

STUDENT MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT, May 22, 1968

HARRY: I want to discuss the present fight in the Student Mobilization Committee in the context of our more general approach to the antiwar movement, especially since many YSA members have joined since the last factional dispute in the antiwar movement.

We have been intervening in the antiwar movement on the basis of certain clearly delineated political concepts. First, that to be effective the antiwar movement has to be basically a single-issue movement -- its main focus has to be on the Vietnam war. Second, that it should be non-exclusionary -- any who want to end the war may participate with full rights. Third, that it should not be a movement for "peace," but a movement against the Vietnam war manifested in anti-imperialist street actions and concretized around the slogan of immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

At the beginning we had to fight for these principles against such forces as the SANE leadership and the Student Peace Union. Their exclusionary policies and refusal to include Vietnam in their "peace" aims prevented any massive, militant protest against the war in progress in Vietnam.

The big breakthrough came with the SDS march on Washington in 1965, which was based on the concept of a broad, non-exclusive movement focused on the single issue of the Vietnam war. We, of course, vigorously supported that action and made a major contribution toward its success. In the course of building that march there developed the non-exclusive, broad based campus committees to end the war in Vietnam (the CEWVs), which we also played a big role in helping to build.

The outgrowth of that was the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam and its conference, out of which we hoped a meaningful national coalition of groups opposed to the war would develop. However, as you know, either from direct experience or from hear-say, that conference was packed by the Communist Party. The pacifists, led by Dave Dellinger, decided to make a block with the CP, as they thought, "to prevent us from taking it over." It wound up with the NCC a front-type organization which the CP attempted to use to peddle their particular political line, rather than to build a genuine coalition of all antiwar forces on a united-front type basis. This was an attempt on the CP's part to impose their political line on the entire movement.

The YSA and SWP led a vigorous fight at that conference, but because it was packed, we lost at the conference in the sense that the CP emerged in control of the apparatus. But the fight laid the basis for future progress. Because we knew the war and its effects were the central radicalizing factor in American politics, we knew that our line of harnessing that radicalization into periodic mass actions would ultimately triumph. After the NCC we therefore proceeded to continue activity on that basis.

We did so with the Bring the Troops Home Now Newsletter which began as a caucus within the NCC and which advocated our viewpoint on single-issue, on withdrawal, mass action, and non-exclusion. We also did it through practical organizing on our own and by stimulating what other practical organizing took place. As a result of this you saw the development of the New York Parade Committee coalition on the basis of the conception that we support. We saw the two fall, 1966 conferences that were held in Cleveland which led to the big April 15, 1967 demonstrations in New York and San Francisco, and the conference in Washington in May, 1967 which led to the big Pentagon confrontation.

This was possible not only on the basis of our activity, but on the basis of the experience of persuading some of the more serious people in the movement, principally A.J. Muste and a few others, that it was impossible to build an effective antiwar movement on the basis of the CP class-collaborationist line.

Thus, we saw Muste taking a position at the Cleveland conference for a non-exclusionary coalition that was devoted to massive national demonstrations. Following this we saw the development of the Student Mobilization Committee. There again, not having learned their lesson, the CP, this time through the DuBois Clubs, was again trying to grab control of the student antiwar movement to exploit it for their own sectarian purposes. They called a conference for a "student strike" and tried to come out of that with an organization which they would control and through which they would carry out their particular program, with some pacifists and some independents for cover.

We intervened at the founding convention and forced them to turn it into a genuine coalition movement, focused around mass actions, that the Student Mobilization Committee turned into.

Since its formation SMC has been under the most intense political pressure. It has been a coalition essentially between us, the CP, and the pacifists, along with a growing number of independents. These three groupings formed the keystone, with both the pacifists and the CPers reluctant participants in such a coalition. Because of their political approaches they, particularly the CP, periodically tried to change it into another type of organization not centered on the war. But the pressure of the independents and us was sufficient that the organization held together.

Now, however, both the CP and "the Dellinger pacifists" are under particularly heavy pressure. The McCarthy campaign and the Paris talks are important parts of this pressure, particularly in regard to the CP. The very success of the Student Mobilization in the strike put additional pressure on them to try to destroy this coalition because it further strengthened our political position and our status within the student movement and the antiwar movement.

The CP has the further pressure on them of the elections and their desire to get the students off the streets and into class-collaborationist politics. Moscow also has its troubles, as we have seen, in Eastern Europe and now in Western Europe. The fact that the Student Mobilization was able for the first time to organize a genuine international student strike, and that our people in other countries were able to use the strike call against the policies of the Communist Party and succeeded in organizing significant student action, was a further embarrassment to Moscow and, I am certain, added to the desperation of the CP here to do something about the SMC.

Their intensified need to bust up the coalition coincided with the increasing difficulties of the so-called "radical pacifists." The pacifists have for some time been in an ideological crisis. The philosophy of non-violence has not exactly been gaining ground in this country, and the pacifists are quite aware of it. At a negotiating meeting we had with Dellinger, Linda Morse, and the others, Dellinger jokingly said to Linda, "I guess people are catching on to the fact that we really don't represent very much." And later on she bemoaned the fact that there aren't really very many radical pacifists on campus.

That is the simple fact, and it's not just an organizational problem -- it is a political crisis. If they really stick to their non-violence and their pacifism it isolates them from every movement that they are trying to influence. They saw their big opening in the black movement when Martin Luther King was leading it on the basis of "Love Your White Brother." But with the development of black power and SNCC and all of the other movements they either had to condemn these movements for their rejection of non-violence or to try to find some way to tag along with them. This general situation has provoked an ideological crisis for them which led to the dissolution of the Committee for Non-Violent Action.

Now, in addition, they are troubled ideologically by what they've found themselves in. A.J. Muste was a pacifist who had no fear of mass action, which distinguished him from the other pacifists. Individuals like Dellinger go along with it, but it troubles them because they are more inclined toward acts of individual "resistance" or individual witness. And they hoped that they would be able to work more of their individual resistance into the mass action. For example, they tried to make a deal behind the back of the Spring Mobilization Committee April 15 to get draft card burners on the platform during that action.

In addition to this ideological crisis there have been signs, still not definitive, but not insignificant, of a move to the right on the part of Dellinger and the people around him. We saw some things in the adult peace movement. There was the desperate move by Dellinger to get Fred Halstead off the platform after both McCarthy and Kennedy declined.

Then the whole business about Lindsay, where Dellinger deliberately failed to carry out a Parade Committee mandate to introduce a resolution at the April 27 New York rally blasting Lindsay's anti-ghetto "emergency power" law. Dellinger waited until the rally was in effect over before introducing the resolution.

We saw a little side indication of it in a Parade Committee meeting last week, where someone got up from some peace group with a proposal that we all go picket McCarthy headquarters demanding that he call for a cease-fire in Vietnam -- a cease-fire by both the U.S. and the Vietnamese. We explained that we couldn't go for that, that if he wanted to tell the U.S. to stop shooting, we were for that, but we weren't about to go telling the Vietnamese to stop firing. Eric Weinberger, the pacifist, took the floor to say, "Well, how do you know? Maybe the Vietnamese would want that." A rather crude expression of a right-wing position that he had not previously held.

This is the general background for what the CP and the pacifists conceived of as a quiet office coup. They apparently felt that they could shove us out of the office and that we were so deeply committed to the maintenance of the Student Mobilization Committee that we would protest, but we wouldn't make a big public issue out of it.

That, of course, was not our reaction. We got up the next night -- in the Parade Committee -- and explained what had happened and declared that we intended to wage an implacable public fight on the question.

It was immediately after that that Dave Dellinger invited us to have a meeting to try to mediate the issue. We have been active in this coalition for several years now. We've been working with the radical pacifists, with the CPers, with SANE, with Women Strike, and we've been extremely flexible in our approach. Our flexibility has revolved around a willingness to make compromises on organization and personnel in order to maintain -- within the framework of our principles -- the united front type coalition. But, when it comes to what they are trying to do now, there is no room for compromises.

We take this position, and we will not give an inch on this question. This is not simply because we are concerned with our rights as an organization, which we are, but also because we are convinced politically that without our line, and equally important, without us, the antiwar movement cannot survive as a meaningful organized force in this country. I say without us, because the fact is that while that line politically represents the majority of the antiwar activists, as demonstrated by their huge turnouts at every single mass demonstration, we happen to be the only organized tendency that stands on such a program. Once the one organized tendency that does stand on such a program is excluded

from the movement, the will of the majority is completely flaunted and it is impossible to carry out that program. Neither the CP nor the pacifists are going to carry out such a program, no matter how much the majority of the antiwar activists want it.

They understand that as well as we do. That's why they took this desperate measure of trying to get us out of the office where the practical work is carried out. We're going to fight it all the way through without quarter. There's no room for compromise on our part. If there are any agreements arrived at, it will be on the basis of their yielding, not on the basis of our doing so, not on this question. We're organizing for the fight. Two mailings from Kipp and Syd have been sent. We're now preparing a series of articles for the Militant which very plainly and bluntly describes what happened and what it means.

We propose now to build a caucus within the Student Mobilization Committee to reverse the bureaucratic and reactionary actions. We propose to build such a caucus on the basis of two points. One, that instead of the Continuations Committee meeting which they have called for June 29 for New York, a full national conference of the Student Mobilization be called and be held somewhere in the Midwest, centrally located. This is in keeping with a decision unanimously agreed to at the last national conference of the SMC in Chicago in January, that a full conference open to all antiwar activists be held within six months to set policy, plan future activity, and elect officers, and that this meeting be held in a central place. We are opposed to the call for a fake Continuations Committee in New York a week before the CP convention, where they will make an attempt to bring in every phony from every kind of non-existent or paper organization in the country.

Secondly, we are calling on all activists to demand the re-establishment of non-exclusion by the reinstatement of Kipp and Syd.

These two points are now being written into a petition for national circulation. Student Mobilization chapters, individual activists, prominent people, and so on can endorse and support this and use it to build around. In addition Syd and Kipp will prepare a position paper, one of a number that will be sent out, putting forward our estimate of the nature, the function, and the perspective of the activities of the SMC. We will attempt to win political support on the basis of that political position paper as well.

Where will the fight lead? Before the Continuations Committee meeting is held, we will try to force them to reverse themselves, to call a genuine conference and to rescind the motion firing Kipp and Syd. If they are able to actually go ahead with the Continuations Committee meeting, we will go

into that meeting and we will fight them there on the basis that I have indicated.

If we are victorious there, of course, then the organization will be re-established on the proper basis. If we do not succeed at that conference, we will continue the struggle. In doing so, we can only be certain of one thing: that our program corresponds to the needs of the situation and to the will of the great majority of the antiwar activists as demonstrated by their support for the kinds of actions that we have proposed and organized in the past. And we know that in one form or another we will win. Either we will win before the Continuations Committee, at the Continuations Committee, at a conference after the Continuations Committee, or, if need be, through some other form.

When we began the fight in the NCC, we had no concrete conception then of where it would wind up. We simply knew that we had a program that corresponded to the needs of the situation and that we would fight for that. We wound up with the National Mobilization Committee and the Student Mobilization Committee as the result of that struggle. What organizational form will come out of the present struggle nobody knows. But we can be certain that if we wage this fight with vigor, with militancy, and with the strength of organization, that we will wind up on top because the massive antiwar movement is necessary to stop the war.

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JACK: I think we are going into what may be the most important fight we have been in in the history of our participation in the fight against the war in Vietnam. The stakes are bigger now than in any of the other ones.

I'd like to place our discussion in a little broader framework. All the comrades -- at every major turn in the antiwar movement -- have to step back for a moment, and look at it politically in terms of what we've accomplished, what we've been trying to accomplish, and where we're going.

There's one basic assumption underlying all this: that the war negotiations will drag on and the war in Vietnam will continue. That's a fact that cuts across the American elections, cuts across the problems in the Student Mobilization Committee, cuts across the viewing of this in isolation as an American problem. If the war in Vietnam continues, new layers of people will continue to be radicalized and mass protests against the war on an international scale will continue.

It is important for us to remember that while we in the United States are in the midst of the pressures generated because of the elections, the rest of the world is not voting in the

American presidential elections. In fact the workers in the rest of the world don't really give much of a damn between Kennedy, Humphrey, McCarthy, Rockefeller or Nixon. This is especially true of the Vietnamese. By their own statements, they want the American troops out and meanwhile they fight.

So the tremendous political impact of the war internationally will continue.

Secondly, even though the issues in the antiwar struggle and movement are going to be fogged up by the elections, like they were on a lesser scale in '66, there's no question but that the war will continue to radicalize people in this country. If the war is not ended, if the domestic crisis caused or exacerbated by the war are not resolved, if Americans continue to die in Vietnam in an ever-increasing rate, and the draft calls continue, we can assume that what's been happening in the last two and a half years will continue. New layers of the population will become opposed to the war.

It is with that perspective in mind that we should look at this Student Mobilization fight -- look not only to the elections but through and beyond the elections. It's very likely that we're not going to get any nationally coordinated adult coalition mass demonstrations between now and November because of the pressures we all know about. We can expect to come out of the elections with greatly increased forces in our own movement and with significantly larger numbers of people who agree with us on the fight against the war, who have been involved in actions with us, and who are ready to take the next steps forward.

There is no reason not to believe that after the elections in November, whoever is elected is going to continue to provoke domestic opposition, and that the disillusionment will be much greater than after the 1964 elections. We should take one big lesson from the French events. That is, we should never get the idea that April 15 was the biggest mass demonstration ever, or that this last student strike was the biggest ever. If this war continues, that would be the most foolish thing we could possibly do. We haven't yet seen the "biggest ever" of anything.

Thus what is happening, it seems to me, is something parallel with what happened in the NCC fight, only on a totally different plane. Then we saw the same things we are seeing today. Only then it was a question of keeping the faith, maintaining the program of mass united front demonstrations and of a student organization for withdrawal, of umbrella organizations like the Parade Committee, and a national student mobilization-type formation. Our basic activity was putting out the Newsletter. We had to go through the whole long process of the degeneration of the NCC, a national action, then moving in on a CP-called "student strike conference" in Chicago, to get the Student Mobilization Committee going.

What we have now is something totally different. The fight is not only to maintain the program of what the antiwar movement should do, which is the program upon which the movement is going to be revitalized whether it is before or after the elections. This time, in addition, we begin with a movement that, in very large numbers in the big cities and on the campuses of the United States, is composed of people who are sympathetic to our ideas which have up until now led the Student Mobilization. To the degree that it exists, that is the student antiwar movement. This time we are again opening a fight over ideas in all levels of the movement, but from the very beginning with groups of people around us that may carry out antiwar actions in a meaningful way as they come up in the next six months regardless of what the Student Mobilization Committee does, regardless of what the Parade Committee does, and regardless of what David Dellinger or any other of his cohorts do. It is on the basis of these people, and on their agreement with these ideas that the whole movement will be revitalized, whether it's before or after the elections.

I don't think we should take something else for granted. The odds are that there will be no big mass action between now and the elections, especially on the adult plane because of the pressures. But I wouldn't bet on that on the student plane. I think that it would be foolish for us to bet on that. We have to keep an open mind. One of the possible variants is that we might even win at the Continuations Committee meeting. We're so used, when we go to stacked meetings like this, to losing, organizing a caucus, a newsletter, beginning a fight, and going on through a long painful process before we can get things rolling again. But we shouldn't assume that always has to happen. If we lose there, we may win a month and a half later. If we lose there, it may be a partial loss and there may be a September national conference of the Student Mobilization Committee called where we may win.

We may also, because of all the pressures, which we have no way of testing yet, take an initial loss on our line. Our line may take another loss in September, it may not be until after November that it can be reestablished. But we don't know. What we must do is reach out and organize this fight among every single person we can reach.

I'm not as familiar with this as the comrades who have been active in the day-to-day work of the Student Mobilization Committee, but I assume there are a large number of students who have been involved in this movement recently that agree with our ideas on both the activities and the organization of the SMC. This is a little different than basically the NCC. What was true of the NCC convention is not true now. We must take advantage of this with a hard hitting open public fight and not only in the pages of the Militant. The biggest mistake we could make would be not to fight the hardest in all committees, the Parade Committee, the Student Mobilization,

and all committees for this line.

While we're doing this, we should keep very clearly in mind that the job is, not merely to maintain the ideas through a newsletter, but to group people around us who may want to react even before the elections to intensifications of the war in Vietnam.

I think that that's the way we should approach it now, especially in the branch. One of the main points before us has got to be how we can reach out in the New York area, and begin organizing and talking to all these college and high school youth who were drawn around April 27. And so the first job to be done here is to match the effort that is being done all over the country to mobilize support for our position.

One final thing. When the party takes this kind of turn and we go into this kind of fight, one of the key things that always comes out of it is recruitment to the YSA and to the party. These youth who go through these kind of fights with us are often because of the intensity of the affair and lessons, rapidly ready to become young socialists.

We worked with these on the Student Mobilization Committee, and the Parade Committee, and on April 27 carried out the biggest action yet on an international scale. Now the job is to take off from that experience to fight the exclusionists and to win as many of these to us while we're doing it as possible.