

ANTIWAR REPORT by Lew Jones, January 17, 1968

The response to the Student Mobilization Committee conference call indicates it will be one of the largest and most representative conferences in the antiwar movement's history. As the most authoritative conference to be held in the near future it will have the responsibility for establishing the dates and general character and putting out calls for spring and summer actions.

All other national antiwar formations have either delayed or mismanaged the planning of the next actions. As a result the period between the previous action and the calling of the next has been extended longer than before. This delay stems basically from the deepening conflict between contrary perspectives. On the one hand, the ultra-lefts and hard-core "resistance" supporters wish to jettison mass actions for periodic civil disobedient acts. On the other, those individuals and groups who are now supporting McCarthy or are looking for a "peace and freedom" presidential ticket, do not want a major antiwar action that would compete.

As a result, those few plans made so far are diffused and without perspective. SDS has called for 10 days of antiwar activity, April 20-30. The character of these actions has not been decided. (See enclosed SDS report.)

The National Mobilization Committee has decided to "recommend" local, Spring mass actions, but has not named a date. A poll of local groups is being conducted to decide between April 20 or April 27. In as much as the remaining active officer in the country, Greenblatt, is opposed to the action, it can be assumed that the call and plans for these actions will be further delayed.

The New York Parade Committee, which has suffered heavily from the swing toward "peace" candidates, has avoided the spring action question, waiting for the final NMC decision.

The Resistance has called for another day of draft non-cooperation on April 3.

Such a lack of common perspective and coordination comes at a time when the antiwar movement faces unprecedented opportunities for influencing public opinion and winning new recruits. As the Johnson Administration plans a further, major escalation, opposition to the war and general discontent have risen sharply. A series of actions designed to appeal to major sections of society could have visible results in the coming period.

The Gallup poll showing over 40% opposition to the war in the union movement, in contrast to Meany's prowar position, cries out for propaganda initiatives by the antiwar movement. Further, the coming clash between Meany and Reuther in the AFL-CIO will have political repercussions that the antiwar movement can benefit from.

The deepening demands of the Afro-American organizations will

continue to help create a political atmosphere that aids the anti-war movement. Martin Luther King's call for an April mass mobilization in Washington for "Jobs or income for all" will have such an impact on the American public, particularly since King himself admits that his conservative non-violent plans may not be accepted by Washington Afro-Americans.

The recent GI defections to Sweden occurring in an almost daily procession, indicate the growing depth of opposition in the armed forces. While not tactically the wisest thing to do, the actions of these GIs graphically point out that the antiwar movement's single greatest opportunity, outside the student movement, is reaching out to and discussing with GIs.

Finally, there can be no doubt that the antiwar explosion on the campuses this fall will continue throughout the school year.

In short, objective developments require the antiwar movement to have an ambitious and action oriented perspective. "Think big" should be the watch-word.

A schedule of activity oriented toward these objectives in the Spring could develop as follows: eleven days of student activity, April 20-30, including an international student strike on April 26, culminated with massive marches in all major cities on April 27, all under the keynote of involving new forces in the activities. (It is important that the mass marches occur on April 27, rather than April 20. That way they serve as a unifying and successful finale for the activities. Also the April 27 date will give the student activities a target toward which the week of activities could aim.

As in the past, establishing and organizing for such a perspective falls on the shoulders of the student wing of the movement, the Student Mobilization Committee.

This general perspective for Spring actions has been agreed to in the national Working Committee of the SMC, a body which includes the CP, DBC, and independents. A proposal is now being written which calls for a six month plan of activity, and a demonstration against the war at the Democratic Party convention in August.

The task that remains is to motivate this perspective. Hundreds of recently activated students and the leadership of SDS will attend the conference. A major task will be to educate these youth to the perspective of building a mass movement and in that way solidify the SMC on a broader and sounder basis. The currently pending debates must be pedagogically discussed.

Aside from the general agreement on perspectives there are two concrete issues which will be in dispute at the conference. These issues should be discussed in the local areas to the degree possible, before the conference.

1. The draft. The recent attack on the antiwar movement in the form of indictments of Dr. Spock, et al, have led to a renewed emphasis among some on individual non-cooperation with the draft. While the movement has generally responded in united fashion, the inclination of the inductees, some leading pacifists, and SDS is to call on others to emulate the actions for which Spock and others were indicted. No efforts to set up a defense committee or fund have been initiated.

This narrow outlook reflects a general sentiment which will be confronted at the conference. Proposals to "increase the militancy" of the SMC position will be introduced calling for the SMC to advocate individual non-cooperation with the draft.

As in the past the individual perspective must be confronted in a politically firm but friendly manner. We will want to vigorously put forward a perspective for fighting the draft: The overall aim is to build a mass movement against the war and the draft, since this is the only way the government can be forced to abandon its policies. Acts against the draft, must therefore be conducted in such a way that they facilitate this overall aim, that is acts that educate and appeal to the masses of American. The antiwar movement should call for massive demonstrations against the draft, acts consciously aimed to favorably impress draftees. Individuals who engage in anti-draft activities, should be defended against the government.

As a strategy against the draft, illegal acts of civil disobedience, however, put the cart before the horse. They require people to make maximum sacrifices and commitments at a time when we should be asking for the minimum. Such acts are wrong tactically, especially at the present time when there are great opportunities to reach masses and when the government is seeking the means to attack the movement. While there are groups who may wish to conduct such illegal acts, it should not be the SMC policy.

2. Relation to the black liberation struggle. The CP wants the SMC to emulate the practices of the National Conference for New Politics convention by giving half the vote to a black caucus (where they will be heavily represented) and thereby "prove" that the SMC is "really" against racism. Both the CP and the DBC are mobilizing for the conference for this purpose and to put forward the demand that the SMC adopt the slogan "end racism" and conduct the student strike under the banner of "freedom and peace."

The CP has seized upon the most emotional and guilt-ridden issue in American politics as means of jamming their class collaborationist politics down the throat of the antiwar movement. They hope through organizational maneuvering to change the character of the SMC so that it can become part of the support to a "peace and freedom" ticket. They further hope that their black members through the black caucus will help them get more control over the apparatus of the SMC.

This proposal must be debated politically. The CP has raised the question of ending racism in American society. What is now required is a thorough political discussion of how racism can be eliminated. Their interpretation of black power is that black and white should unite to fight racism. We must answer that the thrust of black power is towards black self-determination. They translate independent black political action into support for the Democratic Party of some "peace and freedom" ticket, the subordination of independent struggle to the "mainstream" of American political life. We want to answer by posing the revolutionary perspective for the black struggle, the need for independent organization and struggle, for a black political party.

The slogan, "end racism," is a good example of CP duplicity. Far from being a class or national demand, it is a slogan which even Johnson would give lip-service to, just as he could say, "we shall overcome." In the CP lexicon the slogan translates into a mere appeal to the government to end racism. It manages to completely cover up the revolutionary thrust of the black power movement, and blurs the distinction between the supporters of black power and the conservative civil rights organizations.

On the organization side, it is important to point out that it is a crass and foolish error for a predominantly white organization to try to mechanically achieve "black-white unity." As Malcolm said, there can only be such unity when first there is black unity. Moreover, such unity must flow from a concrete political agreement, which does not exist at present. If there is no political agreement, then parity voting or other organizational measures will not solve the problem.

The CP proposal for parity appeals to those interested in individual soul-cleansing. But then why does the CP insist on only 50% of the vote? Why not 51% or 70% or 90% or even 100%? Do they practice what they preach? Does the CP have 50% black representation on its own bodies?

Once a political discussion of the Afro-American struggle is carried out, the SMC can then decide whether it should take a position on this question.

In the remaining days before the conference there are several concrete tasks to be carried out:

1. Continue to mobilize antiwar activists to attend the conference.
2. Initiate discussion in local areas on the issues before the SMC conference.
3. Help initiate plans to organize massive marches on April 27. The SMC and NMC should be notified of these plans.
4. Send reports to the NO as soon as possible on local activities and how many will attend the SMC conference from your area.