The Guardian 26th May 1970

It is now more than six months since SDS died of internal hemorrhaging in Chicago. The remains of SDS which still exist continue to split off from one another and from reality, to the point where even "the ever cautious Guardian has declared that "SDS has ceased to exist.""

But the Guardian, like many ex-SDSers alienated from RYM and WSA, fails to adequately explain the collapse of the national organizational expression of the student left. SDS died because it, like the student and anti-war movement as a whole, was isolated from the working class. As SDSers came to the conclusion that they would have to break with the system, they inevitably had to move away from the large unions, the black studies, federally-aided poverty programs, and other "progressive" programs tied to capitalism. But if reform through the system is not a viable approach, a social force capable of transforming society in a revolutionary manner must be sought.

SDS's search lasted four years and took it through the poor, the blacks, youth, the "new working class," and other vehicles, all of which proved to be irrelevant or about a year ago, all factions of SDS claimed to have adopted some kind of working-class orientation. But, in fact, none of the SDS tendencies (Weatherman, SYL and PL-WSA) base their perspectives on the intellectual roots of the struggle of the working class.

Weatherman has totally given up on the working class; the others have clung to the rhetoric. But the fact is that these movements and programs cannot be linked to the anti-war and student movements to workers left SDS separated from the only force capable of implementing its revolutionary strategies. So, to resolve followed, the revolutionary rhetoric of the journal grew higher, and the division between the two groups became that of a major stick-me-tosingle into one another and crumbled.

RU: The Miracle Workers

Last winter, a new avant-garde on the crisis-ridden left scene, one with a scheme for building movement unity, the Bay Area Revolutionary Union. Soon after it was formed, the RU placed the blame on the fragmentation of the left in "A whole host of Martin-Luther-King-they organize. We want to see the people coming together." The struggle is already a daily basis, [why] share a political line and organize to change the system. To meet this threat, the RU had a ready-made solution. Through the miracle of new, improved Marxism-leninism, the RU claims that the movement would be cured of sectarianism.

Three months later, our heroes took the first step towards uniting the left by leading the rumour campaign that expelled Progressive Labor and the Worker-Student Alliance from SDS for several months of resting on their laurels. The RU spotted an ideological opportunity to unite the movement, and so SYL-MSO, the SDS faction in which they were a leading force, split from Weatherman. After such a splendid job of uniting the left, the RU realized that it needed internal unity, and so turned inward. Immediately, these magicians succeeded in unifying their organization by provoking a split around a truly trivial matter, the Black Violence is the South, noted organizing tool of another "Marxist-Leninist" organization, the CP USA, of the laziest and easily isolated, and so forth.

Fourteen months to build a movement that the RU commented on a move to split over whether SYL was a socialist movement, a cadre organization rebelling against Weatherman, a faction of the original "Marxist-Leninist" organization, the CP USA, of the laziest and easily isolated, and so forth.

When last heard from, RU leader Bob Avakian was in Philadelphia. Minneapolis, Bloomington, New York, Philadelphia, National War Council, called by Weatherman. Rumor had it that Avakian was about to pull off the biggest political trick of all -- and if so, who would deny it?

Weatherman: Fight the People

In the Sept. issue of New Left Notes, Weatherman leader and SDS educational secretary Bill Ayres, in "A Strategy to Win," said, "...it is a worldwide struggle, if Weatherman is correct in that big thing, that the basic struggle in the world today is the struggle of the oppressed people against U.S. imperialism, then it is the case that nothing can change without the active participation of the people. Nothing, we could do nothing because there is a war going on already, and the terms of that war are set.

Later, in the same article, Ayres elaborates: "But the more I thought about that thing, "fight the people," it's not that we're just saying more slogan or anything, but there's something to it." These two statements neatly summarize Weatherman's theory and practice. To the Weatherman the international revolution is now raging -- it is a racial struggle, a struggle between whites being identified as the oppressors and the whites as the oppressors. And the Weatherman placard no flag in building an indigenous movement in this country. Their conclusion is to work as much as possible, to create chaos, to, in Ayres' word, fight the people.

It is not necessary to speculate on the logical extension of this insanity; the Weathermen have already gone that the idea: "we're against everything that's good and decent." But Bernadette Dornov spoke at length about Weatherman's "black liberation" in the inaugural speech, "the real revolutionaries, the real revolutionaries, that's the line." Weatherman raised the black flag in the street.

"Dig in, first they killed those pigs, then they are digging in the place with them, then they even showed a fork in a victim's stomach!"... And so Weatherman has isolated itself out of the movement. Their hallmark is violence for the sale of violence, and their anti-imperialist rhetoric looks more and more like a defense of their own. The violence, the hatred of workers, the one for the sake of the class, the conscious orientation to "hum- pake," the war in Vietnam are all very typical of another movement in another era. "We are a movement," the Weathermen say in their paper: "The struggle against the tragedy of Black Power."..."We are against the tragedy of the white people." Weatherman is a self-styled anti-capitalist group within Hitler's party.

The RU movements, too, arose out of the rage and frustration of oppressed lower middle class groups at the failures of capitalism. Today, the same rage, frustra- tion, and powerlessness can be utilized by the capital- ists once again, even in an "anti-capitalist" garb. Should capitalism come into a state of real crisis, it will be forced to launch a severe anti-defense program, thereby bringing itself into direct conflict with the working class. The bourgeoisie, faced with this threat, must find a mass movement to prevent itself to the workers. The only source for such a movement lies among broad-based masses and terrified petty-bour-geois elements. The bourgeoisie, playing upon the aspirations of people thermite of power, can assume control of a fascist movement and direct it against the working class.

The Weathermen, in Germany, where the fascists movements originally had anti-capitalist overtones, Weatherman clearly is capable of witting the same role.

So when it is suggested to Ted Gold of the Weather men that the basic attitudes of the movement are the same facism in this country before a socialist revolution, he replies: "Well, of course we would like fascists, have to be human beings."

Yeah, Ted, but which side will you be on?

PL-WSA: The Wooden Soldiers

Since being "exiled" from SDS, the Worker-Student Alliance Caucus and its Progressive Labor Party leadership have tried to maintain that nothing changed -- "it is still a national organization with WSA still a caucus within it, but SDS is dead, and PL is here to stay." But PL is not as tall a man for long. PL held New York City Regional conferences regularly in September. The first attracted about 500. By early October, the regional, only 100 showed up, including half a dozen international socialists and about twenty members of the Labor Committee.

Discussions continued. The Is and the Labor Committee supported a resolution calling for universal free higher education with stipends for those who need them, the scrapping of the draft, students and employees with children, an end to tracking on all levels of education, a well-rounded curriculum, relevant education (black studies, women's studies, labor studies, sex education), and expanded construction of schools on a national scale. It was amended that the entire program be paid for by corporations, banks, and real estate speculative.

We considered this program to be typical of an approach. The war and the war economy have caused the current inflation. To solve this inflation it is supposed that the selling real wages of workers, Nixon's attempt to impose an austerity program on workers to fight the inflation is running up against the same thing. The war and the war economy, Nixon's actions and the workers to fight the austerity program is with a wave of militancy. The demands of the workers are not what they are in the 1930's. The demands must be raised in an attempt to link the anti-war movement and the wave of workers' struggles. Discussion centered on open admissions and on the limits of MSS and PL's other suggestions.

The relevance of inflation and the war to the open admissions program for workers. To struggle for inflation is available for social services has caused a general funding crisis in education. The open admissions program calls for the workers who protest against the limits of the corporation, banks, and real estate speculators -- to foot the bill. This links up with the general program of the above. The students are then made to believe that open admissions is a part of this more general approach.

Open admissions serves as a campus link to the working class; we point out that the war economy must be ended before meaningful open admissions can go into effect, and the other social services can be funded, and that the war economy can only be ended by a move- ment of the working class. Open admissions is nothing new now that the Weatherman has failed to end the war. The attempt to undermine open admissions and reinforce the understanding that a movement isolated from the working class can achieve it, is the chief objection. PL-WSA's response to the open admissions program was to oppose it on two grounds: 1) It fosters illusions in the working class that politics in the white middle class. 2) Education bourgeoisie the working class.

The first point reflects PL's desire to define who, where, and on what grounds struggle will occur. It is true that capitalists cannot agree on what is important or what should be done; but it certainly can't damp the war economy, the larger context of the struggle.

If the one around open admissions will not be won without a struggle from below. In New York, for example, the prominent Open Admissions movement is the Students for a Democratic Stu- dent's Movement, for the Board of Higher Education has no solution. Our group has an additional problem: the bank is the only solution short of starving the workers again. But this pooled corporate taxation will only be applied by the bank would be the same, the struggle, consciousness can be made and must be injected. Any demand short of a demand for socialism now can be attacked on the grounds of fostering illusions, of being copeatable over a long term, PL cannot understand that political work can be done and that the working people's consciousness can be raised in the course of a struggle, whether or not they achieve the concrete goals of the first. This is the way to raise the consciousness of the working people. PL's second point is sheer rubbish. The current educational system stratifies the working class, more or less reproducing those conditions which lead to the generation of workers. When workers struggle against the class discrimination that is inherent in the system, they get support that struggle and extend it to a struggle against class domination by the capitalists in society.

When the vote on the open admissions resolutions was taken, we defeated PL-WSA by about five votes, because our arguments were so well presented and their arguments had been totally discredited, what made the vote significant was that this was the first time since SDS that the MSS PL-WSA, the only group with any importance, realizing that they were facing a crisis, the WSAs simply stopped calling regional meet- ings. Instead, MSS is now trying to build a core of people of how PL runs in its "broad-based student organization."

Last on at the regional, PL introduced a campus program -- the Campus Worker Student Alliance(CWSA). The WSAs admitted that last year the worker part of the alliance had been pretty weak, so now they were intent on remedying that by working out the workers not in the worker part of the alliance.

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