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To All YSA Members

Antiwar Report, January 28, 1969, by Lew Jones

The success of April 6 will largely depend upon the extent to which the Student Mobilization Committee is able now to spread publicity, initiate inspiring build-up activities, and obtain support from other forces. Several key local coalitions and prominent individuals support April 6. In the remaining two months, the SMC is launching a campaign of activity and publicity to transform that support into large April 6 marches.

Since the 1968 spring demonstrations many groups within the antiwar movement supported the "peace" candidacies, believed the negotiations heralded the end of the war, and withdrew from the antiwar movement. At the same time, however, thousands of students - some via lessons learned from the McCarthy campaign - have been attracted to radical action and the antiwar movement.

The radicalization on the campuses clearly spread to two new areas, the high schools and the armed forces. Since the April 26, 1968 student strike, the high school students have been the largest contingent on antiwar actions. Also beginning last April and continuing through the January Washington action, increasing numbers of active duty servicemen have sought to legally protest the war.

In the election period and the months since, the antiwar movement organizations have been at their weakest. The National Mobilization Committee became a clique-dominated formation that protested the Johnson-Humphrey Democratic Party machine, "the electoral fraud," and the Nixon Inauguration, as well as the war. In the process many of the affiliated groups became disenchanted. Dellinger did not consolidate his contemplated bloc with SDS, or the "New Left," and emerged from this period in a weaker position.

Most local coalitions, with a few exceptions, such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, suffered under the same pressures as the NMC. Many of these groups exist only on paper.

The Student Mobilization Committee split. Those supporting Dellinger's position, organized into the Radical Organizing Committee (ROC) and met dismal failure. ROC virtually does not exist now.

The basis of the student wing of the antiwar movement was maintained in the Student Mobilization Committee. The successful, timely fight in that organization, plus the modestly successful October 21-26, 1968 protest, now enables the SMC to re-activate the

broader antiwar movement. The Chicago conference call to action on April 6 offers the opportunity for SMC to rebuild itself, for broader coalitions to be formed, and an axis of activity for the YSA around which it can extend its influence.

There is a crisis of perspective and leadership in the antiwar movement now. No clear-cut proposal for any kind of action in the spring has come from the NMC, SDS, The Guardian, the CP, or any of the prominent individuals. The task of the SMC is to help provide that leadership by involving other in April 6; and doing that quickly enough to prevent other groups from filling the vacuum.

SDS, The Guardian, and some other groups have offered two excuses for not supporting an antiwar action in the spring: 1.) The war is no longer a cause celebre for the ruling class; therefore, protest of the war loses its relevance; and consequently what is required is a formation around a number of "timely" issues to continue the struggle. (Dellinger held this, or a variant of it, until recently.) 2.) That the antiwar demonstrations do not attract masses because the liberals think the war is over and the youth have gone beyond "left-liberal antiwar politics." It is therefore necessary to gather the militant forces into a "consciously anti-imperialist movement" which can carry on the fight against the war. The Guardian and many SDSers hold this theory. Some Columbia and other SDSers are discussing an "anti-imperialist action" in Washington D.C. on April 12.

Both assume that the war is no longer a burning issue that can mobilize masses. Most GIs, of course, would contradict this. 30 GIs a day are killed in Vietnam and close to 8,000 have died since the "peace" negotiations began. The draft call is once again at a high level. The bombing halt in the north led to a more intense bombing in the south and Laos.

Even if a cease-fire, which is a lot different from the end of the war, were declared, massive popular action would be required to bring the GIs home and let the Vietnamese determine their own future. After World War II, when the war was officially over, it took massive demonstrations around the world to actually get the GIs home.

The theory of creating a "consciously anti-imperialist movement" is put forward by those such as Irving Beinin who seek some form of all-inclusive radical party like the pre-World War I Socialist Party. It is also believed by many serious youth as the road to changing American society.

We are quite anxious to discuss how to fight imperialism. In fact, this is one lesson we have sought to convey in the antiwar movement. Many have failed to grasp that the most damaging blows to imperialism can be dealt by mobilizing greater and greater numbers in united action against the war while the war is in progress. For us action, and not fancy rhetoric, and position papers, is the test of seriousness in combating imperialism.

For those who seek a greater understanding of imperialism, war, and socialism, and want to take part in building an organization that will end all war, we are more than willing to explain our general program and recruit them to our organization.

Both theories and especially the theory of a "conscious anti-imperialist movement" are replicas of those previously advanced at the junctures between major actions. Not long ago, the CP, The Guardian, and SDS were talking of the coming year of repression and the need to build a multi-issue movement to combat it; neither materialized. Several years ago, SDS raised the idea of organizing an anti-imperialist movement that could fight the "seventh war from now."

The advocates of this theory do not see organizing action against this war as primary. They see the war as a vehicle for building what is primary to them - an organization of their own. Whenever the antiwar movement discusses its perspectives, such theories are raised. But the possibility of creating a new radical activist party is so far from realistic (witness the rapid demise of the Peace and Freedom Party) that these various groups and prominent individuals usually support the next major antiwar action.

We wish to combat and answer those theories through action. The January counter-Inaugural action in Washington, organized by Dellinger and his clique, proves our case for us. While Dellinger originally sought another multi-purpose demonstration that had a confrontational aspect, the end product was much different. Under pressure of isolation, Dellinger was forced to organize what is possible and effective - an antiwar demonstration to bring the GIs home, led by GIs, mobilizing thousands of people, especially high school students. Had the Washington action been organized with those aims in mind all along, it would have been many times larger.

Our main job now is to transform the April 6 support into action to build April 6, while at the same time encouraging other forces to help plan and organize this action. Our action should take several different forms:

1. Publicity. Student Mobilization Committees and other formations should attempt to gain the widest possible circulation of the April 6 plans. Local press conferences are needed. Leafleting of high schools, colleges, and army bases with a variety of leaflets is needed. The national button and Student Mobilizer should be given the widest possible circulation. A poster and sticker from the national SMC will soon be ready, both of which should be displayed widely.
2. Build-up activities. In order to begin mobilizing forces for April 6 and to involve them in successes, antiwar committees should initiate low-key but inspiring activities, which by definition will lead to April 6.

Several areas already have such activities planned. For instance, New York plans regular leafleting of GIs. In the first week of March, New York plans an "antiwar basic training day", where future draftees may learn of their rights as a citizen soldier; satire, rock groups, etc. are planned as part of this event. Seattle plans a February 16 march, rally, and dance for GIs. Boston plans regular GI leafleting and is initiating a newsletter for GIs called "The Pain in the Brass." Austin plans a state-wide conference in mid-February. Philadelphia has planned a GI teach-in for mid-February.

3. Broadening of support. While initiating activities occur, consistent attempts must be made to include new forces in the April 6 planning and organizing. Regular meetings and discussion with others are required. We will have to go over and over the arguments for April 6: that the war is far from over; antiwar action is more than ever needed; we have new constituencies to draw from, especially the GIs who are beginning to act and need widespread civilian support; the GIs want this action and want massive civilian support; they thought Easter Sunday the best day because on that day more GIs will have an opportunity to attend; the six regions are important for maximizing the GI attendance and for maximum national impact. We must re-emphasize also the necessity for defensively formulated actions that do not seek battles with the police. This is important to the participation of GIs.

The liaison committee created at the Chicago conference will meet in Chicago, February 9. Leading coalition figures from every area should attend this meeting. In preparation for this meeting and as a general rule, regular reports should be sent to the SMC and to Fred Halstead (c/o Parade Committee, 17 E. 17th Street, NY, NY 10003) which can be shown to other coalition leaders in New York and elsewhere. It is best if official bodies or prominent individuals other than ourselves write these reports.

We do not know yet if the National Mobilization Committee will support April 6. If it does not the Liaison Committee will serve an increasingly important purpose. If it does, it will lend its authority to the action and provide an opportunity to rebuild a national antiwar coalition.

We are now rebuilding a broad antiwar coalition. The establishment of strong coalitions in local and regional areas is the key to the ultimate re-creation of such a national coalition, regardless of what the NMC does.

Aside from the general areas of activity, there are many

organizational matters which must be taken care of now. Not necessarily in order of importance, these are:

1. An organizing headquarters with a manned phone must be established in every city and publicized.
2. It is not too early to plan transportation.
3. A variety of leaflets on April 6, but especially those indicating support, should be circulated. (New York has leaflets for universities, high schools, junior high schools, and GIs.)
4. The specific plans for the marches are needed, which should be made known throughout a region.
5. Networks of communication throughout a region should be established.
6. The National SMC is in desperate need of funds to publish needed materials. Several things are ready for the printer, but await for funds to pay for them.
7. Every local must assign an experienced comrade to direct our campaign for April 6, plus make other necessary April 6 assignments.

Finally, in order to effectively direct this action the National Antiwar Steering Committee must receive regular communications from every area. In addition, the forthcoming SWP plenum will hear an antiwar report on April 6 and the GI protest development. In preparation for that report, each antiwar director should prepare a report on local April 6 developments, including what group is organizing April 6, what does this group represent, what are our opponents doing, what SMC groups are doing and what are their plans, what GI development do you have in your area, and what activities are going on. Send these reports and all communications to Lew Jones, c/o SWP, 873 Broadway, NY, NY 10003; copies to the YSA and SWP national offices.