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To All Organizers and NCers

Dear Comrades,

The attached material was taken from Vol. 1, no. 2 of Party Affairs, "A Publication of the Communist Party, USA." It is a publicly sold, printed 24-page bulletin that aims at reflecting "the actual experiences and ideas of people (CPers) engaged in active work," and providing educational information for the CP "clubs."

The major portion of the current issue is devoted to a report on the CP National Executive Board Meeting, held in March. It includes major excerpts from the discussion that took place on the youth report by Mike Zagarell.

We are reprinting the discussion for the information of comrades.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters
Mary-Alice Waters
National Secretary

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Excerpts from Party Affairs, a publication of the CPUSA

...Mike Zagarell's report dealt with the relationship between mass movements and organizations among the youth and socialist currents and organizations, examining the attitude and work of the Communist Party with respect to each. It argued the mutually complementary and equally indispensable roles of both the democratic and socialist sectors of the youth movement. Comrade Zagarell affirmed the view, supported both by theory and practice, that an independent organization of socialist youth with a working-class outlook, in which Marxism is the leading current, is needed at all times, regardless of the specific level of the mass movement. The conditions of development of the young generation and the level of the mass movement determine the form and many secondary features of such an organization, but not whether it must exist.

A critical review was given of recent experience of Communist and non-Communist youth in the building of such organizational expressions of a movement of this type as the DuBois Clubs of America. A number of directions were indicated for greater contributions by Communists in strengthening the movements for peace, Negro rights, academic freedom and jobs among youth, as well as the independent organizational expression of socialist youth and the initiative of the Communist Party among the youth.

It was decided that the experiences and conclusions from work in communities and elsewhere among young working people should be drawn upon even more fully in conferences, workshops and educational forms that are being planned. The National Executive Board is recommending that the policies outlined in the Zagarell report be confirmed by the National Committee at its next meeting with the organization continuing to implement them in the meantime.

If the Communist Party is to be a much more vital factor in the struggle for a major turn in national policy in the 1968 elections, the all-sided building of the Party at a vastly faster pace is required, reported Daniel Rubin. He noted that the recent McCarran Act decision aids greatly in making such a turn possible.

The report argued that experiences in shop and industrial clubs and elsewhere indicate the Communist Party can and should undertake serious recruiting efforts, everywhere, but especially among industrial workers, Negro and white, as well as among the Negro people, the Mexican-Americans, the Puerto Ricans and other oppressed minorities. Recent substantial growth among student youth can now be added to in these other areas.

Development of firm grass-roots ties by every Party organization through identification of the Communist Party in the

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public eye as a militant fighter for peace, democracy and economic advance was indicated as decisive for Party building. The need to deepen the understanding of Communists about their specific relevancy to every situation and to their historic role was discussed as necessary if a Party-building consciousness is to be created throughout the membership.

Considerable attention was given to the problem of how to further industrial concentration as a direction and approach relevant to every Party club. The Party's policy of emphasizing the building of shop and industrial clubs was discussed in relation to recent experiences. The entire Party was called upon to become expert on the big labor struggles, especially the UAW contract negotiations, and to find ways of lending support to the UAW in the battle with the giant auto corporations and anti-labor figures in government.

The Year of the Press campaign, especially the task of building press circulation, was discussed. Emphasis was given to its importance, to experiences in its use as the chief Party building instrument, and to the need for a greater role of the leadership in bringing the campaign into every club.

Improving the quality of leadership and the closeness of ties between membership and leadership was discussed in detail, and a number of proposals for improvements were enumerated. It was pointed out that success in mass political activities and Party building depends on strengthening the ties between bodies and the clubs, between leaders and members, and on overcoming bureaucratic hangovers from past conditions. Proposals adopted on recruiting and the Year of the Press appear in boxes below.

Selections from several of the contributions to the discussion on these reports are also printed below.

(Excerpts from remarks during the discussion on the youth report)

Gus Hall

I do not accept the idea that there has been no Party policy on the question of youth work. I think there has been and that the leadership of the Party has fought for it. It does not mean, however, that we have been successful in convincing all of the leading comrades on this policy.

Further, we are not dealing with just the problem of youth work. It happens that in the context of youth work--and it is understandable why--some very fundamental questions come to the surface. It's not the first time this has happened, and I think Winnie's remark about why the YCL was liquidated bears on this fact. Yes, it was revisionism. It was a revisionist mistake. And the present discussion is not unrelated to fundamental weaknesses in our Party on some theoretical questions today, and once again in the youth movement they emerge a little more sharply.

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These problems are not unrelated to the causes of the troubles in China. They have the same roots. They have developed in extreme form there but the same theoretical roots are present here, though in a much different way.

I think it would be very important to have a survey not so much of what has happened but of what the Party leadership has done in trying to help to build a Marxist-oriented youth organization. I think that survey is necessary because the very comrades that have given the least effort, that have been neutral and sat on the sidelines, are the ones that now say: "You can't do it. You can't build this kind of Marxist-oriented youth organization." That's a wrong basis on which to make an estimate. A political estimate must be on the basis of effort. Then we can say whether we can or we can't do it and not indulge in abstractions that it can't be done when we haven't tried.

The recent Washington conference is a very important one, and it's related to the question that we are discussing. Its importance lies in the fact that the very same youth who a year or two ago rejected the whole concept of the role of classes, of the working class, of trade unions, now placed in the very center of their considerations that they cannot make headway on anything in the South without understanding the role of the working class, of the trade unions, and of unity of Negro and white in the South. And it was not an abstract discussion. The most important thing about that conference were the experiences. There were the 500 students from the University of North Carolina who went in a body to the textile strike picket line. It was a very dramatic thing. They saved that organizing drive. They saved that strike. There were a number of these instances of tactics, of experience.

But why the change? How was it possible that from one year to the next there was such a change in outlook? There are two reasons for this: One is experience. The other is our influence and the influence of the DuBois Clubs. Yes. It happened at this conference. It has happened in a wide section of the youth movement.

It took ideological work. Without our influence, experience alone would not have done it. Nothing happens spontaneously in the struggle of the people. The organization of the DuBois Clubs was an historic, important happening in this country--that is the estimate that I would like to give. It has made an important contribution to the struggles in this country, to the class struggle, to the peace struggle, to the civil rights struggle--a very important contribution.

It is not enough to say that it is because of objective conditions that there is an age gap in our Party. The reason that there is an age gap is that we liquidated the Marxist youth organizations. In spite of all the difficulties and problems in the over-all movement, we wouldn't have that age gap in our

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Party if we had not liquidated them--LYL, YCL, I think all the way through.

There is an ideological sickness in our Party and the more I think about it, the more I think it's one of our major weaknesses historically. We come up against difficulties. How do we solve them? Liquidate. It's no problem after it's liquidated! This is a weakness against which we have got to stiffen up. We are not going to give up positions until we've given the maximum effort in testing them out, and we cannot in all honesty say that about building a Marxist-oriented youth organization these last two or three years.

I don't put the blame on our young comrades on this question. They have weaknesses and they should be critical of them. But there is a more fundamental weakness on the whole question of the role of a youth organization.

Let me say further in estimating the DuBois Club organization that this has been what it set out to be. It has been a healthy platform on which our young people have been able to ponder the questions of Marxism and capitalism. Some have come into the Party. Some have not. But it has been a healthy platform and that is one of the big arguments for it.

Now the question: When is a Marxist-oriented youth organization necessary? At all times. That's what we must understand. When it didn't exist, it was a mistake. It was not a decision that reflected some special conditions or special objective realities in the past, and because of which it was correct that it didn't exist. It was part of Browderism that it didn't exist.

The need for a Marxist-oriented youth organization arises from the class-nature of society. It is that fundamental. It is an instrument in the class struggle and if we feel that youth need a special organization, then in the area of class struggle there is the need for a special instrument of that struggle amongst the youth. The real question is not how we designate it. The decisive question is: do we need one, is there a need for it, is there a need to struggle for it? I think it is needed at all times. Therefore, we are not out to determine whether it's needed right now.

As for the level of political and ideological development, what does that determine? It is very important. It determines such things as the program of the organization, its tactics, its structure, its relationships. All this is determined by the level of struggle at that particular moment. This is a legitimate area of discussion at all times. What are the weaknesses of an organization in reflecting the present level of development? What are its strong points? What should be changed? Should it be a council form or organization? How much effort should it devote to educational work? Should it have a student

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division? These are important questions. But not the question of whether there is a need for a Marxist-oriented organization.

There are some special problems in building a Marxist-oriented youth organization. And we should not avoid them. Why is there a certain special difficulty? It lies in the fact that such an organization is at all times planning new ideological approaches. It is constantly trying new ideological forms with youth who have not yet had the experience in life to give them an inkling or a sense of class and the role of the working class. There is still the question of class consciousness, and class consciousness and theoretical understanding develop simultaneously. These are very special problems. You do not find them among the workers. Why? Because the workers, even when they do not have a knowledge of Marxism, have the experience of the class struggle. Therefore you are not ploughing completely new soil when you move among workers as you do when you move among young people. And therefore there is a special difficulty, hence the special emphasis on education, on ideological work, is very correct in this respect.

I know there is often confusion about what this class consciousness is. And I would like to place it in just a few words. Radicalness, rebelliousness, militancy, alienation from society are not enough. This is not yet class consciousness. A Marxist-oriented youth organization therefore has to plough new soil that goes beyond those concepts and those levels of action. Among youth we certainly have radicalness and rebelliousness and militancy and alienation. These have become mass phenomena in America in the last few years. But that isn't enough. Therefore a Marxist-oriented youth organization has to carry it further and that is its special responsibility. The SDS cannot do that.

Organizing youth in the community--Jay Thomas (Philadelphia)

I'd like to talk about the trouble with community organizing. First of all, I think we've had some substantial successes in community organizing. But I don't get that feeling here and I think that's wrong because if we don't see that, then we are really making some serious errors. I think we've made some major breakthroughs in a number of areas. We are beginning to build in the white working class community. We have made substantial contacts in the black community--in Chicago, to some extent in Pittsburgh, in Philadelphia, and there were some breakthroughs in New York of which I don't know the particulars. The national action in Washington included 50% Negro and Puerto Rican youth. That's a phenomenal development for a Left youth organization. And I think we are only scratching the surface of what we can do.

There were a lot of weaknesses and problems with last summer. People for one thing didn't have a clear outlook as to what they were going to do. In many respects, just plain exper-

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ience in community organizing wasn't there, and that contributed to a lot of the chaos and the lack of effectiveness. Also, people had wild ideas of what we were going to accomplish. They thought they were really going to turn this country inside out in one summer. Of course, that wasn't so. Then there was subjectivity arising from not accomplishing these desires, which resulted in a lot of pessimistic analysis of what we did accomplish. I don't think the accomplishments were great, but for that time it was probably the best we could have done under the circumstances. But people just didn't see it.

One of the big problems was that people left the areas. They went back to work or to school and that left a vacuum. The fact is that most of our clubs are not in existence any more, particularly community clubs. That's because you can't go into a community for just one summer and talk about building a base. You can't do it with one or two people that are going to work for only a summer and then leave. You've got to have some follow-through. It's got to be consistent. People in the community don't understand an organization that works for three months, and when you leave they say, "What happened to them? I thought they were interested and were going to do something?" It's very difficult to face people once you've done that.

In Philadelphia, the people aren't completely turned off. But the fact is that really getting them committed to the organization in terms of taking leadership doesn't happen unless you have a long-going kind of thing which is what we are projecting for next summer. I think it's an excellent idea and I think it's going to mean a significant change on the whole, particularly in Chicago. Chicago, the Midwest, industrial concentration and all that--this will really have a great potential for us.

The Youth Commission has been discussing the idea that prior to the summer there ought to be classes. I think that's an excellent idea because people ought to have a vision as to where they're going, some true estimates as to what reality is, because otherwise they won't accomplish much.

Youth experiences on the campus--Bob Heisler (New York)

The DuBois Clubs were most successful in about three colleges in New York and this is because in those areas they projected a policy directed at the whole campus and did in fact open up the democratic and mass movements on those particular campuses. For instance, in Brooklyn College the DuBois Club was the first Left organization on the campus. It broke it wide open. It was a nut that nobody thought you could crack, but the DuBois Club got in there, conducted a struggle for a charter which was a big free speech struggle and opened up the whole campus on the free speech movement. It continued to grow beyond it, and continues to lead the movement there. It grew with the movement. Its activities built Vietnam committees.

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Its activities created the base and fertile soil for all kinds of other democratic developments. The important fact is that it was there hitting and pushing things forward.

I should also say that the style and atmosphere in the DuBois Club were particularly conducive to these developments. Even at a non-activist campus, they threw dances and organized other activities. The kids who came into the DuBois Club were just liberals originally, who had moved a little further. I don't know exactly what first attracted them to the Club, but they got into it and built it in their style, and the way they related to questions attracted other people of that kind. The organization continued to grow. It had a style of activity that was broad in its relationships. It was able to break through in a non-activist college.

At City College, the DuBois Club opened up things also. It was the organization that called the teach-in there when the teach-in movement first broke out a year and a half ago, and got an attendance of a thousand people. That same year, on the SDS-initiated march to Washington, eight bus-loads were organized under DuBois sponsorship. As a result of DuBois initiative, a 200-member Vietnam Committee was formed soon afterward. It ploughed the soil for the development of democratic pro-peace organizations. They realized that not all those who went to Washington necessarily wanted to be in DuBois. There was more of a feeling for a Vietnam Committee growing out of the march. So it helped to build that. There were problems, as a result, for the DuBois Club, problems of where did it go from there. But it righted itself after a while and continues to grow. This indicates that you can't make a dichotomy between the work of a socialist youth organization and the mass democratic movement.

There is ample experience to show that proper work of a socialist organization can plough the field and help to produce democratic, pro-peace developments and produce them far more effectively than could a lone Communist put into a situation where nothing is happening in the hope that he will organize a movement on his own.

For a balanced approach to youth work--Jim (Southern California)

We begin with the assumption, which has been stated clearly, that there is a need for an organization like the DuBois Clubs no matter what the level of struggle is. I'm not too much concerned at this moment with whether or not that's true as a fundamental theoretical proposition. What I am concerned about is the way it has been projected. I think it's been projected in a very rigid way in most districts; that is, where there has been a DuBois Club, it has been seen as the central focus of all work, almost independent of the circumstances. Of course, the circumstances influenced whether it worked or not, but you try damn hard no matter what the circumstances are or what your evaluation is of

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the needs in a given local area. I think this is a problem because whereas we may seek the building of a strong socialist youth trend organizationally expressed in some fashion, this would not necessarily mean that the first and last point of your policy here, there and everywhere is concentration in the DuBois Clubs. And I think this has been the major distortion of our policy.

The attitude toward the youth clubs has got to be one of seeing them within their particular historical context which they are in, not in terms of some abstract situation in which a strong party exists, including people of all ages and working in all areas of struggle, with the youth sector as a part of that. Actually it is a party with a very large number of older people, a tremendous age gap and then a relatively weak but growing youth sector. Hence the necessity to build very quickly among the youth and to acquire the kind of ability and experience which within a decade will give them the ability to lead the Party. This is a very important demand on the youth and to me this militates against the idea of concentration in Left youth work, because to be able to develop leadership for our Party means that we have to be in a wide variety of movements. We have to be more involved in trade union movements where socialist orientation can be a limiting factor, and sometimes we have to be involved in political work, in electoral policies. We have to be involved in broad mass struggles in the community, the black community, the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican communities. We have to gain this kind of experience.

There are three levels of activity in the youth field. First, there is the Left, the Marxist Left, the Party, the DuBois Clubs and other elements around them. Second, there is the "movement," which I would define as SDS, community organizing projects, voters rights organizations, peace organizations, Young Democrats. And then there's a third area which I would call "non-movement" organizations: dormitory councils, students governments, sororities, fraternities, YMCAs, religious groupings, etc. I think we have to have an approach to all three of these areas and an approach which is balanced.

In the student community one of the reasons the DuBois Clubs have had a difficult time is that the ideological demands of the movement have been very high and that the level of the DuBois Clubs has been too low to compete. Actually only the Party has been able to compete because the Party has a developed ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

In the communities a very real problem is the fact that the socialist orientation is a narrowing one and I think it's ridiculous to say that it's not.

There are many people who, believe it or not, will not participate with socialists when you come into a community originally. Therefore the Party has to have an approach to building community organizations which sees the development of the Left

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within it as rapidly as possible, and perhaps the development of that Left movement into a DuBois form, but which sees the community approach as fundamentally an approach on the community problems.

I think that the problem has been not so much that we haven't been doing mass work, because I feel that our comrades on a local level do respond to the needs in many areas and have been doing that work. The problem has been rather that the documents from the national office, the concentrations in district leadership, and the general discussion which has gone on among youth, have been concentrated on going over and over again the problems of socialist youth organizations, and that the focus, guidance and education necessary to develop good mass workers and the concept of mass work have not been carried out very well.

The DuBois Clubs and the Left cannot exist in a healthy fashion unless there exists a broad democratic movement which we have the responsibility to build and to help.

The following item is for entertainment as well as elucidation.

Increasing the membership and strengthening the clubs--Jack Kling

... I think the central question in this is the question of the club system of organization, of our Party clubs. Quite a number of clubs meet twice a month. Quite a number meet once a month. There are some clubs that don't meet but have members-at-large. Many of the clubs that do meet have no strategic goals. They have no direction.

Clubs have educationals. Sometimes they get very little from the political life of the district, so they do the best thing they can. They pick up the Worker and read from it, and some clubs even pick up the Guardian and use it for educational discussion within the Party.

That is one set of problems.

Then there are situations where a large number of comrades are extremely active--in the peace movement, in various mass organizations. Do they feel that the club is the channel that gives them leadership in these movements? They do not. And in some cases the club can't help them, since they cannot be familiar with the inner workings of mass organizations. So they feel, "Why should I come to the club meeting? What's the purpose?" As a matter of duty they go to a club meeting and they don't go too often. What happens then? Faced with this type of situation, sometimes we have to get things moving. So we bypass clubs, we begin meeting with certain political leaders individually and the concept develops that the Party organization consists of those people who meet with them. Sometimes it's easier for someone who works for the Party full time to visit a person. So we do it that way. He feels the Communist leader he sees is the Party, while the club chairman feels, "Well, I can't do anything about it...A situation is created where we bypass the club and unwittingly develop an atmosphere of bureaucratic tendencies, where the club doesn't understand its role, etc...."