TWO WAYS TO BUILD A MOVEMENT

At the February 19 National Conference of the Anti-Bakke Decision Coalition (ABDC), all participants voiced their loud approval of a nationwide spring offensive for coordinated organizing, including for all applicable forces for a demonstration in Washington D.C. One week later and with high hopes, the ABDC executive board representatives attended a meeting with the National Lawyers Guild, Black American Law Students Association, People's Alliance and the National Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision, in New York in order to hammer out principled unity. The ABDC did not agree to link the planning of the Spring actions to only those 3 groups. ABDC insisted on a broad democratic planning committee open to all genuine anti-Bakke groups, including regional organizations such as MECHA's (Chicago student organization) and Asian Student Unions. This was a concrete application of ABDC's principle of unity: "Rely on the masses to overturn the Bakke decision".

At the first Planning Committee meeting, the ABDC representatives were fairly optimistic that the forces involved could reach principled unity. Although the ABDC entered the Planning Committee with a recommendation for a demonstration of April 22, they were flexible and agreed to hold a march and rally on April 15, the original date chosen by NOCDB. The Committee also agreed on the following: 1) The Planning Committee would be expanded as we moved toward the April 15th march date. 2) Common slogans and demands were agreed upon which would appear on all literature advertising the march in Washington, D.C. 3) The name of the April 15 Planning Committee would be used on all literature to show that the march and rally were being sponsored by a broad range of groups. 4) A common press release and poster were to be developed. 5) The Planning Committee was not set up just for the march on April 15; it was to be an on-going coalition of the groups who were local agreements as well, but these were the ones which the leadership of the NOCDB came to disregard through the course of struggle.

By the time the second meeting was called on March 16, it was clear that the NOCDB had other designs for the Planning Committee. They had not carried out the task of designing a joint poster with the April 15 Planning Committee members on April 15. The Planning Committee never appeared on any literature at all; they never prepared a joint press release; they blocked all attempts to actually expand the planning committee in a democratic way; and finally they came to the meeting with a new stipulation. They insisted that no future planning for the march on Washington could be done with having a closed, 3-group planning committee on the West Coast. This committee would have the same composition as the April 15 Planning Committee. NOCDB insisted that Spring actions under control of this closed committee. The proposal excluded various regional groups who have been instrumental in building the anti-Bakke Movement. ABDC could not agree to this because it undermined the democratic procedures necessary to build a strong united action.

Brooklyn College Students Fight Bakke

From a correspondent

Brooklyn, N.Y. - On April 6 the Stonies dominated Student government at Brooklyn College refused to allocate money for buses for the April 15 anti-Bakke demonstration in Washington D.C. They had $9000 in uncollected funds and had recently given the Jewish Defense League (JDL) $1000 for buses for one of their demonstrations. Not surprisingly a majority of the NOCDB leadership attended the ABDC National Conference. They made a detailed proposal for a joint Washington, D.C. action. They never proposed joint West Coast actions. We took up the argument that the NOCDB was truly concerned with a unified action in the spring, they should have raised their concern for actions in all parts of the country at the Feb. 19 conference. Instead they chose not to participate as full delegates, they chose to participate as observers only. They were only concerned with how the rest of the anti-Bakke movement would play into the plans which they had already made. The ABDC conference unanimously rejected NOCDB's proposal for a planning committee consists of only 5 groups. Even in the face of these maneuvers, ABDC offered to participate jointly in an open conference, in full NOCDB participation, in order to plan a united West Coast action for May 13. ABDC has always held open conferences, democratically run. NOCDB members of their coalition have always been invited and attended these conferences. Six hundred people and over 150 organizations attended the National Conference of ABDC. The wider the number of people and the wider the political input—the more successful the movement. In contrast, the NOCDB insists on closed conferences and a planning committee which excluded any anti-Bakke forces. The top leaders of the NOCDB act like they fear the participation of the masses in the planning of events. In their view the fewer, the better. Such a bureaucratic approach can only restrict the movement and make it more difficult to unite all possible forces.

After the third Planning Committee meeting, the NOCDB leadership decided to walk out because they couldn't force a closed planning committee for the West Coast; they formed a new committee and excluded ABDC. Despite this blatant act of splitting, ABDC still called for people to attend the April 15 demonstration. In fact, ABDC led a contingent of over 1000 people for that event.

The 15,000-person turnout on April 15 was a sign of the mass hatred for the Bakke decision. People traveled from the South, East Coast and Midwest to attend. The large showing certainly put the ruling class on notice that trouble is brewing if they rule in favor of Bakke. Unfortunately, the speakers and political emphasis of the march failed to represent the views of the masses.

The main speakers did not represent the many major organizations which have built the anti-Bakke movement. The National Lawyers Guild, BALSAs, East Coast Asian Students Union and ABDC were not allowed to speak at the main event. Instead the marchers were treated to long-winded speeches by reformist politicians, representatives of the revisionist Communist Party USA and the Trotskyist-initiated National Student Coalition Against Racism—none of whom have done much to mobilize the masses against Bakke.

The dissolution of the Planning Committee weakened the anti-Bakke movement. The top leadership of the NOCDB is primarily responsible for the split in the Planning Committee. With the Bakke decision to be handed down any day now, it is not in the interest of the masses for the NOCDB to behave in such a manner.

There are many individuals and groups within the NOCDB and within the anti-Bakke movement who wish to see future unified anti-Bakke actions. Today we stand ready to participate in principled joint actions. In particular we urge principled joint actions in major cities where the Bakke decision is heard. We cannot be based on political maneuvering, they cannot be planned by excluding the masses. We must build a unified front against the Bakke decision and against national oppression.