

NEW LEFT NOTES

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LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE

JUNE 19, 1967

THE COMPUTERIZED CITY:

Privacy Yields to Progress

THE SYSTEMS EXPERTS
STUDY NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

New York Times Describes
"First attempt to program an entire city"

Peter Henig

Despite apprehension that has been expressed about the development by the Federal government of a computerized data bank to store and make useable information on the individual and collective behavior of U. S. citizens, the nation's information-handling industry is taking steps to develop and refine its techniques for doing just that.

A story in the New York Times reveals that the city of New Haven, Connecticut is cooperating with the Advanced Systems Development Division of IBM in a two-year study that involves IBM's "first attempt to program an entire city". IBM reportedly chose New Haven because "with 151,000 people, it is a manageable size", and because "it's well run".

The problems faced by the IBM systems experts are directly analogous to the ones that have to be tackled the first time a complex industrial process is subjected to automated control.

Any process control operates on the basis of significant data on what is happening in the process to be controlled. In the case of the petrochemical industry, where long years of experience with sophisticated instrumentation and recording apparatus provided process control experts with fairly precise knowledge of exactly what kind of data should be considered significant inputs for the automatic controls, the introduction of electronic computers to keep track of and act upon the data was a relatively simple affair.

Not so in the case of steel manufacture. When the first attempts were made to apply automated process control in this industry it was quickly discovered that not nearly enough was known about what happens in steel-making to decide which measurements of the process should be fed into the control computers. Efficient instrumentation could not be set up. Computers could not be properly programmed to operate the control mechanisms in order to produce the desired results in the finished product.

Before automated control systems could become operational in steel, systems analysts had to conduct exhaustive studies to find out which temperature readings, which precise measurements, which content analyses—and at precisely which moments in time—are important for controlling the results. Only after this type of knowledge had been developed to a minimum level was it possible for computerized control systems to become operational. Steel industry management was willing to make the immense investment in studying its own technical processes because the knowledge of which measurements are important made possible more efficient control systems. And, since the main feature of computerized control is a practically unlimited capacity for storing, manipulating, and displaying information according to the wishes of its users, the workings of such a system lend themselves to the continuous devel-

opment of knowledge which can be applied to control.

As has been the case with a number of other newly developed American technologies, the first attempt to apply computer guidance to the mechanisms intended to control a human social process is to be found in Vietnam. In this case the process control experts had to decide which of many possible measurements of Vietnamese society were significant indicators of Viet Cong (i.e., revolutionary) activity. The measurements (such as movements of people and vehicles, level of food crops, fluctuations in income per capita, composition of a local population by age and sex) are then fed into a mobile computing center which interprets the data for U. S. officials who then order the measures intended to achieve the "appropriate" counter-revolutionary results. The measures that have been used range from a new "civic action" program to the spraying of chemical defoliants on food crops to the napalm bombing of a village. U. S. government sponsored statistical and sociological studies to determine which of the many possible measures are significant for controlling human social processes are now under way in a number of Latin American countries.

In the first stage of the IBM attempt to "program" an American city, a statistical analysis of how New Haven operates was conducted. "The next phase, determining what information should be filed (in computer storage)...will take 18 months", according to the Times story.

In the meantime, IBM and city government "are planning to put the city's files on computers to obtain a statistical profile of everyone in town."

"Information ranging from dog licenses and divorce decrees to police reports and tax statements would all be electronically cross-indexed." This "coordination of data about individual citizens" would involve "everything from a library card to a welfare application".

Judging by the New York Times report, New Haven officials view the new methods of gathering and displaying the measurements of the city's social processes as an aid to doing their jobs better: "The knowledge, for example, that a man was crippled could be stored away for possible use by the Fire Department. His application for welfare assistance could be automatically checked to see if he owned a car."

The Mayor is quoted as saying: "We've got all this information scattered all over the place now, so we can't use it. But after it's all together we'll get at it and make New Haven a national model."

The use and implications of computerized guidance for government agencies were more explicitly spelled out with regard to police operations:

With computers, the police chief could have instant access to all the information about a suspect....An instant list, with pictures, of sexual deviates who could have been in the area where a crime was committed could be made available to the police by data equipment.

Moreover...since all the city agencies would pool their information, the computer system could also determine if a fire broke out near a convicted arsonist's home, or if hubcaps were reported missing on an afternoon that a known juvenile delinquent had been truant from school.

The Times dispatch, by William Borders, gave no indication that the issues which have stirred concern about Federally operated social data systems—namely, invasion of individual privacy and centralization in the hands of the few of knowledge that is significant for the effective wielding of power—had been the subject of controversy in New Haven.

* *

LYND ON draft resistance

Staughton Lynd

Last summer, when the "Fort Hood Three" declared that they would refuse to go to Vietnam, Stokely Carmichael urged them to go to Harlem and tell their story there. This summer, the organization of opposition to the war in the ghetto (white and black) is the frontier of peace activity.

Anti-war activity among young people has been undertaken in two kinds of community: the campus and the ghetto. The month of April 1967 represented a turning-point in both kinds of work.

Crucial for the campus anti-war movement was the fact that the We Won't Go group at the University of Cornell, having committed itself to burn draft cards if 500 persons took part, decided on the eve of the April 15 mobilization to go ahead even if those participating were only 50. The immediate consequence of this step in faith was that more than 150 burned their cards the next day. Since then, older persons not personally subject

to the draft have circulated perhaps as many as half a dozen statements of support. One, initiated by Paul Goodman, explicitly invites men over 35 to "join the conspiracy". Another, initiated by Noam Chomsky, is modeled on the statement made by 121 French intellectuals in support of draft resistance to the war in Algeria.

Equally significant for the developing draft resistance movement off the campus were Martin Luther King's advocacy of a "boycott" of the war by young men of draft age, and Muhammad Ali's personal refusal to be inducted.

The potential impact of Muhammad Ali's action was suggested in a column by Tom Wicker. "What happens," asked Wicker, "when enough citizens simply refuse to obey the positive commands of government and of the national majority?" The New York Times columnist went on to answer his own question. If, he said, "100,000 young men flatly refused to serve in the armed forces, regardless of the consequences," the



THE WAR GAME

a film by Peter Watkins

In the June issue of "Movie Maker" (British amateur cine magazine) editor Tony Rose describes young (32) Peter Watkins as fortunate in his many gifts: "intelligence, charm, talent, good looks, and abounding energy"; but all of this has apparently been sabotaged, for one final gift would never bring him ease or contentment. "That last gift was conscience." And so in the 10 years since he bought his first 8mm movie camera, Peter Watkins has been engaged in a constant battle with oppressive authority and public apathy. As one might expect, this combination of creative talent and moral purpose has reaped for him a shower of flowers and bricks. Nearly every one of his amateur productions was acclaimed by most film critics and denounced by offended establishment "Faces" (on the Hungarian Revolution; no controversy for the British there), was universally acclaimed and cited by one critic (Tony Rose) as one of the two or three greatest amateur productions of all time.

His talents being so undeniable, the BBC awarded him \$28,000 to produce a TV documentary. His product was "The War Game", on the effects of a nuclear war. One look and the BBC promptly banned it from TV, cinemas, or even film groups. A storm of protest from Watkins' amateur colleagues forced the BBC to screen it for a "select" group (not one film critic included), and the verdict was the same. Further, a personal smear campaign was begun against

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Johnson Administration's "real power to pursue the Vietnamese war or any other policy would be crippled if not destroyed. It would then be faced not with dissent but with civil disobedience on a scale amounting to revolt." (New York Times, May 2, 1967)

A succeeding column by James Reston made clear how the Administration planned to deal with this imminent threat to its war. Draft deferments for college undergraduates will be continued, Reston declared, because Administration officials estimate that one out of every four male undergraduates might simply refuse to go. (New York Times, May 5, 1967)

A little arithmetic makes clear the immense and sobering fact that if there were no student deferments 100,000 men would refuse to go and the war would end. Every student and every teacher should ponder what this means for his devoted How shall we confront the devoted that the Administration is taking students

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Letters:

CALVERT INTERVIEW

Dear Friends:

In his rebuttal to the irresponsible Paul Hofman article in the May 7 New York Times, SDS National Secretary Greg Calvert raises some questions centering around the problem of the use of violence to solve social problems—questions that warrant examination.

It seems to me that in large part he confirms Paul Hofman's contention that spokesmen for the New Left advocate revolutionary violence—and this is singularly unfortunate.

Greg Calvert quotes Hofman's report of Che Guevara's saying that "When a regime begins to offer material incentives, rather than moral incentives, to the people, it is no longer revolutionary." Quite so! But I would offer another saying: "When a regime begins to offer material (i.e. violent) means for solving social problems, rather than moral (i.e. non-violent) means, to the people, it is no longer revolutionary." (In the sense that it no longer offers an alternative to, but merely a repetition of, the suffering and oppression that men have always inflicted on each other.)

Greg Calvert's position is, of course, well within the American revolutionary tradition. Indeed, it is well within the tradition of violent revolution in any and every country in the world—and that is precisely its limitation and its shortcoming. It offers a much-needed affirmation of the best revolutionary ideals of freedom from oppression and social injustice—a renewal of "radical idealism"—but it offers nothing truly "radical". "Radical" means "getting to the roots of the problem", as Calvert suggests; it also means "having gotten to the root of the problem, offering a fundamentally new approach to the solving of that problem". "Radicalism" means not only thoroughgoing analysis but also thoroughgoing change.

There is little change in revolutions which are merely rotation. It does not suffice to replace the violence of the oppressor with the violence of the oppressed. Even Marx insisted that revolution to be radical must entail evolution. It is not enough to turn over the social order so that the "proletariat" becomes the "bourgeoisie" and vice versa. There must be an evolution so that these artificial classes themselves disappear.

The root problem in human society is not one of who oppresses whom but of oppression itself. The root problem in human society is not that group A perpetrates violence on group B—the real problem is violence itself. And the radical solution to this problem is not to side with the oppressed but to fight with those sensitive human beings in every social class, proletariat or bourgeoisie, peasant or landlord, oppressed or oppressor, to overcome the root problem itself—to overcome violence and oppression themselves; and this cannot be accomplished by violent (material) revolutionary means but only by non-violent (moral) means.

At the end of his article Greg Calvert says, "I believe that killing is wrong... I also live in what is rapidly becoming

the most violent society in the history of mankind. Though I oppose and will continue to oppose with my whole weight the use of oppressive force, while it is used to maintain men in bondage. I also support the right of men to fight for their own liberation. That is not because I believe in or advocate violence, but because I believe that men should be free to determine the course of their own lives and that they must struggle together to eliminate the bases of the violence which oppresses them."

How tragic that so few—including Greg Calvert himself—can fully comprehend that it is indeed "...the violence which oppresses (men)". It does not suffice to fight "repressive force" with counter-repressive force. The medium (as Marshall McLuhan points out) is the message. The medium of violent social revolution is violence, and its message—far from being "radical" or "revolutionary" social change—is also violence and "repressive force".

The problem is that the state (or the provisional government of the revolution) with its "temporary" use of the repressive techniques of martial law does not "with away". Violence becomes woven into the fabric of the society's structure and the goals of the revolution are lost in the process.

One class may well replace another, a rotation may well result from the "revolution", but the evolutionary aspect of revolution is lacking if the stability of the "new order" still rests on the foundation and ruling technique of the old order—namely violence.

Revolutionary change is necessary in many parts of the world—the violence of the status quo must be ended—the society based on oppressive violence must be replaced with a society based on community and the shared positive goals of humanity. But this revolution cannot be accomplished by violence. I am convinced that the only true revolution (one that results in evolution of man's social forms) must be a non-violent revolution. We must reject war and violent revolution in order to achieve a truly social revolution. However, from a rejection of war and violent revolution we must not lapse into gradualism or "legalism" (which has always only been effective in working change in the aftermath of violence). We should instead embrace and develop the techniques of non-violent revolution. It is only by meeting the challenge of non-violent revolution that men will achieve the revolutionary social goals they seek.

Yours in Peace,

Richard Boardman

MILITANT WAC'S BURN UNIFORMS

To whom it concerns:

I am writing this letter for myself, Lynn Brunstein, and Joyce Rolison. Our ages are 19 and 20 respectively. We are members of the Women's Army Corps at present undergoing discharge proceedings to culminate with our release from active duty near the 30th of May this year. On the 17th of April we burned our military uniforms and disobeyed direct orders from our Commanding Officer to wear the military uniform, resulting in court martial charges against us. We

"resigned for the benefit of the service and are receiving other than an honorable discharge. The burning of the uniform is a "first" for the United States Army we are told.

This rather drastic though quiet protest is not meant to impress you. We tell you in order to point out our sincere desire to uphold our beliefs and disbeliefs which, we feel, in large part concur with the feeling—it could not really be called a policy—of the Students for a Democratic Society. We wish to work actively in your organization in any capacity. We will be living in New York City and would appreciate information on the SDS chapter there. Any other information would be helpful too.

I am not a brilliantly expressive person. I am inwardly bitter and disgusted to the point that real communication with others seems to me an infrequent occurrence. I am not sure that anyone can do anything but protest. Perhaps I fear exploitation of my sincerity. But regardless of my fears or feelings and jointly because of them I write this letter.

I ask you for myself and my friend to please reply as soon as is possible.

Respectfully yours,

PFC Barbara L. Brunstein WA 8527615
WAC Detachment Special Troops (2154)
Fort Lee, Virginia 23801

SUGGESTED MIDDLE EAST RESOLUTION

RE: ARAB-ISRAELI REACTION AND IMPLICATIONS, NIC RESOLUTION:

Be it resolved that the Mideast crisis has brought about strong reaction from American Jews and confusion on the Left in general. It is important that the American Left understand that Arab reaction is as valid as will be the reaction of blacks to whites in South Africa when that violence culminates against colonial settlers in that country. The importation of pro-Western settlers into the underdeveloped world to build a strong colonial base is hardly a new tactic of imperialism and is no more justifiable in Israel than in Kenya or Mozambique. The Israelis are no more at fault than white settlers anywhere else in the Third World, and no less; the Arabs are no more wrong than the Africans who will ultimately rise against those settlers.

Understanding this fact will be of critical importance when the Johnson administration argues the justness of its foreign policy based on its non-intervention in the Mideast. It did not "intervene" because it did not need to, much as it may not need to in South Africa when white settlers use knowledge gained from International Harvester's nuclear plants to annihilate black populations: that is to say it has intervened, and will intervene heavily. We should not allow ourselves to be fooled by the publicity the Government will try to milk out of this issue.

Perhaps most discouraging is the number of American students expressing the desire to fight for Israel. Not only do they fail to understand the nature of the conflict, but they let emotion fog their reason entirely. If present Israeli positions are maintained, she will control the Sinai Peninsula, eliminating her need to import oil, and the Dead Sea, potentially one of the wealthiest mineral-producing areas in Asia. One can also assume that the severity of the current Israeli depression will be greatly reduced. If they are interested in freedom and national sovereignty they might first join the fight against the American government, which stands as the single greatest obstacle to national self-determination and perhaps even the existence of nations in the colonial world, and then turn themselves to winning a historically more appropriate place for the sons of Zion, perhaps in the cities of Stuttgart, Liverpool, and Kiev.

Roy Dahlberg
National Interim Committee
Oakland, California

PHILADELPHIA

TEACHERS ORGANIZE

Ann Fleischaker

At West Philadelphia H.S. this year, three teachers, including myself, began a Controversy Club which was to serve as a discussion place for students, teachers and outside speakers on political problems and issues of the day. During the year we invited speakers on Black Power, why the poor pay more, Vietnam, and local school problems. Most popular were the meeting on Black Power (our school is 98% Negro) and a discussion of the lunchroom boycott which was staged by students for three days in response to poor food and conditions. While these issues were not directly related to the war, they did stimulate discussion of how to implement student ideas and action. As such I believe they were a significant introduction to wider awareness and concern, which necessarily precedes any action on the Vietnamese situation.

In late fall, three carloads of West students attended a city-wide conference on Vietnam which included films, speakers and workshops. We all came away buzzing with new facts and ideas.

The one drawback to such an after-school, yet on-school-grounds club has been that we could not initiate action. This was partially due to a fear by the faculty advisors that the club would not be allowed to continue the following year. As it was, we were constantly visited by conservative faculty and administrators interested in checking us out. But since we were constantly well attended and always carried on spirited discussions we were pretty much left alone except for criticisms that our speakers were one-sided. But the fact remained that as a group, neither students nor faculty became radicalized to the point of going out into the community. About ten faculty members and ten students from West attended the National Spring Mobilization in New York on April 15th, and we plan for our final meeting of the year about how and where to meet over the summer. Hopefully we will join in a local Vietnam Summer project...a storefront where local whites and blacks will set up a draft counseling service, a mimeographed newspaper to present local writing talent and news about the project. We hope high school students can become involved in discussion and action groups stemming from the project.

Out of the 15th of April as well grew an idea that high school teachers interested in peace and freedom should get together. Fifty high school teachers from the Philadelphia area signed a letter supporting the march. By June 1st, some of those fifty had met and planned an end-of-the-year draft convocation for high school students, teachers, guidance counselors etc. There are also tentative plans for leafleting summer schools with anti-draft literature, forming curriculum study groups to plan how to bring issues of war and peace into the classroom on an organized basis, and plugging into local Vietnam summer projects all over the city.

One of the exciting things about high school student and faculty activities has been the willingness of the two to work together on projects...in fact the traditional division between students and teachers in the high school—and at universities, for that matter—has been smudged over. I think this is due partially to each group's need for reliance on the other to accomplish anything significant. With high school organizing to end the war, or end anything else, students and faculty need to group together against the powers that be, because neither group has had many rights in the past. High school student power and teacher power are both recent developments, and very much need each other's support.

new left notes

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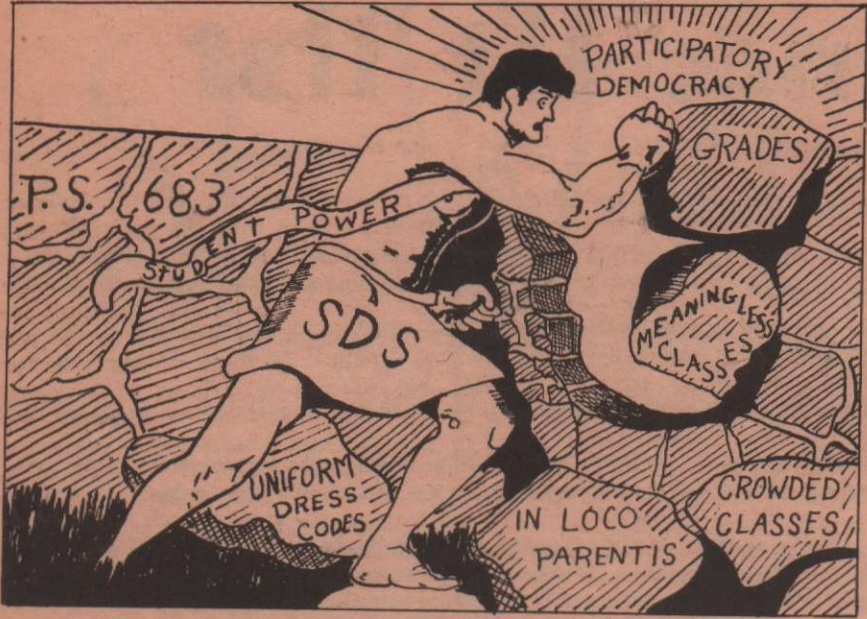
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decide

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columbia univ. struggle



Obstinate Administration? - Call SDS!!

war game

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Watkins in the "loyal" press. He was supposed to have tortured his actors to gain convincing performances from them (denied by every actor consulted, and incidentally, all were amateurs). He was further labeled as "middle-minded, irresponsible, immature", and his film called a failure, and naturally nobody would be permitted to refute any of that by seeing the film for himself. Protests continued, however, and the debate reached the British Parliament itself, where CND sympathizers howled for it to be shown. In typical British fashion free expression was preserved by allowing still another "select" audience, which now included some film critics. Nevertheless, even this screening was under the tightest security arrangements ever seen (for a film, anyway!) with police everywhere checking carefully every pass. From this (Feb. 66) came the first revelations as to the content of "The War Game". The film has since been made available for restricted distribution.

"The War Game" is now available in the U. S. (Contemporary Films). Briefly, it is a newsreel style account of what would happen after a nuclear attack on Britain. The camera moves in and out, up and down in a style Watkins made famous in his earlier films, first opening our eye and then becoming it as we are increasingly involved, first engaged by the dramatic effects of the opening sequence, and then held as we are forced to be witness to the exposure of one horror after another: shock waves, fire storms, radiation sickness, hunger, panic, and rapid human deterioration. These are never conjectured, but based on the actual experiences of Dresden, Hiroshima, etc.



The shots of what would happen to us are sharply, in fact angrily contrasted with idiotic quotes from various sources of authority: Civil Defense, Government officials, the Vatican Council. All of them offering advice and judgments, "practical" and "moral" and all of it insane. I say this because the technique is definitely not calculated to produce some black humor response, such as in "Dr. Strangelove". There is no poking fun, and if one is moved to laugh, one is at the same time conscious that it is only an outlet for the boiling anger that rapidly swells within you as the monstrous nature of this reality begins to take hold. Authority is not treated as absurd, rather it is dangerously insane. The Vatican Council assures us that nuclear weapons are perfectly moral, provided that they are "clean and of a good family". Civil Defense informs us

that everything will be fine, if we will only get a few sand bags. A scene of an execution of looters is accompanied by a priest's recitation of "The Lord's Prayer": "Thy Kingdom come" (guns are cocked), "Give us this day our daily bread" (they tried to steal bread), "Forgive us our trespasses" (guns are aimed), concluded with a "May God have mercy on their souls", which is ambiguous as to whose souls (as the men are shot).

The only relief from mounting anxiety was afforded for me by a scene in which rioting mobs club a policeman (authority) to death in revenge for police brutality. The scene is left cleverly ambiguous in its sympathies, but I am not alone (John Chitlock in "Amateur Cine World" got the same hint) in finding in it the suggestion that the overthrow of authority by inflamed emotionalism may be our only recourse against stone-faced politicians who are coldly indifferent and insensitive to the insanity which they have created and which they dignify as "realism". Intellectual reasoning with such authority is futile.

I have read of Peter Watkins' being described as a man who is "always running, jumping and never standing still". The power of the film he has created could shake the apathy of even the American public. Its effect on those of us who like to think that we are concerned is to make us want to run and jump and never be caught standing still again.

Robert Modler

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DRAFT RESISTANCE

from page 1

calculation we do, plans to continue undergraduate deferments? A way forward is indicated by another product of the April events, the newsletter of the new Draft Resistance Clearing House, 8 Francis Court, Madison, Wisconsin 53703 (255-6575), created by a number of We Won't Go groups at a meeting after the Mobilization on April 16. "At this time," the first newsletter states, "most draft resistance activities are located on the campus. When summer comes and most students leave the campuses, the Movement will be extremely vulnerable and scattered. We feel that it is necessary to relocate draft resistance activities to the urban areas where students will probably be located, and where organizing can really begin."

Here is the beginning of an answer to our dilemma, not only (so it seems to me) for the summer but for next winter as well. If the Administration plans to continue student deferments then students must reach out to the young men who are drafted for this war: ghetto youth. Programs need to be developed to make contact with these young men both before and after induction. Draft information centers should be started in off-campus

(At the end of last week's exciting episode the Administration refused to recognize the overwhelming student/faculty vote to abolish class rankings. The SDS chapter after thoughtful analysis mobilized for a two day class boycott. As we return to our story, the two titons are engaged in struggle.)

At about this time a coalition emerged which was to be the basis of the anti-rank campaign. It was short-lived, perhaps lasting less than a month. But its impact on the Columbia campus was extraordinary. Following the University's deliberate attempt to ignore student-faculty opinion (it was announced while the voting was still in progress that ranking would not be discussed at the next Council meeting) various liberal and moderate sectors of the campus spontaneously resolved to take action. Through mutual personal contacts coordination was arranged with SDS's strike plans. Later a strike coordinating committee (SCC) was set up. It was SDS's hope that the coalition would not bind our hands and yet still give us the opportunity to appeal to whole new constituencies on campus.

Coalition Forms

The SCC was not a coalition of only the radical groups; at Columbia this would have meant SDS joining with an array of miniscule factions with no roots in the community. Rather, the SCC consisted of leaders of the student council, the undergraduate dormitory council, the student union managing board, the Young Democrats, the Citizenship Council, SDS and other political organizations (amounting to about 50 members in all). The decisions of the SCC were not binding, and autonomous strike committees were established in each dormitory. Several organizations, such as SDS, the Student Afro-American Society, and the Citizenship Council, carried out activities in their own names. (The Citizenship Council is a vast, sprawling, slick student-run organization which carries out community projects throughout the city. It is the showcase of Columbia, and it involves more than 1,000 students. The resources and manpower of the Cit. Council were indispensable, and the general coordinator of the SCC was chairman of the Cit. Council.) Nevertheless, because most of the work was done by the SCC and people associated with it, the responsibility for major decisions fell on its shoulders.

The SCC immediately developed a publicity machine and real ties to the campus. The influence of the SCC grew to such proportions that the Administration became alarmed and an emergency meeting of the University Council was called for March 23. As the Council was convening, hundreds of students gathered on the steps of Low Library in a silent vigil. A strike was scheduled for the following week if the Council did not end ranking, and it was estimated that more than half of the College would strike. The fact of concurrent student rebellions at Long Island University and the London School of Economics perhaps weighed on the minds of the Council members. In any case, top-ranking administrators, probably including Dean David Truman, a renowned authority on interest group lobbying, had been lobbying the Council for days in a desperate attempt to avert the strike. A few hours after the vigil it was learned that the Council had voted to end ranking, and the strike was cancelled.

The basis of SDS's work within the coalition was to appeal to the top student leaders to organize their own constituencies using their own lines of communication and manpower resources. (As time went by, everyone had to fend for himself in the battle to get co-workers for projects.) Much general publicity and dormitory work was undertaken by SDS people. Such prominent tasks as writing the Strike News, the SCC newspaper, fund-raising, and reconnaissance and intelligence work within the Administration were handled jointly by the SCC. (The latter were very important, as Administration tactics seemed to change every few days.) Decisions were made in the Citizenship Council offices on campus in a series of meetings of the SCC and anyone else working on the strike. Meetings were convened every night at 11:00 and usually lasted several



hours. Anyone with a new idea or some piece of important intelligence knew where to go to get the attention of the SCC. Someone was in strike headquarters at all times, and letter-boxes were set up for each facet of coalition work. A seven-man executive committee tried to hold the whole thing together.

The division of labor in the coalition gives an idea of the scope of our attempt to mobilize the College. Every dormitory had liaison officers with the SCC who were responsible for organizing their own dorms. The head of the undergraduate dormitory council worked with the SDS person usually responsible for dorm canvassing to coordinate this dormitory work, which was so central to the whole campaign. Two men were in charge of off-campus work, which chiefly involved a series of "callups" of the hundreds of off-campus supporters whenever an important strike activity was coming up. The head of the fraternity council was with us, and he coordinated work on "fraternity row". Faculty liaison was particularly important, and several people worked full-time just trying to stay in touch with, mobilize, and explain point-for-point everything we were doing to the faculty. Several people worked on setting up an alternative school for students to go to on the days of the strike. The strike-school was to have had seminars on Vietnam, Columbia's relation to the warfare state, the nature of the contemporary university, etc., to be led by prominent faculty members. One whole day of the strike was to have been devoted to small groups in which striking students

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Columbia cont.

would discuss the meaning of the event. SDS members would, of course, attempt to get our view across. The former editor of the Barnard Bulletin ran a newspaper which had several issues. The newspaper served both as publicity and as an organ for more theoretical articles. Position papers were published almost daily. In addition, each of the following was important enough to have at least one person for whom it was a full-time responsibility: finances, voluntary manpower and records, distribution and publicity, Strike Dance (fund-raising), and arranging for tables to be manned at various spots on campus for further publicity.

The most critical problem we faced was that of communication. Columbia is a huge school, and thousands of students live in apartments located everywhere in New York. The problem was so severe that a Barnard student is reported to have boycotted her classes for two days oblivious of the Council decision which averted the strike. A variety of techniques were employed to maintain visibility on campus, including leaflets, position papers, constant rallies, etc. One of the most successful was the dormitory floor discussion group. For awhile there were discussions on some floor of each dormitory almost every night. Some nights several discussions were held in each dormitory. The College responded very well to this arrangement. Not only was it the most convenient way to stay informed, but it gave everyone a chance to sound off on the nature of the University and the war. An audience could always be guaranteed by the dormitory organizing committees. In some houses there were strike representatives on practically every floor. Each discussion had a short speech by a faculty member and by a representative of the SCC. SDS members went to all of the discussion groups, and thus had an unprecedented opportunity to reach people and raise broader issues. Discussions were also held in fraternity houses. Often the fraternity would be extremely hostile to SDS speakers at first. However, after the student power movement and the anti-war movement were discussed and parallels were made to the impotence and alienation of the fraternity members vis-a-vis the University and the draft, SDS hardly ever failed to secure an attentive audience. (Note: the continual expansion of the University will certainly mean the demise of "fraternity row". Student power demands were directly relevant to the situation of the fraternity members.) The discussion groups were a high point of the ranking-struggle in general and SDS's radical organizing campaign in particular.

A mention should be made of our liaison work with the faculty. The Columbia faculty is traditionally liberal and a positive political force on campus. In this case, however, we had a difficult time putting our tactic (the strike) over on the faculty. With important exceptions, the faculty generally conceived of political confrontation in terms of symbols and arguments; that is, to much of the faculty the decisive event was the vote against ranking. Considerable coaxing and arguing had to go on before they would see our point that the decisive act was forcing the Administration to be bound by the votings through direct action. Communications with the faculty were extremely difficult. Indeed, the confrontation with the faculty was one of the main forms of

radicalization which occurred to the non-SDS people in the coalition. Some professors took liberal positions toward their extreme formulations and concluded that direct action, particularly student infringement of absolute faculty sovereignty over the classroom, was not justified no matter how momentous the issue. Without getting into a philosophical discussion I will simply comment that to many liberal students in the coalition the tenacity with which some liberal professors held out against the strike appeared as a betrayal.

Lessons of the Fight

The following conclusions seem warranted by the Columbia experience. Whether they will be useful on other campuses can only be known in the future.

1) People will act against the war on a matter of life and death, namely, the draft. The draft issue was the key to reaching the campus, and it made sense out of the months of talk about Vietnam.

2) The strike seems to be a useful tactic for organizing a campus. Sit-ins have almost always failed at Columbia because they have never been mass actions. The strike by definition is a mass tactic, and one that can achieve goals. Indeed, the same Spectator editorial quoted above states: "The recently threatened boycott is an example of the new type of forceful method—and the large number of previously apolitical students willing to lend their names to it testifies to the widespread acceptance of the radical approach." Although this appraisal of the Columbia scene may be a bit simplified, it is true that for once a large number of students felt that the tactic proposed by SDS was neither futile (rallies) nor the unrealistic action of only a dedicated few (sit-ins). Civil disobedience will have a time and a place at Columbia, but hopefully when that time comes the bulk of students will participate. Moreover, by its very nature the strike tactic forced us to appeal to every student. This gave us a brief but exciting apprenticeship in political skills (speaking, publicity, administration, etc.) which will be extremely useful to all of us in the future.

3) The serious weakness of the coalition tactic was that SDS suffered severely internally. Despite the fact that SDS has earned tremendous respect and good will on campus that it can draw upon in the future, the internal organization crumbled during the coalition. It was just impossible, given the time and manpower limitations, and perhaps our own lack of foresight, to keep SDS going as a separate entity while the campaign was in full swing. In future months the chapter will have to experiment very carefully with ways to rebuild the internal organization (perhaps through radical education programs etc.).

4) Nevertheless, I would argue that as an organizing tool for reaching new people, our coalition was successful. There is no doubt that the campaign had a great radicalizing impact on the people who worked for it. We could see this develop almost day-by-day. Moreover, the entire community was our audience for a few weeks for the presentation of a radical critique of the society and the University's place in it. It is our belief that SDS's impact on the community will be enduring and should open the way for radical political organizing in coming months.

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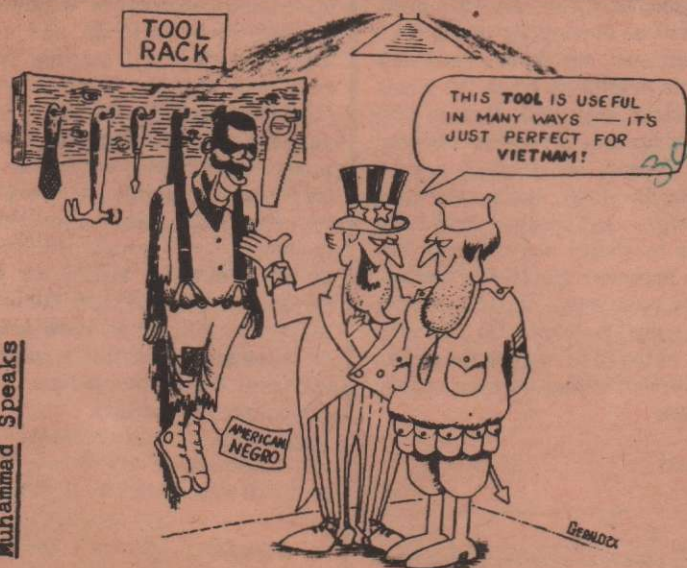
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