

Antiwar Report to the NEC, August 4, 1967, by Lew

(This report has been updated since the oral report to the NEC on August 4.)

The general plans for the October 21 mobilization, as outlined by the Administrative Committee of the National Mobilization Committee (NMC), can be summed up by the slogan "Confront the Warmakers in Washington." As planned at this time, the march will gather somewhere near the White House, march past the White House, and proceed down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Capitol building. A rally will be held near the Capitol or perhaps on the Capitol steps.

The idea of a confrontation in Washington is not merely a play on words in an attempt to find a catchy slogan. The mere gathering of thousands in Washington will constitute the antiwar movement's most militant mass action and will create a mass confrontation. Washington is governed by the federal government through a committee appointed by the President. The reaction to the plans for October 21 will undoubtedly be less favorable than that of the Lindsey administration in New York on April 15.

Beyond the act of demonstrating in Washington, the mobilization is planned in the confrontation spirit. An antiwar demonstration has never before marched down Pennsylvania Avenue, even in the 1930's. Also, it is illegal to demonstrate within 500 yards of the Capitol building.

The NMC has designated the week of October 16 - 21 as a week of protest in Washington, culminating in the October 21 action. Groups are urged to plan activities during this week. For example, hippies in New York and Berkeley have been discussing holding a be-in (of sorts) at the Pentagon on Friday, October 20, and other groups are planning such things as protests of the war tax and tax increases, and the draft.

The confrontation attitude is a reflection of the continued deepening of popular antiwar sentiment and the development of the antiwar movement. The recent ghetto uprisings were, in part, a remarkable display of total hostility to the war. Other developments, such as Bishop Sheen's call for American troops to get out of Vietnam, and recent opinion polls, have also revealed the new depth of antiwar sentiment. Johnson's newest escalation and a tax increase have only accelerated antiwar feelings.

Several important groups such as SNCC, CORE, Women's Strike for Peace, and national SANE have decided to participate in the planning of October 21 from the very beginning, and have played an important role in helping unify the coalition around the October 21 action. WSP has played a particularly responsible role, and their participation in Washington D.C. prior to the march will help insure adequate planning and coordination.

As expected, the NMC has been extremely slow in getting out publicity for the October 21 action. A button has been produced but not yet distributed. A leaflet announcing the action is still in the process of being composed. However, orders for these items can now be sent into the NMC.

The Student Mobilization Committee has continued to be the main organizing force for October 21 throughout the summer. Their posters, buttons, stickers, calls, and other material have already been widely distributed, and there has been a marked increase in interest in the SMC. Correspondence and orders for material are running at 20 - 30 letters a day. Significantly, a number of SDS chapters and Vietnam Summer projects have written the SMC and ordered October 21 material from them.

It is important the SMC, both nationally and locally, continue to be the chief builder of October 21 and the student antiwar movement. Local areas should be giving thought to how the SMC is going to be launched on individual campuses and at high schools when they open in the fall.

With national publicity for October 21 now available, enthusiasm in local areas is beginning to build up. Many areas held modest but successful demonstrations on August 6. Los Angeles, Austin and Atlanta held quite large demonstrations. In some areas conferences were held to discuss fall activities which will help build October 21.

The main tasks before us are:

1. Continue efforts to make the October 21 demonstration known to large numbers of people. Literature, posters, buttons, and stickers should be ordered in large quantities.

2. Local antiwar committees and area wide coordinating committees should begin planning fall activities to help build October 21. Caravans to Washington, rallies, demonstrations, campus and city referendums are all activities that can help build enthusiasm.

3. Local areas should begin making arrangements for mass transportation to Washington.

4. Plans should be made for building and utilizing the SMC on campuses and in high schools as school gets under way.

5. We must continue to plan the distribution and sale of literature, particularly the YS, to those new forces who will be mobilized in the next months. In this effort our antiwar campaign pamphlet, War and Revolution in Vietnam, should be emphasized. Each local should check to see they have an adequate supply.