

# NEW LEFT NOTES

Let the People Decide

Vol. 1, No. 3

sds

February 4, 1966



(photo by Howie Epstein)

## Reaction to bombings

SDS groups around the country moved quickly in response to the resumption of bombing of North Vietnam. Demonstrations were held around the country on February 1st, in much the same spontaneous manner that they took place one year and one day before, when North Vietnam was bombed for the first time.

In Syracuse, the new chapter staged a twelve-person demonstration that received extensive radio and press coverage. At Stanford the Committee for Peace in Vietnam called a strike—on the first day 300 students and 6 professors walked out; a very large noon rally was held pointing toward a larger turnout for Tuesday. At Berkeley, SDS and the Vietnam Day Committee call a strike for Monday, when classes will resume. At Lake Forest (Ill.), SDS will hold a pro-

test despite the statement of the police chief that this cannot take place.

Other demonstrations took place in Detroit, New York, Boston, Toronto, Oakland, and undoubtedly other places as well.

Several calls have been issued for nationally coordinated action. One proposal, from Staughton Lynd, for a national convergence on Washington, has been supplanted by a call for international protest for this coming Saturday. On that day, the Veterans for Peace in Vietnam will go ahead with their plan to attempt to give President Johnson the medals and insignia that they have won in past wars. Women for Peace and the National Coordinating

Committee to End the War are joining that demonstration and calling for local demonstrations of support.

As well, the Berkeley groups are asking for national support for their student strike. The theme of these strikes would be that a student can't continue his normal life when the country is at war.

In San Francisco, a regional meeting held Saturday with virtually no publicity attracted 65 people: the group did not succeed in reaching agreement on the kind of Vietnam activity called for. The New York regional office reports that it has informed SDS members in New York about plans for local demonstrations there that might involve civil disobedience.

### Lake Forest and The State

Lake Forest College SDS organized a protest picket to occur outside the Selective Service Board of Waukegan, Illinois. Waukegan Police were informed by the chapter. Immediately thereafter the mayor of Waukegan informed them that they needed a parade permit; and that they weren't going to get one for it was too dangerous to march and

they were subject to arrest if they did march; and that they were irresponsible-immature kids.

The police subsequently refused to grant the chapter's request for a permit. The chapter has consequently delayed the march until greater numbers can be secured and they will then march with or without a permit.

### NAT'L SECRETARY'S REPORT

## The movement, the public, and the bombings

by Paul Booth

To many people in SDS it was no great surprise that the President resumed bombing the North. Many had feared that the bombing would resume in January, accompanied by intensive mobilization at home, other acts of escalation, perhaps the bombing of the population centers. To many, the greater surprise was the mobilization of powerful opposition to the resumption of bombing in the Congress.

The period of the bombing pause demonstrates the limits that can be imposed on the foreign policy adventures of LBJ. However, I fear that it gives us little to base our hopes on. Several factors operating independently of our movement contributed to stall the Administration:

1 Perhaps the most powerful deterrent to the resumption was the almost universal opposition of the white-gloved set. Almost all of the 114 heads of state and high diplomats consulted by our roving ambassadors must have expressed their opposition to the bombing and to the war. Especially behind closed doors, our war isn't very popular. To the extent that the peace offensive was a grandstand manoeuvre, the fans at whom Lyndon was aiming were principally the leaders of allied and neutral nations.

2 Another important deterrent that is playing a role is the objective difficulty of fighting a land war in Asia. When a General Gavin comes out against the war, he has logistics: the difficulty of building a supplying operation to South Vietnam, the formidable adversary—a guerrilla movement with twenty-five years experience and two victories under its belt—more than he is thinking about the rights of self-determination and the horrors of napalm. These same realities make for a caution in the White House.

3 A third factor to which the American peace movement only barely relates is the reluctance of ordinary people in America to see their sons fight in Vietnam. Although the Left has tried to organize that sentiment (it was to accomplish that that SDS tried to build anti-draft activity, and that the Young Socialist Alliance argues for the slogan "Bring the Boys Home") it hasn't succeeded, and the American popular hesitation is implicit, though powerfully so, in the statements of politicians, and in the back of their minds. But it is with that in mind that Everett Dirksen has backed away from his hard line, and starts talking about the boys coming home in coffins.

All these restraints played an important role in the lull, but the war machine today is grinding on, much as before. The one

contribution that might have been made by the peace forces at home did not get across. We all knew that the peace offensive would only be real if it removed its conditions about the National Liberation Front. It still seems to be the case that if the U.S. directed its offensive at the NLF, and recognized their power and demands as springing in large measure from people in that country, the war could be ended. But we failed to pierce through the smokescreen that LBJ created.

The Administration understands the importance of this question. Rusk himself said Friday that "Many people outside think that peace will break out instantly if the Viet Cong is recognized. This is a complicated question that is directly related to what the fighting is all about."

Indeed, Everything that Carl Oglesby said about America's attitude toward revolution is symbolized in the unwillingness to tolerate NLF representatives as negotiating elements, as partners in a coalition government, as a political force in South Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the peace movement has concentrated its fire (what little of it we have) on the moral implications of bombing. This has been particularly true of the growing movements among clergy and divinity students.

A significant service could be performed by SDS people in the coming weeks if they

older members of the group should have exercised some kind of restraint on the others.

On the night of the 29th, General Hershey reaffirmed on radio that he felt their local draft boards "had done the best thing possible" in reclassifying 13 of these defendants to 1-A.

The National Council of SDS has proposed demonstrations and a petition of support for the Ann Arbor defendants. For further information contact the National Office or VOICE, 2435 Student Activities Bldg., U. of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

### Conviction at Ann Arbor

29 of SDS' sit-in defendants in Ann Arbor were found guilty Friday, Jan. 28, and spent the weekend in jail. Sentenced on Monday, they were released Tuesday, after \$14,000 in appeal bond had been posted. The defendants were fined \$50 plus \$15 in costs, and received stiff jail sentences.

The students among the group were sentenced to 15 days imprisonment, the teaching fellows received 18 days, and Tom Mayer, the sole faculty member in the group, was sentenced to 20 days. The reasoning behind this was that the

### South readies for protest

The Southern Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam is receiving daily reports of plans for demonstrations against the War in Vietnam on February 12, and inquiries about possible demonstrations from groups in the process of formation in the South. Among the cities definitely planning activity are New Orleans; Tougaloo, Miss.; Miami; Nashville; Atlanta; and Albany, Georgia. The Tougaloo demonstrations will be state-wide in participation.

Inquiries from developing organizations and plans for demonstrations are coming from Richmond,

Virginia; Baton Rouge, La.; Gainesville, Florida; Pine Bluff, Ark.; Savannah Bluff, Ark.; Savannah, Georgia; and Charlottesville, Va.

A check with the Southern Student Coordinating Committee indicated that they are still encouraging northern groups not to demonstrate on the date since the major purpose of the demonstrations, to link in the eyes of the public the Southern freedom movement with the anti-war movement, would be submerged if the inevitably larger demonstrations in the North drew all of the publicity.

### Regional conferences held

#### Michigan

On Feb. 5-6 a regional conference for all chapters in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio was held in Ann Arbor. The major purpose of the conference was to discuss developing a regional structure. A report on the results of the conference will be forthcoming.

#### New York

60 members attended the first Upstate New York SDS regional meeting last weekend at Harpur College, including folks from Harpur, Albany, Buffalo, Buffalo State, and Syracuse. Paul Booth spoke at the meeting. A full report on the workshops and structure discussion is not yet available.

#### New chapters

The mail brings news of new chapters at Cabrillo Jr. College in Aptos, Calif., Trinity College in Washington, D.C., Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa., and the Henry David Thoreau chapter of Dewitt Clinton High School in New York City.

prevailed upon faculty and clerical groups to focus attention on the political question of negotiating with the Viet Cong. Organizing joint demonstrations around that theme would be one way of accomplishing that—more creative approaches can be thought of locally.

We can be candid that our interest in raising that particular question is only partly that it allows the movement to operate politically in a situation in which most people in the country have been provided no evidence undermining the Administration's protestations of sincerity. In addition we seek to raise the political questions of Vietnam: what are the conditions of life there that have moved people to rebellion—what are the changes in that country that should occur, which America and its henchman regimes there are preventing?

I feel that we should respond to this turn of events as an occasion that offers considerable opportunity to build a movement as described at the National Council meeting.

Viet-Nam program must be chosen that broadens the base of participation and involvement. We should concentrate on those groups we regard as essential to social change in America: they are the colleges, trade unions, community organizations, churches, and a few others. We must broaden the base instead of escalating the tactics and militance.

# Letters

on the anti-war movement, conscription, participatory democracy,

at-large chapters, and mental hospitals

## on peace politics

CHICAGO, ILL.

Due to a pre-occupation with questions of structure (featuring a 7-hour debate on the democratic election of the editorial board of the Bulletin—which won't even be writing editorials), the N.C. was stymied and didn't reach the discussion of political perspectives which I hoped the following proposal would have helped stimulate and focus. In any case, I submit it to you through the mechanism of this wonderful new publication with the hope that the discussion will start to take place.

### Electoral politics 1966 and adult organizing

The confluence of several trends makes it important for SDS to make the primary direction of its action program for the next months engagement in electoral campaigns.

First SDS has grown in its local base to the point where its active membership and potential membership in many locations can provide important force to such efforts. In a number of cities at-large chapters based primarily on non-students have begun to gain strength, and for them there is no more natural arena for activism than electoral politics (for the student the campus is that arena). There is a very large "young adult" constituency which is looking for a way to be involved in SDS but to which we have offered no program.

Second In our activity aimed at organizing against the war in Vietnam, the universal experience has been that for the bulk of Americans, Vietnam does not fit into a realm of experience which is immediate and therefore requires of them a more than passing consideration. For most people, a political campaign is an occasion in which there is a greater expectation of the need to make judgements about foreign policy issues.

Third SDS understands the necessity of making poli-

tical connections between issues, which we understand intellectually, felt politically: an electoral campaign is an occasion for multi-issue organizing. Among thousands of the young people who have been moved into activism recently there is a sense that the problems are more far-reaching than their single-issue protest activity would suggest. These young people are looking for a sensible form of action in which a general disaffection and opposition to the direction of the society can be brought to bear.

Fourth Those liberals whom LBJ has been unable to either coax or bully into his Great Consensus are being cut off politically, and are searching for allies. These include both liberals who are deeply moved by the Vietnam issue, and liberals who have been involved in reform and other insurgent movements in local politics against mainstays of the Johnson coalition such as Mayor Daley of Chicago. In almost every case they are open to more radical political approaches than before.

### "Peace politics"

The most likely course of action for Vietnam activists to take is that of the traditional peace campaign: heavy emphasis on the need to end the war, and an attempt to use the forum of a campaign to carry on the educational job on the war. This will be unfortunate if it is the dominant type of politics entered into, for: (1) it fails to build anything permanent, although the war is a symptom of deeper facts of American life which require a more radical and broader critique and movement to change. (2) It will have no effect on the war, because such candidates tend to get very few votes, and the President will be much more hostile to anti-war candidates than Kennedy was to the peace

candidates of 1962, who fared poorly nevertheless. (3) It will pass up the opportunity to reach out for allies around domestic concerns, allies desperately needed in this coming period of heightened Cold War anxieties at home.

### How should radicals approach the '66 elections?

The basis of our involvement should be the understanding that there is no organized left in this country, and that our job is to bring that into being in order to have the power to influence the course of politics. These electoral campaigns should be seen as a stage in the development of local insurgencies in many cases, the initiating stage. The important work is organizing work, but this should not be seen narrowly. The elections afford the opportunity to: (1) build precinct organizations to canvass and campaign and to carry over past the election, hopefully contributing to the growth of neighborhood unions; (2) expose to the public the results of our analysis of issues and institutions, taking advantage of the attention on the candidacy to carry out political education; and (3) building various campaign committees based among different professions and walks of life with the intention of sustaining these groups around programs relating to the radical concerns of the profession.

I believe that it is possible to achieve these ends either through Democratic primary insurgencies, or independent candidacies, and that the choice of electoral form is much less significant a question than those raised in the three points above. Furthermore, it should be influenced by an understanding of the locality's recent political history; the other principles should apply universally.

Paul Booth

## strategy

BERKELEY, CALIF.

Dear Paul (Booth) and Lee (Webb),

Your paper on the Anti-War Movement, ("The Anti-War Movement: from Protest to Radical Politics," ed.) during the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) convention in Washington, was deeply disturbing. Not that I disagreed with much of analysis: on the contrary, I agree that we must urge Viet-Nam activists to build a multi-issue movement for the changes in America upon which any real change in the underdeveloped world depends. (and vice versa?)

My complaint is that your paper—and SDS in general—does not talk to most of these peace activists where they are at. Moreover, I believe that this lack of communication stems directly from a consistent underestimation of the importance of the Anti-war Movement, with its single issue committee and (yes) its demonstrations, to the creation of a permanent political force in America.

You are correct in stating that the peace movement is small, politically isolated, vulnerable, and defeatist. But there is still more movement around the war than around any other issue of political significance. Certainly I would not herald this mostly middle-class and academic (sic) peace activism as the agency of social change prophesied at Port Huron so very long ago. Nonetheless, is there comparable movement—let alone potential for social change—among the poor, the ghetto dweller, the southern Negro, or even the students on issues other than the war? And, can we really build a permanent radical movement without making American imperialism a major concern?

If we are to be radical organizers, we cannot say to peace activists, "You're wasting your time, build SDS chapters." We must meet them at the point of their concern—"the utter depravity of the war"—help them to articulate and demonstrate that concern, and then as partners in their protest urge them to discover in their experiences, their frustrations, the defeat of their assumptions, the truths with which your paper assails them.

Now, how can we do that without ourselves getting sucked up in the numbers game of demonstrations, without encouraging false notions and false expectations, without drawing

resources and energy away from the other constituencies we are organizing? While my own experience with the Berkeley VDC cautions pessimism (and modesty), let me offer a few tentative suggestions.

There will be major demonstrations on March 24-25. Most of us don't need to demonstrate the increasing impotence of increasing numbers. We should not, however, downgrade the importance which rituals play in helping people demonstrate their commitment. (What could have been more ritualistic than the SDS presence at the missile crisis demonstrations?) Our task should be to integrate into those marvelously anonymous mass mobilizations an opportunity for face-to-face small group activity. This permits people to be people rather than cattle (said the old cowboy), and can provide radical self-education.

For example, a series of small concurrent rallies in poor neighborhoods, middle-class shopping centers, small towns and colleges would allow small groups of activists to learn about those features of the political and cultural process which your paper highlights. (How about a small sit-in at the toy shop?) These forays would be especially significant if the experiences were evaluated and publicized. Or, the morning of the demonstration delegations could visit various figures in the local power structure, talking with them both about the war and the demonstration, and requesting that they write a letter to the President about the visit (regardless of their views on the war.) We could then evaluate our conversations and attempt to find the ideological and structural bases underlying them.

Community work and (as you suggest) peace politics also enable people to learn very quickly why issues must be related. But even more than in demonstrations these activities encourage impossible expectations and consequent disillusionment. Let's talk more about structural and programmatic ways to maintain a sense of realism and experimentation. (If Marcuse would only hurry up and find that agency!)

Then there is (yawn) radical education within the movement. It's only our most important task, but neither your pearly paragraphs or mine seem to have made that imperative real even to ourselves. At Berkeley, demonstration fatigue (What can you do with 15,000 people, arm them?) has led to some

receptivity for freedom school type seminars in which activists could work back from their experiences and reading to the development of some coherent view of their role in history. Carl's Washington address also offers a broad vista of research and conference possibilities, but we still lack that dramatic package.

So—could we pull off the impossible, real teach-ins, engaging real intellectuals in a confrontation of American reality (which includes but extends way beyond the war). For brevity's sake, I won't plan the agenda here, but the topics should be self-evident. (We might set as our task disproving most of the facile comparisons between Saigon, Watts, and Selma . . . oh . . . and Aushwitz.) It could be a real flop.

On the other hand, it could be the centerpiece for a challenge to the intellectual community to engage with us in an ongoing Renaissance of relevance. We would need the help of major figures in poverty and civil rights, our guys and theirs. Equally important, we would need a format that allowed both a confrontation of the generations and a real engagement of and dialogue between that group usually known as spectators. The biggest hurdle would be the need to develop a sense of urgency and drama, but the coming escalation of the war plus the help of the entertainment and intellectual industry might put the show in the road. If people salute (when we run the idea up the flagpole), we should probably aim at putting on a first such "Learn-in" and then provide a chautauqua of radical intellectuals to play the circuit.

Whatever programs and publications we develop, we must try harder to relate to the peace activists as a constituency. That means, in part, a relationship with NCC, which will become a national organization despite the decentralist, coordinating rhetoric passed in Washington. (I will even go so far as to predict that the very defense against YSA domination will be the vehicle for accepting YSA strategy, and eventually, their outlook that the domestic movement is merely an appendage of revolutions abroad.) More important, it means that we work with, not at, peace activists, and that we develop programs which combine Viet-Nam with other radical concerns. Let's not be left sectarians.

Pacem in tuchus,  
Steve Weissman

## ON MENTAL HOSPITALS

Mr. Wittman,

(letter is in reference to Carl Wittman's article in the SDS Bulletin, "In a Psychiatric Ward"—ed. note) . . . I was a patient in two psychiatric hospitals, one private and one state. I lived through many of the episodes you described and many more people don't talk about. I'm now on the other side of the keys. I'm a student nurse at a hospital. Of course, I didn't tell the school where I had spent the last year; you know how quickly I would be asked to leave if they found out.

The point of my letter is: what did you do and what are you doing to help John, B. . . , the young Jewish girl and many, many others like them? I think you fail to realize the impact just one insightful person can make on a patient. In a despair filled atmosphere a person such as you could instill

the hope and determination necessary to one who must constantly fight to maintain his individuality and human dignity along with his sanity.

You suggest an organization of former patients. Don't you realize that once you've been in a mental hospital you're labeled a "nut" forever? I doubt the general public would pay any attention to a "bunch of loonies" trying to improve conditions on a "funny farm".

The solutions you suggest, such as more staff, more money, questioning authority, etc. are well and good, but I feel the best results will come from individual dedication on the part of those who contact the patients most often. One understanding attendant can do more good than a whole staff of doctors.

When I graduate I hope to go into psychiatric nursing. When I have the

needle in my hand I'll know how it feels to be so doped up you can't stand up straight. When I have the authority to order restraint I'll know how it feels to be tied down for hours on end. When it's up to me to decide whether a patient should be placed in seclusion I'll know how it feels to be locked in a room. And when these situations arise I'll also remember how helpless I felt against the "higher authorities" and the many nights I fought, fought like hell, to maintain my sanity in a place that was supposed to "help me get better".

By no means do I think that I and others who have gone through similar experiences alone have the ability and understanding necessary for psychiatric work. But I do think that I'll be a much better nurse because of my experiences. . . .

## on conscripts

WASHINGTON, D.C.

. . . I (have) introduced amendments to the proposed Vietnam military assistance authorization bill. The amendments would prohibit the sending of draftees to Southeast Asia without Congressional approval. Of course, if any draftee wishes to volunteer, this amendment would not apply to him.

When these amendments are called up in the Senate at the time the authorization bill is considered, I hope that it will provoke the widest possible debate on our entire Vietnam policy. . . .

Ernest Gruening,  
U.S. Senate

Editor's note: The above letter from Sen. Gruening was received with his speech proposing the amendment. This amendment has provided a

possible lever for provoking debate on Vietnam policy in the Senate. It might be helpful if you wrote your individual senators urging support for the Gruening amendments (Amendments nos. 481, 482, and 483 to Senate Bills 2791, 2792, and 2793). But if you do act, act now because time is of the essence. Copies of the speech are available from the national office or Sen. Gruening's office.

# NAC MINUTES

submitted by Judy Kissinger

- NAC members present: Harriet Stulman, Joyce Bennett, Judy Kissinger, and Steve Goldsmith.
- Discussion of "Central Printing Office" part of the Jeff Shero-Don Olson proposal for SDS printing. (This proposal called for doing a major part of the organization's printing of literature at Lawrence, Kansas, where the best press accessible is located. The Kansas people requested a monthly allowance to keep up rent of a house for the printing equipment. The labor is to be volunteer.) Voted to pay the \$150/month estimated necessary to bring it off.
- Review of previous and new money requests. Voted \$100 each to North-west and Texas regions provided Booth receives from them information on how the money is to be spent. If he has doubts, he's to bring them to the next NAC meeting. He's also to make it clear to both Texas and the Northwest regions that this money comes out of the \$4000 N.O. operating money.
- Voted to send Scott Pitman the \$150 for his fund raising trip through California.
- Voted to give Bob Speck \$31 needed for dental work.
- Voted \$300 for a 1/2 page ad in the New York Review of Books.
- Current deposits for rent, electricity, etc. will be applied to future deposits on staff member's apartments.
- Since there is no photo project now, the facilities of the dark room are available for use by staff members.

Steve Goldsmith proposed that a file of

articles by SDS people be maintained. Also an index of press coverage. He was mandated to seek people to do this.

It was revealed that the University of Illinois has offered to preserve SDS records for posterity. No immediate decision was foreseen on this matter.

Steve Goldsmith reiterated his concern about the membership dues (cost of news-letter/membership, etc.) To be discussed further at next meeting.

Jeff Segal was mandated to mimeograph regulations on use of N.O. facilities by local chapters and the Chicago region and make them known to all.

Clark Kissinger stated that he can probably not remain on staff much longer. He was instructed to prepare an outline of the functions he has performed and to make an appeal through New Left Notes for people to work in these areas.

General discussion of NicNac mailings. (These go to NAC members and at-large members of the National Council. They are usually written by the National Secretary, Paul Booth.) There was general feeling that Paul should restrain himself from "editorializing". Some comments could more appropriately have gone in personal letters or the weekly newsletter to all the members. Letters reprinted should be edited for coherency.

Discussion of New Left Notes. No fundamental criticism of second issue. Most people liked it. Suggested that it should contain more gossip. Jim Russell is to decide who will receive free copies of the newsletter. We will continue the \$5 subscription offer for nonmembers.

## at-large chapters

WASHINGTON, D.C. —

In thinking about the problems of at-large chapters—having had peripheral connections with them in NYC and here in DC—I drew up the following.

One of the main functions of an at-large chapter might be termed "social" or "morale-building". Individual members, not in college (if in college, their main focus should be organizing on their campuses), spending much of the time at a job or at home, need a sense of being connected to like-minded people. At the same time, exigencies of time and city geography make the development of a chapter-run community-action project very unlikely; thus an at-large chapter should not see organizing as its main function. This does not rule out the important role which an at-large chapter can play as a transmission belt for information on such actions as the grape strike and the Washington bus boycott. Nor does it mean that where the opportunity

exists, members of the at-large chapter should not take part in community action projects in their communities. Nor does it rule out the possibility of chapter people being active in developing college chapters where possible. It does mean that it is not only useless but discouraging to the chapter members for the at-large chapter to see itself as the nucleus of a community action project—or, indeed, of an organizing effort of any kind. The chapter has more important functions to fulfill.

One such is educational: having seminars on particular issues be a principle part of the chapter's work. Thus the intellectual aspect of the "morale-boosting" need—that is, the need to discuss issues of common interest with fellow radicals—can be realized. I know seminars sound ordinary, perhaps even dull—but that's not because the idea is ipso facto wrong but because they are so often run poorly and fail to reflect the interests of the participants.

A second is "social" in the usual sense. Every

three weeks or so the chapter should follow its regular meeting with a party. Needless to say, a party need not be frivolous; much serious discussion can take place in informal settings, especially if the regular meetings themselves are stimulating. Besides, relaxing is a good idea.

A third activity which an at-large chapter can engage in involves an area which, as far as I know, has only been talked about in SDS for the past few years and very little if anything done about it. This is the question of how professional (or middle class) people can be radicals in the context of their ordinary lives. I would suggest that the at-large chapter devote a number of its meetings to the following procedure: A member of the chapter (perhaps two in a given meeting) would discuss in considerable and specific detail his or her work situation, with an eye toward how he or she can "operate radically" in that context. Other members of the chapter would help him or her brainstorm about

## participatory democracy

CHICAGO, ILL. —I think it would be most helpful--for SDS members as well as the movement generally --if you defined the term "participatory democracy" more specifically. Perhaps you have done so somewhere that I am not acquainted with; it would be useful, nonetheless, if you could give answers to the following questions:

1 I assume you use the term not only to indicate a desired relationship within a political or semi-political group, but also as the major characteristic of the type of society which you aspire to build. If so, in what way does participatory democracy differ from the Titoist concept of "self-management"? I am not referring, incidentally, to self-management in practice, but in theory.

2 Is participatory democracy compatible with the concept of a state and state power, or does its fulfillment come only with the "withering away of the state"?

3 In what way does participatory democracy differ from the abstract concept (not as practiced, but as visualized) of "democratic centralism"? In other words, after a person has fully participated in making a decision for action, does he or does he not have the obligation to carry out that decision, even if he may have expressed himself against it?

4 In what way does participatory democracy differ from anarchism? Do members of an organization or citizens of a society have any obligatory duties, or only those which they feel they want to perform out of love for their associates? If you do not believe

in either anarchism or democratic centralism, how far along the line do you go with each? And what do you reject of each?

5 How legitimate is the idea of a "caucus" under participatory democracy? Do people of similar bent have a right to caucus so as to devise common strategy, and if they do so aren't they guilty of manipulation? How much manipulation is permissible?

6 How legitimate is the idea of a temporary or permanent "faction"?

7 What limits are there on membership "participation"? Put differently, is the average member's participation confined to setting policy; and if not, does he have the right to inject himself in administrative decisions (e.g., buying postage stamps, assigning someone to a TV program sending out a letter for funds)--and how far? Stated still another

# Southern Calif. chapter reports

by Mike Davis

The following is a report on chapters in the Southern California area and their relative strength and activities.

• PASADENA SDS chapter is one semester old, has approximately thirty members, and is only vigorous group on Pasadena City College campus or in Pasadena as a whole. SDS has been fighting all year to gain official recognition, but last week the ASB turned down their appeal, so the ACLU is preparing a brief to submit to the State Board of Education. Under the State's present educational code it looks as if SDS will ultimately win. The fight for recognition and the consequent free speech issues have been catalytic on campus all year--ad hoc rallies have attracted several hundred students at a time. Pasadena SDS has also done some work around local high schools and is planning a teach-in for early February with Harvey Wheeler, Mary Clarke, etc.

• UCLA SDS At its first, relative unpublicized meeting the SDS chapter attracted fifty people, at the last meeting which was well

various aspects of the situation described. This would not only help the particular member in his particular situation, but would lead to a discussion of "middle class organizing" on a very concrete level, from which hopefully some generalizable principles and ideas would come. Assumedly each member of the chapter would be helped by each discussion, even though his particular situation wasn't being discussed, because people would come to think of the "how to be a radical" problem in a more concrete framework than has been true in the past. I suspect that people have thought about this problem only in a pretty diffuse way, and the kind of specific examination I suggest would help direct and crystallize individuals' thinking.

Don McKelvey

way--since you evidently do believe in a certain amount of centralism, such as an office, a national president and secretary, spokesmen, etc., what are the limits of centralization vis-a-vis participation?

8 Participation in an established organization is relatively easy to define, but how do you define, but how do you guarantee participatory democracy in a new organization? The initiators of a new organization are obviously self-appointed. At what point are they to be considered as acting on the mandate of a constituency? How is that mandate achieved?

I do not offer these questions by way of criticism, because I have been an advocate of "Participative" democracy for a long time. But I do think that faulty notions about participatory democracy do inhibit much-needed action.

Sidney Lens

publicized only a dozen people attended. The ailments of the chapter are hard to point to and are bound up in the malaise at UCLA in general. Nevertheless, SDS was the first group to begin work on the Delano strike, has had a CO counseling program, and is planning to hold a large campus meeting of all 1-A's next month. A VDC committee is active on campus, has turned capitalistic in its concern with lit. sales, runs on rigid parliamentary rules, and turns most people off. Radicals/activists abound, but seem to have no where to turn to; VDC plans bigger and better teach-ins, SDS flounders, and DuBois hovers in the ideological outerspace. Optimistically, the chapter is beginning to show signs of new viability and if SDS could ever get together and carry out a program, it might stir up the entire campus.

• CAL. STATE AT LOS ANGELES SDS Very good chapter and key group on campus. Has sponsored rallies, meetings, Delano activity, spontaneous teach-ins, etc.

• U. OF CALIF., SANTA BARBARA SDS Great bunch of kids from former campus student rights-peace group. Haven't heard from them lately, but their size is large. Not sure if they have official status yet either, but this could be one of our best chapters.

• U. OF CALIF. at IRVING SDS First meeting this week--looks good. Chapter should become official in a few weeks.

• SANTA ANA INEXILE SDS An attempt to form an SDS chapter last semester met with threats of expulsion, arrest and draft, ergo chapter is now off campus. Has probably a dozen members and is currently working with the Orange county peace groups, but hopes to have programs of its own.

• SAN DIEGO STATE SDS Very strong chapter. Along with extensive Vietnam activity, a high school

action project (HSAP) has been started with a mass leafleting of one High School and three subsequent meetings, the largest of which has an attendance of about 40-50 high school students and numerous teachers. 26 students and teachers have signed up to meet with students and others from high schools in the future.

• HARBOR JR. COLLEGE Independent student group affiliated with SDS and also with YSA (1).

• CLAREMONT COLLEGE Not formal chapter, just some ad hoc SDS kids, but good change of organizing one this semester.

• VALLEY SDS Nobody knows what's happening out in the San Fernando Valley. Had a good peace demonstration, however. Chance of organizing at Valley State College in connection with peace candidacy.

• U. OF CALIF. at RIVERSIDE SDS Chapter tried to prevent the city council from allowing Northrup Corp. to build test site for Vietnam type new weapons. One of the first efforts in history of S. Calif. to raise concern against the morality and economics of the defense industry.

• U. OF S. CALIF. SDS Official on campus, but existent only in platonic sense. However, it looks as if SPU/SDS group may emerge from recent Vietnam activity.

• L.A. -AT-LARGE SDS Yet unformed, but have nearly thirty possible members. Survivors of Committee to End the War, working kids, old socialists, etc. who want to join SDS plus group of guys from Watts.

• HIGH SCHOOLS Have five national members at Palisades High alone and many more informal members all over the city. Kids are active in independent high school chapter or join at-large chapter.

## NEW LITERATURE STOCK

Now in stock at the n.o. are the following items:

- (10¢) sds buttons
- (free) membership application cards
- (10¢) The University and the Cold War - Paul Potter
- (10¢) Oglesby speech at the March on Washington
- (10¢) The New Radicals and "Participatory Democracy" - Staughton Lynd
- (10¢) The New Left and The Establishment - Sidney Lens
- (5¢) Democracy is Nothing if it is Not Dangerous (speech) - Carl Oglesby

## NEW LEFT NOTES

Published weekly by Students for a Democratic Society, 1103 E. 63rd St., Chicago, Ill. 60637. Phone (312) 667-6050. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Chicago, Ill. Subscriptions: \$1 a year for members; \$5 a year for nonmembers. Signed articles and letters are the responsibility of the writer. Unsigned articles are the responsibility of the editor, James Russell.

Students for a Democratic Society

Carl Oglesby, president; Jeffrey Shero, vice-president; and Paul Booth, national secretary.

National Office: 1103 E. 63rd., Chicago, Ill. 60637  
New York: 49 W. 27th St., New York, N. Y. 10001  
New Eng.: 1785 Cambridge St. (rm 199) Cambridge, Mass.  
Chicago: 1103 E. 63rd, Chicago, Ill. 60637  
N. Calif.: 924 Howard St., San Francisco 3, Calif.  
S. Calif.: 702 W. 27th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Vol. 1, No. 3

February 4, 1966

# Notes on the pathology of the N.C.

by Todd Gitlin

I might have thought that my feelings toward the December N.C. were strictly personal had not almost every person I talked to—while the meeting was going on, and afterward—agreed that it was a disaster. What I heard about were different symptoms, but all agreed that there was a disease loose. Afterward, some SDS people—mostly in the National Office—seemed pleased that some decisions had been made, but that delight strikes me as the sort of satisfaction a slave might feel after a day in the fields—it was hell, but thank God it's over, and look how many bales I picked, after all.

Because feelings ranging from discomfort to boredom to distaste to nausea to utter rejection seemed almost universal among those who were there, I decided to circulate some rough notes on the nature of the malaise. I do this with great trepidation. Toes will be tropped on, inevitably (I do not exclude my own); and maybe the wrong ones. The clinical details could be discussed more abstractly, but then maybe we wouldn't recognize them; and besides, what would be the point?—Whom would we be kidding, besides ourselves?

Or we could say that the distemper was caused by that series of upsetting and violent episodes going on the corridors outside; that we had bad luck and in "normal" conditions we could do better. But this would be self-delusion in the grand manner. The last N.C. was in the pattern of the four or five that preceded it: a great deal worse, but not essentially or qualitatively different. (Not to mention that those episodes themselves were not freakish, but in themselves symptomatic of our collective failure to grapple with the fact of being racebound and classbound.)

Or, at another, more seductive, level of blindness, we could say that N.C.'s are simply necessary evils, bearing particularized germs that we can localize and keep from contaminating the rest of our organizational life. But to say this is to forget that an N.C. as the most regular gathering of people who are in some sense the backbone of the organization, is bound to concentrate, to intensify, certain shared incapacities, though it may also generate problems unique to the occasion.

These notes pretend to be nothing more than that: notes, impressions, educated guesses, maybe even desperate stabs at the truth. Their purpose, again, is not to cast blame or to enunciate definitive answers, but to provoke some shared thinking, and thus to get some changes in the way we carry on our terribly delicate and almost unbearably important work. Many of our troubles lie deep, and for them I have no proposals, modest or immodest, beyond a plea for self- and mutual-consciousness. For other symptoms I think there are fairly straight-forward reforms, some of which I'll try to suggest.

I shouldn't have to add that this is written (of necessity) in a spirit of hope and an old-fashioned belief that we are responsible people, as rational as this society can allow, and as capable as anyone of taking our interwoven futures in our own hands. We had better be.

## Symptoms

1 A dearth of ideological and strategic content to debates, where it would be appropriate. The shallowness of debate is particularly evident when programs are on the floor (Viet-Nam, freedom draft, campaign against domestic budget cuts, etc.). People are impatient to formulate programs that members can work on, and resist grappling with deeper, prior issues, among which are these:

—To what extent does and should the movement exist for its own sake? That is, to what extent is the maintenance and multiplication of the movement itself integral to the achievement of social change?

—Who's "in the movement," who's outside?

—What is an "organizing issue"? Why should we choose to organize around issues created by government actions? What do we gain by that approach, what do we lose?

—What strategy for what change—in people, in institutions, in attitudes—is implicit in any proposed program: and what place does that change have (in terms of importance and timing) in our overall schema of change?

When issues of this sort are slighted (and it does little good to erect elaborate rationales on the spur of the moment, for they are often jerry-built), we get superficial discussion. Triviality begets triviality. It is as if there were a Law of Increasing Triviality, up to a point of which, usually, someone makes a desperate, too-late attempt at salvage. Or else, breakdown.

2 An over-preoccupation with ideological content where it is NOT appropriate; or mis-identification of the deeper issue involved. Discussions of national structure and the National Office, and one segment of the debate on the Radical Education Project, are prime instances of our propensity for misconstruing the nature of an issue. Slogans and symbols replace analysis and hard thinking. For example:

"Decentralization." But which functions are properly national, and which ones are not? The ones that are properly national are then the province of a national structure (like the extended NAC), with the National Office lubricating that structure. The ones that are properly regional are then located regionally; etc. (We might ask the same questions when we talk about political goals.)

"Democracy in the Office." But is it egotism or, rather, a responsibility of each of us to each other, that should guide a staff member?

"Regionalization." I'm for it; so is everybody. But a functional region is one that actually serves and is accountable to its constituents. It is not the same as the vested interest of a regional office.

"Bureaucracy." Does that include the keeping up of mailing lists? a billing system? the existence of a National Secretary? Or does it refer, instead, to (a) a style that treats members as objects, and (b) a structure that precludes substantive participation from, and accountability to, all corners of the organization? (Again, the same question applies to our social theory.)

"Political Control." There was a long, trivial debate about the accountability of the editorial board in Al Haber's proposed Radical Education Project. Several delegates cast the issue as one of "political control"—who would guard the guardians of our minds? As if the danger was one of brainwashing; as if, in fact, the danger was more urgent than shaping a project in one mold or another. It was the type of education proposed that should have been at issue, not the purported risks. We were so concerned to avoid that we evaded the purpose we wanted to make possible.

"No Leaders." The issue—it sometimes seems nothing more than a mystique but it is still a live issue—was buried in the "political control" debate, as in many others, each time with greater or lesser degrees of implicitness. When it surfaces, it usually arises as an over-preoccupation with democratic forms ("abolish the National Secretary") rather than a serious, hard, agonizing, honest talk about elitism, experience, competence, decision-making, personal styles, etc.

Elitism is and should be a matter of central concern. But it cuts so close to so many exposed nerves that both elites and non-elites circumvent the paralyzing substance of the issue, casting it instead as a game, an in-joke, a purely formal issue of titles and offices, or an underground cycle of resentment and counter-resentment. No wonder that it erupts, periodically, in a manner often dehumanizing of both protesters and protestants. (As in the assault by some of the West Coast people during the December conference.) These eruptions do have value in forcing the issue, but much better if we could talk about it less tensely, with more time, and not too late.

Only if the issue is joined openly will it cease contaminating our deliberations.

(The first day of the December conference, by the way, was intended to draw both "old" and "new" people into reflections based on the ways each of us came into SDS. Unfortunately most people came late, and the workshops were too big.)

3 Speechmaking. This is the premium style. If you can make a good speech, you're in; otherwise, you're out. That is a statement of the deplorable reality: SDS's status system.

The fact is that status is not a metaphysical force by a ranking assigned by very definite people—usually called the elite. The elite are often (by no means always) able to make coherent speeches that bear on previous speeches and so carry the discussion toward resolution, or at least clarification. This ability is assigned status, first by the elite, then by others, all acting out standard social values. The non-elite feel forced to compete for that status, so they make speeches too; usually, but not always, less coherent but who notices their content? We only listen to the elite's speeches, although sometimes we open the mental gates and admit an ordinary mortal to the charmed circle; for if we listen to him he must be elite, and when we assign him elite status we will keep listening. Many of us who either can't or won't hazard such speeches then feel inferior, since we are reduced to employing the SDS status scale (which in turn is a condensation of American political values) as a measure of contribution. To make it worse, those of us who feel pressed to make speeches frequently take the time of the body to make quite marginal distinctions between Our Positions and The Other Positions. We are just that proprietary, as if our copyrights depended on pristine uniqueness. All in all, even the best speechmaking tends to carry worse speechmaking in its wake—thus very little comes out of the best.

It is hard to say what would result even if all the speechmaking were clear and brilliant. Would it contribute to a problem-resolving attitude? I doubt it—the style is so easily corruptible; it's so natural to decide to make a speech simply for the sake of making it; the discussion so easily gets boring and wasteful (though this happens in trivial discussions also); the approved "ideological" (in quotation marks, because the language of a statement does not make it ideological) language is unwieldy and unaccustomed.

But these damaging consequences of speechmaking have to do less with the length of speeches than with their form and the attitude that produced them. Their form: as sweeping as possible. The attitude: a single speech will resolve the matter, so each struggles to be definitive (which is not at all the same as being sharp and clear, and helpful).

At the root of this, I think, is unbridled ego-involvement. Our egos become tied to our words, our proposals. We would sooner make speeches before the whole body than consult privately (preferably beforehand) with the other speaker to iron out what might be a trivial difference, or to clarify something left unclear. We would sooner throw in two cents now than think something through for a few minutes and then be germane (that is, problem-solving or problem-clarifying). We would sooner couch an observation as Grand Theory than as a simple observation ("constituency," "undemocratic," "organize") than the harder language of precision and experience. We would sooner split hairs than solve problems. So the speech-makers get heated and ego-inflated; some listeners emulate, most grow restless and frustrated; we all get bogged down in incomprehensibility.

No panaceas for this one. Only this one notion: The skill of drawing inferences from experience is transferable if done gently and without airs of rancor or repetitiousness.

(to be continued in the next issue with points 4, 5, and 6 of the symptoms and some "modest proposals")

## Another December conference view

by Guy Loftman

The December Conference was called not to make decisions but to gather a consensus from the SDS peasantry. From this point of view the Conference was a flop, due largely to an unrealistic agenda.

The Chicago Kernel who set the agenda naturally aimed it at problems the National Office faces every day. Unfortunately, these problems have nothing to do with the problems that local hirelings face.

The program was set up to hash out things like coalitions, exclusionism, organizational growth, the specifics of ideology, etc.

In Bloomington the problem of coalition means finding someone—anyone—to coalesce with in opposing the war, finding someone—anyone—who gives a damn about 42 million poor Americans (let alone a billion or so starving Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans).

Local problems at Antioch are different from ours; there they are trying to find a way to affect people outside their already radicalized community.

Berkeley has other problems, mainly centering on the difficulties of mass mobilization and relating to other radical groups.

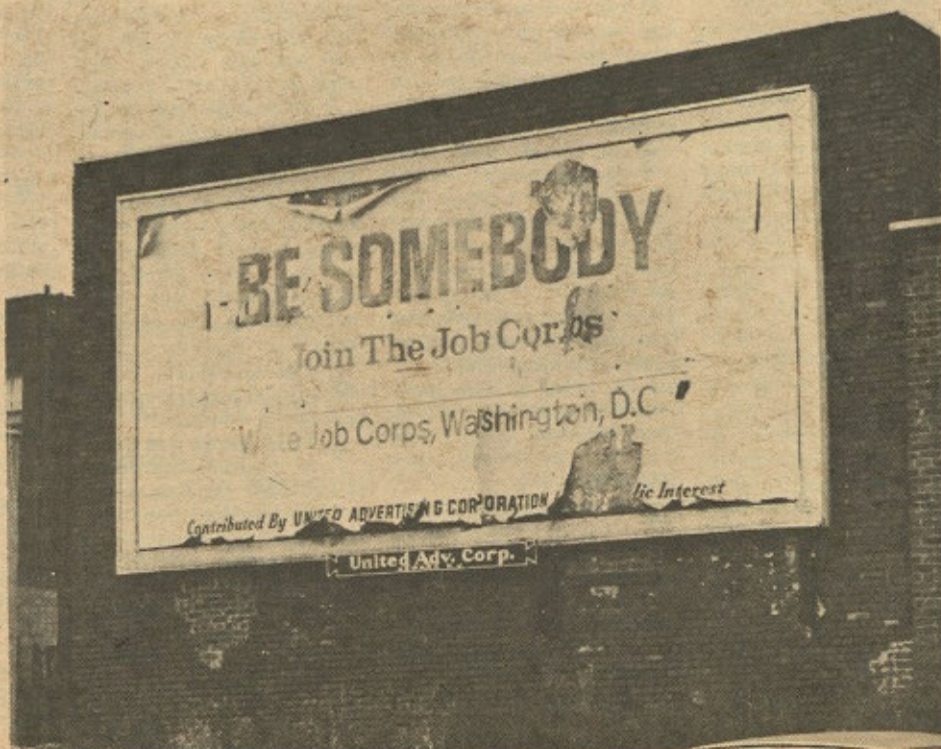
The point is this: each chapter has

peculiar difficulties and none of these are the difficulties of the National Office. Consequently, there wasn't much point in our discussing Movement coalitions with liberals, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's shafting at Atlantic City, or How Specific Should Ideology Be.

After everyone figured out that the agenda didn't fit the facts some good workshops got underway to make the Conference relevant to the hinterlands. "How does a radical work in a corrupt society?" seemed important to us because we all face this problem every day in Bloomington.

But if the conference was a flop from one point of view, it was successful from another: it pointed out some SDS weaknesses and raised some startling questions—how can we set national policy on issues that don't affect us at all? Is participatory democracy a valid approach to national organization? Should the national office evade policy entirely and simply serve as an educational and advisory group? Should regional offices concern themselves entirely with local problems? Do we need any national organization? If so, what is its purpose? If not, what is SDS?

(reprinted from the Indiana University SDS Newsletter)



(photo by Howie Epstein)