can participate in united actions (anti-war, anti-racism, strike support, etc.) while continuing to discuss political views upon which they do not all agree.

Since SDS members hold widely differing views on politics and tactics on almost every subject, every political and tactical position SDS takes (except for the vaguest formulations like "We fight racism") will necessarily not find unanimous agreement among the membership. Does this mean that SDS should not take clear political positions? Of course not. If we tried to do this we would restrict ourselves to low-level actions and campaigns. Moreover, any political organization has politics. To claim otherwise just means SDS's politics would be submerged, making a mockery of open discussion and democratic determination of policy. Anyone who has been in SDS for several years knows that in most SDS chapters, talk about "participatory democracy" was simply camouflage for subterranean maneuvering by leadership cliques.

If we are to put forth intelligent programs and undertake struggles, then we must not be afraid to put forward political positions. Since we will never be unanimously agreed on every issue, this means the politics of the majority of the membership will dominate so long as they are the majority. SDSers who disagree should be able to argue for their positions and try to win over a majority of the members to them, and must be assured full representation, proportionate to their strength at the time, on all SDS leading bodies and a forum for their views in New Left Notes. In fact, however, the successive leaderships of SDS have never pursued this kind of policy. New Left Notes is not now and never has been representative of the differing opinions inside SDS. At the 1968 SDS Convention, the grouping which later became the WSA caucus was not able to elect even one member to SDS's leading committee although they represented a substantial minority of the Convention delegates. Our organizational set-up is not noticeably different now.

Leninists and Independents

Since its inception, the relationship between SDS and outside alleged revolutionary organizations, particularly those practicing

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"democratic centralist" discipline, has been controversial. The early SDS excluded reds out of cold-war anti-communism. The Klonsky-Dohrn faction tried to counter Progressive Labor/WSA's attack on main-stream New Leftism by expelling all members of "outside cadre organizations".

Members of SDS in "external cadre organizations" certainly have the right and responsibility to publicize their group activities within SDS, to recruit independents, to fight for their political line and to play a leading role in the organization. What they do not have is the right to turn SDS into a de facto youth group of their own organization. Since becoming the leadership of SDS, members of PL have tried to force through a privileged relation between PL and SDS. Internal SDS meetings have been used to organize Challenge sales. PL has been the only adult revolutionary organization invited to speak at rallies organized by SDS. In the November 21, 1970 issue of New Left Notes, there is an article entitled PLP, CLP, and Liga Socialista Celebrate Workers International Solidarity Day, which begins, "For hundreds of SDS members, who are members or friends of Progressive Labor Party..." (and what of the hundreds of SDSers who are not members or friends of PL - do they get equal time?). These kinds of articles in NLN clearly give the impression to an unknowing person that SDS is PL's student group.

SDS has also witnessed the opposite political attitude - that members of outside revolutionary groups are second class citizens to be tolerated as long as they work hard and don't make trouble. Students new to radical politics and serious independents should welcome the presence in SDS of politically experienced groups, offering comprehensive and definite policies for SDS.

It has been argued that Leninists in SDS have an advantage because adhering to democratic centralism, they vote as a bloc. This was one of the Klonsky-Dohrn faction's arguments for expelling members of PL. The history of SDS shows that this argument is a red herring. Throughout SDS's history like-minded members, with no ties to outside organizations have formed factional grouping with whatever discipline was needed to push their politics. The old SDS had the Praxis group, the Revolutionary Union, RYM II and the Weathermen. SDS now has such factional groupings as the Revolutionary People's Caucus and the Midnight Special group. Disciplined caucuses, open to all SDS members and based on a definite program, are far more democratic than the clique politics all too common in the radical student movement.

RESOLVED:

1. SDS should define itself as an anti-imperialist, anti-racist socialist youth organization with a working class perspective.
2. SDS must constantly reaffirm its non-exclusionist principle in practice. This means guaranteeing proportional representation to all political viewpoints within SDS on leading bodies and in the pages of New Left Notes.
3. SDS should not have a privileged relationship with any adult "revolutionary" organization, e.g., SDS business meetings should not be used to organize sales of publications of such "revolutionary" groups. If SDS organizes a united front rally, all groups should be invited to speak on the basis of agreement with the demands of that rally.

ADVERTISEMENT

Readers and subscribers of the RMC Newsletter who agree with the arguments and conclusions of the lead article in this issue, "For a Revolutionary Socialist Youth Movement!" will also be interested in reading "A Contribution to the Discussion on the Worldwide Radicalization of the Youth", a dissident resolution of the so-called United Secretariat of the Fourth International passed by the Political Bureau of the French Communist League. This resolution, a polemic against the SWP's revisionist programmatic perspectives for world revolution, for the first time is made available to American radicals. It has been published with an introductory critique by the Spartacist League as #7 in its Marxist Studies series. The mimeographed document sells for 15¢, and is available from the RMC Newsletter, c/o M. Tishman, Box 454, Cooper Station, New York, N.Y. 10003.

The Panthers, Racism and the Radicals.....continued from front page

taking a turn for the worse - a class collaborationist and accommodationist turn to the liberal establishment. Instead of emphasizing the need for an independent working class party which would rip political power from the representatives of the bourgeoisie - the Democrats and Republicans - the Panthers have turned to the liberals, "the New Left", and the Communist Party to form a "popular front". Shades of the Communist Party policy in the '30's. That decade saw the Communists support Roosevelt's New Deal on the grounds that an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie was necessary to fight fascism. In the summer of 1969, the Panthers called a conference to form a conglomeration called the United Front Against Fascism. That this marked an attempted alliance with liberal politicians is indicated by their having Willy Brown, Bay area Democratic Party assemblyman and Carlton Goodsett, a liberal newspaper tycoon, speak at various Front Against Fascism functions. In the recent elections, the Panthers were sympathetic to Ronald Dellums' Congressional campaign on a Democratic Party ticket. In New York, Panther spokesmen, Zayd Shakur, signed the call for Black Solidarity Day along with Democratic Congressman-elect Charles Rangel and Livingston Wingate, head of Haryou Act, the federal poverty program for the ghetto. These acts are a betrayal of the working masses, black and white, because they assert that workers must put their faith in liberal reformism and not in their own political, economic and social power.

The White Backlash and How to Fight It

Ironically, but expectedly, the United Front failed since the so-called "democratic" forces, especially the liberal Democrats, wouldn't touch armed blacks with a ten-foot pole and are rushing headlong towards the right and a policy of repression. In the past year, the repression of the Panthers has deepened as the general political climate has moved right. By and large, the persecution of the Panthers has been popular among the white working class, and liberal politicians have had to take a hard line on black radicals to withstand the Nixon-Agnew onslaught. Even George Wallace noted that most liberal Democrats are now talking like he was in 1968.

The repression of the Panthers and other radicals cannot be stopped by having the existing left forces run around chanting "Free the Panthers" and "Fight Racism". The great mass of workers in this country will only oppose the persecution of the left if they believe the left represents their interests. This is not now the case and the Panthers and most of their supporters have done nothing to change this situation. Huey Newton's continued glorification of black lumpens as the "backbone of the revolution" makes it impossible for the ordinary white worker to identify with the Panther's cause and strengthens his fear of the ghetto masses. Despite their hostility toward "porkchop nationalism" and willingness to work with white radicals, in rejecting proletarian socialism and an integrated working class party, the Panthers are rejecting the only politics capable of ending their own persecution and oppression of black people generally.

In this period of continued inflation with increasing unemployment, with the threat of government wage control and anti-strike laws, the left, black and white, can make deep inroads into the American working class. But the left must break with its black power image and put forth a program capable of uniting black and white workers around their common class interests. This is the only way the wide-spread discontent among white workers can be turned against the ruling class, and not against black militants and student radicals.

Against Gangster Tactics within the Left

The Panthers have often used verbal and physical violence against their left critics. At the 1969 SDS convention, the Panthers joined with the RYM-Weatherman faction against the pro-working class Worker Student Alliance caucus in an attempt to destroy SDS. The Panthers were brought into that convention to denounce, bait and try to stampede it--and were a partial success. The splitters walked out, "expelled" the WSA and instituted a new set of rules and politics, including uncritical support to various "socialist" countries. Ironically, several Panthers were arrested in Cuba only a few days later for trying to organize black workers there. This should have given the Panthers and their friends an object lesson in the importance of workers' democracy

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and a hostility to Stalinism. It did not.

Along with their alliance with the Communist Party, the Panthers reverted increasingly to the use of Stalinist tactics against their political opponents. At the 1969 United Front Against Fascism conference, those groups critical of the Panthers' alliance with liberals--these included SDS, the Spartacist League, Progressive Labor--were physically thrown out. On several occasions, members of other left groups have been harassed and threatened for selling literature critical of Panther policy.

The RMC sees the need to build an integrated workers' party, based on the rank-and-file of the trade unions. Only the unrestricted and unintimidated exchange of ideas will facilitate the workers' struggle. To sit back and watch a group repeat past mistakes is to abandon any pretense of revolutionary struggle. In order to build the kind of society we want; the left must understand what is wrong with certain ideas, tactics and policies. The Panthers refuse to let other groups "get away with" criticizing them--for any reason. They respond with the same tactics the ruling class is fond of using--intimidation, beatings, harassment. They use these tactics because their politics can not stand the criticism of their opponents.

Some members of SDS have argued that we shouldn't criticize the Panthers and other black radical groups in order to attract more blacks into SDS. There's an obvious contradiction in wanting to build an integrated organization by being sympathetic to black nationalism. Since Stokely Carmichael raised the "black power" slogan in SNCC, one of the main policies of all black nationalists, and this includes the Panthers, is that black radicals should devote themselves to all-black organizations. The Panthers had excellent relations for a while with the RYM-Weatherman faction of SDS precisely on the basis that SDS would be an all-white organization and radical black students should be encouraged to join the Panthers. The Panthers would certainly oppose radical blacks joining SDS rather than being active in the Panthers. It is glaringly obvious that SDS can only become an integrated organization by attacking the black nationalist concept that black and white radicals should be in separate organizations.

Defend the Panthers!

In SDS, the question of defending the Panthers has come up. Of course, SDS must defend them. The left must be defended against any attack by the ruling class. If they are allowed to proceed unopposed, the left and workers' movement will be defenceless. Not only will defending the Panthers strengthen the movement as a whole, but it will establish our credibility with the Panthers themselves and others on the left, and make them more responsive to our criticisms of the Panthers' political weaknesses. Sectarian or cowardly dis-association will do nothing except harm and is an abdication of our revolutionary duty. The current stand of the SDS leadership on the Weatherman question is a disgusting example of this. SDS should participate vigorously in the defense of any and all in the left and workers' movement who are under attack from the ruling class; any other course is suicide.

Some Progressive Labor members have argued that to make a big deal about the Panther trials is elitist and down-grades the day to day persecution of ordinary black workers. This argument overlooks the fact that often particular acts of injustice and oppression acquire a political significance beyond the fate of the individuals involved. The Iranian Revolution of 1906 was touched off by the public torture of a merchant. It would have been insane for Iranian revolutionists to refuse to participate because the masses hadn't reacted to earlier atrocities. The Dreyfus Affair, over the framing up of a Jewish military officer, was a major defeat for the French reactionaries. A successful persecution of the Panthers, Angela Davis, the Weatherman, etc. may shape the political climate in the '70's just as surely as the successful persecution of the communists ushered in the reactionary '50's.

RESOLVED:

1. That SDS take an active part in the Panther Defense campaign.
2. That SDS does not give positive political support to the Panthers, in view of their attempted collaboration with sections of the liberal establishment and use of violence toward other left groups.
3. That SDS affirm that the persecution of black radicals and oppression of the black people, in general, can effectively be combatted only by building an integrated workers party, with a program meeting the needs of both black and white workers.

D E F E N D T H E M O V E M E N T !

The Revolutionary Marxist Caucus received a letter Dec. 15 on Weatherman stationary requesting help in the defense of "6 of the Family", friends of the Weatherman and movement activists, who were arrested by the police on Dec. 4, and are presently held in the Tombs and the Women's House of Detention. In accordance with our position on defense of the Weathermen and other persecuted political groups, we are asking our subscribers and friends to send money for legal defense and/or bail to the following address, to be used for their aid:

Family Trust
c/o Lubell, Lubell, Fine and Schaap
103 Park Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10017 phone: 245-3574,76.

OPEN LETTER TO THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL.....continued from back page

To recognize that this solution won't solve the problem of SDS is the beginning of wisdom. It can't solve the problem because it fundamentally fails to understand what was wrong with the old SDS and, worse yet, offers precisely the old New Left's nostrum as a solution to a political problem; a classless, metaphysical democracy.

A call to restore the NIC and SDS to the good old days before the split is really incredible. The old 'democratic' SDS was dominated by the cliques in control of the National Office and New Left Notes. It was precisely the swamp nature of the old SDS, the eschewing of voting procedures, of clearly responsible political leadership, of clearly drawn political lines that permitted the Dohrns, Rudds, Klonskys, etc. to run SDS like George Meany runs the AFL-CIO. And Clark calls for a return to the swamp! No, thank you!

The "Democracy" of The Midnight Special

The problem is compounded by the RMC's past experience with The Midnight Special's brand of democracy. To begin with, the New Orleans MDS chapter at its inception tried to exclude members of the Spartacist League from MDS membership (see "The Moscow Trials in New Orleans" available from RMC on request). At last fall's Southern Regional SDS meeting in Tallahassee, Florida, former PL'er (and present MNSer) Ed Clark voted with Spartacist spokesmen to affiliate the represented regional chapters to "Boston" SDS, while present MNSer Harold Yuratich led the fight against affiliation. Thus, the calls to "save SDS" emanating from New Orleans these days carry the co-signature of a man who stated his views that there were no significant differences between SDS and the then RYM/Weatherman bloc! Yuratich reinforced his demands then by a spectacularly grotesque piece of "Leninist"-baiting mocking both Progressive Labor and Spartacist as "vanguard of the vanguard" sects. As a direct result of the voting down of "affiliation", in reality a statement of "no confidence" in Boston, SDS has become moribund and reduced to a pitiful mini-handful in the South. Radicalized youth in the South have turned in disgust to the Young Socialist Alliance. Thank you, comrades of The Midnight Special! Since then, finding yourselves in a minority at the Memphis Regional SDS Conference you walked out of the conference, denouncing it as "Trotskyite". Subsequently, The Midnight Special carried a slanderous, red-baiting attack on the RMC's role at Memphis, implying we were 'outside agitators' who changed the conference site at the last minute to keep legitimate SDSers away, and were racists to boot. To your credit you reprinted RMCer Pat McGee's letter correcting your distortions of the Memphis events. Your lack of comment or rebuttal to the letter no doubt indicates that you take no issue with McGee's statements, in which case if you are serious political people, you owe us an apology for your misrepresentations.

The Midnight Special's latest atrocity (December 1970 issue) is an article by Yuratich (who else?) branding the YSA/SMC as cops; "...the YSA and the SMC are either being used as or are tools of the bosses. In any event, they should be treated as such and given the same treatment that one would give a cop." This vicious and stupid cop-baiting is the kind of workers democracy one has come to expect from The Midnight Special. By avoiding political struggle, ignoring or slandering opponents on the left, Yuratich ends up once more playing into the hands of groups like the YSA. If sellout politics on the left (which the YSA espouses

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abundantly) are the same as the armed might of the capitalist state, was it the duty of radicals to defend CP'ers against the witch hunt of the 40's and 50's? Perhaps Angela Davis should be jailed? Maybe the revisionist Rosenbergs deserved to die? Maybe the revisionist-led NLF is as bad as the Green Berets? Such infantile sectarianism in reality plays into the hands of those very cops whom Yuratch affects to despise

For Political Struggle

Your analysis of the situation in SDS requires you answer some questions. If the politics of the present SDS leadership are "good" as you claim, and the problem lies with the present NIC having become infected with 'bourgeois attitudes' such as arrogance and elitism, how can you guarantee that the next crop of NICers with "good" politics won't succumb to the same virus? Something more than bad 'attitudes' is wrong with SDS, and simple calls to build a movement with rank and file control will not resolve the crisis in which SDS finds itself. Several years of similar struggle by Mao Tse Tung and his followers against 'bourgeois ideology' has not prevented the Chinese state from fawning over some of the more reptilian petty bourgeois regimes of the third world. Peking's massive welcome to Khan of Pakistan, the Batista of the Indian sub-continent, is only the most recent example of counter-revolutionary practice that gives the lie to all the hot air about fighting 'capitalist ideology', etc., etc....Auto-criticism which ignores politics and concentrates on rooting out abstractions such as elitism, commandism, etc. is no vaccine against revisionism or political imbecility.

Differences on organizational questions are invariably reflections of political differences. Thus, The Midnight Special's current agnosticism on PL/WSA's politics is untenable in the long run. You must either return to the PL/WSA fold or strike out a new course. Many oppositional groupings have sprung up in SDS and have tended to bloc together against PL/WSA. But this opposition is moving in a right wing direction, tending to return to some of the worst aspects of new leftism; e.g. studentism, softness on black nationalism, mindless enthusing for petty bourgeois heroes of the third world, life style fetishism, etc.

The responsibility for this state of affairs is PL/WSA's. After the '69 split decisive leadership could have turned an organizational setback for SDS into a political victory over new left politics and conceptions. To do this it was politically necessary to carry the split to its logical conclusion...i.e., to repudiate the anti-working-class "Lin Piacism" of Rudd, Doarn and Co. and to affirm SDS's commitment to socialism via working class struggle. But PL/WSA, reacting in the opportunist/sectarian fashion which is its hallmark tried to conciliate the independents who didn't understand the split and pulled back from the task of winning the student movement to socialist consciousness. To appease the non-existent "center" and win it over to SDS it retreated to the CWSA strategy...a program so trivial that even its most ardent proponents are content to let it lie undisturbed in its grave.

In reaction to the disasterous consequences of the CWSA program and its sudden abandonment by PL/WSA (which confused and demoralized many SDSers), some former WSAers have rediscovered old new leftism. Acknowledging PL's claim to being "Communist", they reject this "Communism" and along with it Marx, Lenin and the class struggle. But this is a mistake. PL's claims to the communist mantle, the mantle of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, are not valid no matter how much PL may aspire to it. PL came out of the CPUSA opposing the gross reformism of that party, but not really understanding the CP's revisionism which coincided with the rise of the Stalin faction to power in the CPSU and the Communist International, not with the accession of Browder to the party leadership. PL carried with it out of the CP a lot of Stalinist baggage which it mistook for real Leninism.

For some time now PL has been estranged from Maoism and shedding bits and pieces of its Stalinist underwear. But PL has not yet confronted the Russian Question. It has yet to grasp Leninism or to comprehend the reasons for the degeneration of the October Revolution. Both inside and outside of SDS, PL now stands in explicit repudiation of the political content of Lenin's Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder, and bears direct responsibility for not only the resurgence of new leftism within SDS, but for the linking of these new left trends with the old RYM forces who circle SDS--the buzzards (con't. on pg.9)

eagerly awaiting a feast.

Thus, Boston recently witnessed the formation of the wretched Revolutionary People's Caucus which represented nothing less than an anti-PL bloc of all the new left forces both in and out of SDS. This Revolutionary People's Caucus has been forging links with other right wing oppositionists around the country, and has as its goal a return to the pre-split swamp, and the worst political expressions of new leftism. Certainly the RPC has a right to exist within SDS and deserves representation in proportion to its strength on leading bodies of SDS. But it must be politically defeated, since it represents a turn away from the working class. And The Midnight Special call for a simple change of faces on the NIC and its spreading of naive illusions about the pre-split SDS can only be a hinderance in the coming struggle against the resurgent new left in SDS, and against the SDS leadership who are responsible for its existence.

Sectarianism or Socialism

If The Midnight Special believes politics to be relevant, if it agrees with Lenin that there can be no revolutionary practice without a revolutionary theory (i.e. Marxism), it must face up to the political questions wrecking PL/WSA and SDS. It may seem cute to Harold Yuratchik for example, to portray the RMC as sectarians concerned with "the Federof-Zinsky debate of eighteen-trivial". (Something else presumably trivial in his eyes is the non-presence of a union bug on the newspaper, another thing they share with New Left Notes and something which shows their "workerism" to be as meaningless as it is cynical.) Yuratchik may feel that he can simply ignore the Russian Revolution and its degeneration, but he does so at his own peril. Perhaps he and The Midnight Special prefer George Marlen, "The Voice From the 30's", who informs us that the Soviet Union is capitalist. You'll find plenty of company who will agree with that view, most of them indifferent to the rape of Vietnam by American imperialism.

In closing we reiterate: the contradiction between your political agnosticism vis-a-vis PL/WSA and your organizational differences with them cannot be suspended indefinitely. You face a political choice: return to the PL/WSA fold, move in the direction of irrelevant sectarians such as George Marlen, or move towards authentic revolutionary socialism, the communism of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. The choice is yours, comrades, but to choose the first two paths is to betray the struggle for the socialist revolution.

Fraternally,
George K., for the RMC

LETTERS:

The RMC has received a lot of interesting mail, so we're starting a letter column--please write and we'll print your stuff! The following exchange is between a Pler and a former PL candidate member who has since joined the RMC. Due to lack of space, we can only print excerpts.

Dear Scott,

"You call for a "Labor Party." What Kind?! Revolutionary, reformist, what? And why? People here in the U.S. don't like to vote, because they know it makes no difference, and if there were a worker's candidate, he couldn't do anything anyway! This system can't serve the workers, remember? You can expose the system at its lowest levels (councilmen, maybe even State Reps) but we have to destroy it, not try to win workers to the polls.

But the real question is, are you trying to win workers in large numbers to unite and fight back, to recruit them into reform struggles in which revolutionary politics are raised, to win them to communist ideas? Or are you only talking to people on the job, and otherwise sitting back looking very critically upon SDS and PL. That's sectarianism (a shell of advanced political talk with no basis of experience --not being able to show how certain ideas and certain errors affect concrete situations).

It is no mistake that the words communist or revolution do not appear anywhere in either of the papers you sent me (Worker's Action #5, Spartacist West #18). What revolutionary would ever say that bosses laws against unions could be repealed by "labor party" power? What
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revolutionary would ever cast the U.S. government as able to be stopped by the action of a labor party other than a revolutionary communist party?

Fight for Socialism!
Jon

Dear Jon,

...I want to make a few points clear about the idea of an American labor party. When Russian Marxists were still in elementary study circles, Lenin called for the formation of a "socialist workers" party in 1894 to influence workers. (this from "What the 'Friends of the People' are and How they fight the Social Democrats," I bought my copy from PL). The present plan for a labor party was initiated by Leon Trotsky and the leaders of the SWP (which at the time, 1932, was the vanguard party). They knew that the American movement needed a "party of the working class". The C.I.O. was born in this period and before its demise of militancy and merger into the A.F.L.-C.I.O., it was hoped that there would be a labor party based on the trade unions.

I think you're afraid that a labor party might just be economist, or might just become another reformist party, such as the British Labor Party, but I hope you bear some faith in the American working class... A national labor party was formed in 1919, by the workers themselves through the Chicago Federation of Labor. This was a combination of Steel and Packinghouse unions. In 1920 it changed its name to a Farmer-Labor party to get agrarian support, in the 1920 presidential elections, it got 250,000 votes.

You said that people "Don't like to vote because they know it makes no difference and if there was a worker's candidate, he couldn't do anything anyway!" This is ultra-leftism at its worst. Was Lenin wrong when the Bolsheviks combined legal with illegal work?... Lenin devoted a whole chapter of Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder to refuting the ultra-lefts in Germany who refused to use the elections that they could have. Lenin said, "Parliamentarism, of course, is politically obsolete for the Communists in Germany; but, and that is the whole point--we must not regard what is obsolete for us as being obsolete for the class, as being obsolete for the masses." "As long as you are unable to disperse the bourgeois parliament and every other type of reactionary institution, you must work inside them, precisely because there you will still find workers who are stupified." Better yet, why don't you read chapter 5 in Lenin's book.

James P. Cannon, one of the founders of the C.P. and American Trotskyism said in his report to the February 1948 Plenum of the National Committee of the SWP (the SWP was still vanguard up to the mid-fifties before they became class collaborationist, supported all-Black parties, etc.), "We do not and we did not support the 'labor party' unconditionally. We will not do so in the future. We support it 'critically'. That, I think should be emphasized...Our fundamental aim at all times is to advance our own program and to build a revolutionary party..."

It's amazing how many books I read since I became associated with the Trotskyist movement (he who doesn't know history is doomed to repeat it)...You cannot empirically denounce everything without first realizing what it is and how to fight or assimilate it.

Bolshevik greetings,
Scott

Dear RMC:

I have just recently come across, and read your periodical, Revolutionary Marxist Caucus Newsletter. I live here in Boston and am right in the middle of much of what you talk about in the Newsletter. I am a former student who had to quit school because I come from the working class and have no rich father to pay my way. But I got a reasonably good education and am very interested in the revolution.

But until reading your newsletter I have been generally disappointed with the revolutionary groups around here. They seem more bent on destroying each other than in building a mass movement. Also I find that their politics are turgid and in many cases unrealistic. Thus it has been refreshing to read your newsletter. Of course I have only seen this one issue, but it seems to be politically a lot more solid and analytical than anything the local groups have had to offer...

Yours truly, Philip J. Dykema

SDS LEADERS SELL OUT OVER WEATHERMAN BOMBING

The press release reprinted below was issued by the Revolutionary Marxist Caucus of SDS in Boston on 16 October, following a press conference called by SDS leaders to repudiate the Weatherman bombing of the Harvard Center for International Affairs library. Reports of the press conference, including pictures and quotes from a prepared statement, appeared in the Boston Globe of 16 October and in the Herald-Traveler the following morning. The SDS statement made no pretense of defending the Weatherman against the prosecution of the bourgeois state, but instead concentrated on defaming them to such a degree that no one could doubt the "innocence" of SDS. The statement completely "disavowed" the Weathermen and claimed "no sympathy" with them. The motive for this action can only be described as the most craven and un-revolutionary cowardice before the minions of the ruling class.

In doing this these SDS leaders, including Mark Zanger, Ira Helfand, Claudio Buchwald, and Thomas Antenucci join the worst liberals at Harvard. With righteous voices, these liberals have actually called a meeting to urge the prosecution of the bombers, who had the audacity to transgress against a precious symbol of academia. To a revolutionist, there are no such sacred cows under capitalism. Yet SDS has directly lent its voice to these disgusting liberal cries for vengeance against these "perpetrators of violence"... vengeance to be carried out, of course, by those paragons of pacifism, the capitalist cops and courts! While the SDS statement did not directly call for the prosecution of the bombers, its denunciation and lack of defense, in a special press conference at this time, can only lead to that conclusion.

Of course individual terrorist actions are "self-defeating" and "can't win" and a mass revolutionary movement is needed, but, like Lenin's dispute with the Russian Narodniks, this is a question to be hashed out within the movement. The Weathermen are misguided, but they are revolutionaries who are fighting the same enemy we are: they think theirs is the way to defeat the ruling class. To refuse to defend them against the class enemy is to cross class lines--and is a gross betrayal of fellow revolutionaries. The fact that they may attract crazies, provocateurs, and police agents into their ranks, as often happens to such groups, is of course no excuse. The Weathermen must be defeated by us politically, in the context of defending them; surely it is obvious that we can't expect to win people to our ideas if we look the other way while the class enemy does its work on them.

The SDS press conference came shortly after a meeting of a committee of Harvard-Radcliffe SDS at which some of the leaders of the press conference had been present. The committee had decided, through democratic discussion and vote, to issue a leaflet on the bombing which would characterize bombers as misguided revolutionaries and defend them against the bourgeois state. Thus the SDS leaders who called the press conference and spoke for H-R SDS were acting directly against the wishes of the SDS membership, as expressed in an appropriate local SDS meeting called to decide that very question! As if that weren't enough, the leadership put out a leaflet after the committee meeting which failed to defend the Weathermen, as called for by the meeting!

The RMC calls upon all chapters of SDS to repudiate the stand taken by the SDS leaders and to defend the Weathermen!

PRESS RELEASE

The Revolutionary Marxist Caucus of SDS strongly disagrees with the statements of SDS leaders about the Harvard Center for International Affairs bombing as quoted in the Globe, Friday, 16 October 1970. The RMC considers the actions of the SDS leadership, in "disavowing the Weatherman faction", as motivated only by fear and cowardice.

The RMC has no connection with the Weathermen and feels that individual terrorist bombings are self-defeating, but we feel it paramount to defend the people involved against the police, courts, academic liberals, and all representatives of the established bourgeois society. Unlike the SDS leaders, we sympathize with those who, like the Weathermen, feel that this oppressive society must be destroyed. Our tactical disagreements with Weathermen are not the same as our differences with the ruling class and its lackeys. We always solidarize with our fellow radicals and members of the labor movement against the class enemy, no matter how much we may disagree with them over tactics.

(Brandeis chapter of SDS endorsed the above statement at its regular meeting 19 October 1970. We urge all chapters to do likewise.)

NEW! RED! REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST BUTTON! Red banner on white background, REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST CAUCUS around outside. Yours for 25¢. Order from RMC Newsletter, address on back page.

COLUMBIA LABOR ACTION MEMBERS JOIN RMC!

The Columbia Labor Action Committee was formed last spring in response to the invasion of Cambodia and the slaughter of Kent State students by the National Guard last spring. Originally called the Work Stoppage Committee, the group sought to develop and extend the work stoppage movement that flared up briefly on campuses over the country, trying to link up with radical workers to build for a general strike against the war, counterposing this to new left-'student power' illusions. Members of the Labor Action Committee have now joined the RMC to help build a socialist youth movement that can provide militant leadership in situations like Cambodia-Kent State. The following is part of the Labor Action Committee statement to Columbia SDS. The complete statement includes demands for open admissions, for SDS involvement in labor struggles in a real way, for a worker's party, for defense of all radicals under police repression, and for a truly democratic and socialist SDS:

"The death of Columbia SDS and the entire movement at Columbia has recently been discussed in the New York Times and Columbia Spectator, and is by now a known fact. As members of Columbia Labor Action Committee, we have no joy at the declining fortunes of SDS, locally or nationally. Historically SDS became open to revolutionary politics when it dropped its exclusion of Communists in 1965. As against the prevalence of New Left-student power-Third World politics the WSA fought for a serious working class oriented student movement. SDS emerged from the 1969 split as the healthiest force in the radical student movement. As opposed to the reformist YSA-Mobe, SDS has stood for a militant, pro-working class and anti-imperialist movement. As opposed to the terrorist New Leftism of the December 4th Movement, RYM, the Weatherman, etc. SDS has been a spokesman for a pro-working class student movement. But while we praise SDS in these and other respects, it would be disingenuous of us not to admit our pervasive criticisms of SDS which have in the past kept us (and presently keep many genuine radicals) from joining SDS. It is also these very reasons which account for the relative popularity of such groups as the Student Mobe, D4M, YAWF, etc. compared to SDS on this campus (witness 1,000 at D4M rally in March, and 500 at a recent YAWF teach-in).

In enunciating our criticisms, we have no intention of drawing large segments of SDS into another group (while SDS still exists nationally). We realize that we as an ad hoc body have neither the facilities nor organization needed to maintain an independent body. For this reason we encourage all our members and former members who were in the Columbia Work Stoppage Committee to work within SDS. Some of us wishing to join SDS, but being critical of its current policies, have joined the Revolutionary Marxist Caucus, a national opposition caucus formed in December 1969 by members of the Spartacist League and independents who agreed with its general policies in SDS.

As pro-working class radicals we can not expect overwhelming campus support at this time. But our criticisms, organizational and political, are aimed at building a democratic, non-exclusionary socialist youth organization that, as the crisis of U.S. capitalism unfolds, will grow--attracting newly radicalized socialist youth to the movement.

JUAN FARINAS CONVICTED!

Juan Farinas, former member of PL, a campus worker at Columbia University, and now a supporter of the Workers League, has been convicted on 3 counts of violations against the Selective Service Act. He faces up to five years in prison and severe fines. Sentencing will be on January 28. An appeal is being readied. The RMC urges everyone to join and support the Juan Farinas Defense Committee! For more information, contact the Committee at the following address:

Juan Farinas Defense Committee
6th floor, 135 W. 14th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011

phone: (212) 924-0852

