

873 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10003

June 14, 1970

To All Organizers, NC Members, and At-Large Members:

Dear Comrades,

The upcoming Cleveland antiwar conference has come under intensified attack from several different tendencies that have been part of the antiwar movement, but which are fundamentally opposed to the line of independent mass antiwar action. These attacks have included red-baiting against the SWP and YSA, phone and letter campaigns slandering the Cleveland conference, an attempted split in the Cleveland Area Peace Action Council, and the calling of a New Mobilization Committee initiated conference in Milwaukee on June 27-28.

As we have observed in 1966 and 1968, the approach of the fall elections has intensified the clash over political perspective between the three main approaches toward the antiwar movement: 1) our line of independent mass action; 2) the class collaborationist line of drawing the antiwar movement into support of capitalist political candidates; 3) the pacifist and confrontationist line which substitutes the isolated acts of a handful for the masses. These are the basic lines of division that lie at the heart of the present attacks on the Cleveland mass action antiwar conference.

Ever since the December, 1969, steering committee meeting of the New Mobilization Committee, which voted against mass action and against calling an antiwar conference, the leadership of the New Mobe has been in the hands of a conglomeration of pacifists, confrontationists, liberals, reformists, and Stalinists united around opposition to our mass action line. This is reflected in the present position of the NMC, which favors a combination of civil disobedience tactics with a reformist multi-issue line, adding a sprinkling of ultraleft rhetoric.

Because of this evolution of the NMC, it was necessary for those groups and individuals favoring mass independent antiwar action to call together the Cleveland conference.

In response, the NMC has initiated a conference scheduled to take place in Milwaukee, June 27-28. This conference has a broad list of prominent sponsors. A copy of the call is enclosed. It is not called as an antiwar conference; it is not presently being built as a large conference; and it is not planned as a major decision-making conference. The original intention of the NMC in calling this conference was to present an alternative to the Cleveland conference and attack it as divisive, as they are presently trying to do. The proponents of civil disobedience had planned to have the Milwaukee conference endorse their tactics, but many of the sponsors do not favor civil disobedience. Thus it is quite likely that the Milwaukee conference will be quite heterogeneous in composition and inconclusive in the decisions it adopts.

In any case, it is clear that the two conferences are not two competing antiwar conferences: The Cleveland conference is an antiwar conference. The Milwaukee conference is not. The Cleveland conference will plan for mass antiwar action. The Milwaukee conference will not.

The fact that certain sectors of the antiwar movement are now in retreat from mass antiwar action, combined with attacks from these sources on the Cleveland conference and the confusion that will exist due to the existence of two conferences, will probably mean that the Cleveland conference will not be as large or broadly inclusive as it could have been. Nevertheless its purpose remains as centrally important as ever. It will represent those forces who are presently interested in maintaining the perspective of mass antiwar action; it will serve an educational role in this regard; and it will lay the basis for continued antiwar action in the fall.

Despite the defection of sectors of the old antiwar coalition, new and powerful mass forces in addition to the students are much more amenable to antiwar action than before, especially labor, and Third World student and community groups. The aftermath of the Cambodia escalation and student upsurge in May has made this very clear. The possibility for antiwar action in the fall is likely to be much greater than in the comparable pre-election periods in 1966 and 1968. This is the context in which the Cleveland antiwar conference takes place.

The organizers of the Cleveland antiwar conference have put out a number of materials from Jerry Gordon which explain some of the details and answer the attacks being made on the Cleveland conference. This material has been sent out to a large national antiwar mailing list. At least one comrade in each local should have received that mailing. We are also enclosing one copy of this material for each organizer, but do not have enough for all the NCers. Please be sure that this material is passed around and all comrades engaged in antiwar work are familiar with it.

An additional feature of the Cleveland antiwar conference is likely to be a fairly large intervention by PL and SDS. This is in line with PL's stepped-up campaign of intervening in the antiwar movement. It offers us an opportunity to take them on politically on a national scale. Comrades coming to the conference should be familiar with the main thrust of PL's sectarian line.

PL has never supported the united-front character of the antiwar movement and will most likely call for the exclusion of "liberals." They also reject the concept of the "antiwar university" and attempt to counterpose the fight against university complicity and ROTC to our concept of the antiwar university which not only fights against university complicity but also serves as a base for reaching out to the working class, GIs and oppressed Third World communities to involve them in independent mass action against the war.

Comradely,

Gus Horowitz

Gus Horowitz
SWP National Office

Carl Frank

Carl Frank
YSA National Office