

Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, New York 10003
December 14, 1968

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND AT-LARGERS

Dear Comrades,

At the antiwar fraction meeting at the YSA Convention we went over the immediate problems and tasks facing the GI-civilian conference in Chicago, December 27-29. This letter will review the progress we have made and outline the remaining tasks in the last ten pre-conference days. A fuller report on the general antiwar situation is being prepared. The SMC national office will also be sending out a mailing this weekend.

The endorsements for the conference and the concept of a GI-oriented spring action have increased sizably since the initial leaflet. Several areas responded rapidly with several noteworthy sponsors including Prof. Marvin Gettleman, Russell Johnson of the AFSC, Sid Lens, Stewart Meachem, University Circle Teach-In Committee (Cleveland), Donald Kalish, the Detroit Black Panther Party, and the national co-chairman of the Campus Americans for Democratic Action. The conference now has over 50 sponsors, one of the broadest sponsor lists in the history of the antiwar movement. The Chicago Peace Council has agreed to officially host the conference and its leaders have shown an active interest in it.

We have encountered our greatest difficulty in arranging the Friday night teach-in. While many have expressed interest in it, because of holidays and vacations there have been a number of scheduling difficulties. The second leaflet was delayed in order to be able to include noteworthy speakers, but we ultimately were forced to print it without a complete list. At the present time the teach-in will include: Nettie Bell, a mother of one of the Fort Hood 43, Robin Boltz, ACLU Atlanta, Sid Lens, and the Rev. Ed Redick, SCLC in Chicago. Well known speakers from local areas can be used. If such speakers can be arranged, please contact the SMC office in New York. The second leaflet will be mailed out by the SMC in the next day or two.

The biggest single task outlined at the fraction meeting was the popularizing of the spring action throughout the entire antiwar coalition, and not just the forces that we influence. Our aim is to have as much discussion among as many forces prior to the conference as is possible, so that the conference discussion will represent those forces in a formal call to action. In both New York and Chicago informal meetings have been arranged to discuss the conference and the character of the spring action. In New York the meeting will include representatives of LINK, Veterans for Peace in Vietnam, VIETNAM GI, and several groups within the Parade Committee. In Chicago the meeting will be made up of representatives of the most

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active groups in the Chicago Peace Council and individuals such as Jack Spiegel. We should try to have similar meetings in every area, on campuses and high schools. These meetings should be used as vehicles for solidifying sentiment in each area for the action and for mobilizing a broad political spectrum of individuals to come to the conference. Also, we should make a major effort at drawing as many student antiwar leaders outside of our own ranks to the conference, and involving them in its work. This conference, as part of directing the antiwar movement towards the GIs and the high school students, will be an important event in maintaining and strengthening the militant student wing of the movement.

At this point there is no concrete proposal for a place or a date for the spring action. Enclosed you will find a letter sent to all sponsors in which the SMC has outlined the various possibilities and pros and cons for the action. It is important that sentiment in each area be sounded out on this. Remember, though, that we seek action(s) that will mobilize the greatest number of civilians and GIs.

We have encountered a back-corridor smear campaign to discredit the conference, initiated by Dave Dellinger and the NMC Save our Soldier Project. This attack, never open, goes along either a red-baiting line, or along the axis of "no date should be set at the conference for the spring action." This factional attack in its own way indicates the strength and authority of the conference and is part of the general debate over antiwar perspectives. In discussing the spring action and the conference, however, we should be careful to do nothing that would indicate that the conference is a competitor with the January 18-20 Inauguration Day demonstration which is being planned by the National Mobilization Committee.

The time remaining before spring, and practical necessity require that a date for a mass spring action be set at this conference -- and that is the explicit purpose of the conference. If at the January 20 action the NMC finds that it agrees with the character and purpose of the spring action but would like to see another date, there will be no difficulty working that out.

Special attention should be paid to publicizing and organizing for the conference among GIs. It is important not only to leaflet GIs but also to arrange a procedure for GIs to attend the conference, so that we can have the largest possible GI participation. New York is considering the idea of offering free or very inexpensive transportation to interested GIs.

The Teach-in, the GI-Civilian Conference, and the Student Mobilization Committee Conference will be held at the YMCA Hotel, 826 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60605. Enclosed is a registration card for the hotel (more will be sent out by the SMC). In order to obtain a 10% discount on the room rates these cards or duplicates of them must be sent to the hotel in advance of the conference. The hotel is near the loop area and will be convenient to all public transportation.

As was outlined at the YSA Convention antiwar fraction meeting, we will be mobilizing the Midwest locals and at-largers, partially mobilizing the East Coast and South, and have token representation from the West Coast. This means: in the Midwest all members unless explicitly excused for good reason should attend; in the East and South members active in antiwar committees and activity should attend; in the West and Southwest there should be at least one representative from each local.

Another letter from us will be forthcoming covering our fraction organization and other details. In the meantime, let the YSA in Chicago (302 S. Canal St., Chicago, Ill. 60606) in advance how many and who will be coming from your area.

Comradely,

Lew Jones

Lew Jones

For the National Antiwar Steering
Committee

STUDENT MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE
TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM
857 Broadway Room 307
New York, N.Y. 10003
Phone (212) 675-8466

December 14, 1968

To All Sponsors of the GI-Civilian
Antiwar Action Conference:

Dear Friends,

The GI-Civilian Antiwar Action Conference will include a representative cross-section of the antiwar movement in its deliberations. Numerous antiwar GI newspapers and organizations and spokesmen from broad civilian antiwar coalitions have already endorsed the conference, and many others will be in attendance. It would be most helpful if prior to the conference these groups would initiate some discussion in their local areas in order to facilitate the conference discussion on proposals for a mass spring GI-civilian antiwar demonstration.

Accordingly, the following are some of the suggested ideas that have already been raised in New York discussions. These are not to be the only proposals under discussion, and any position papers are welcome.

- 1) That demonstrations be held at a few regional centers; e.g. New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Atlanta, Austin (the Southern demonstration to be divided into two centers because of the extremely long distances involved and the high degree of GI organization in both areas enables them to sustain two demonstrations). The advantage of this proposal is that it would maximize the number of GIs who could participate in any one place. To be successful, people would have to look upon the demonstrations as real regional actions. The whole concept of this type of demonstration would break down if it was dispersed into more than a few central places. People in cities where no demonstration is scheduled will have to be prepared to travel, and avoid calling a demonstration of their own.
- 2) That demonstrations be held in every major city. This makes it easier on those areas which would otherwise have to travel, and enables each area to gain local publicity. Successful demonstrations would be held in most places, although the number of GIs participating would vary from place to place depending on the extent of GI organization in each area and on the uneven distribution of military bases throughout the country.
- 3) A demonstration at a single location, most likely Washington. A GI peace march on Washington would have the most dramatic political impact. Areas far away could have send-off.

rallies for those traveling to Washington. Money could be raised for free or nominal air transportation for GIs. Problem: are we prepared to carry off another Washington demonstration, which would necessitate sizable GI and civilian participation to be successful? The number of civilians who participate is not as important as the number of GIs, though. This proposal should be undertaken only if we think we are ready for it now.

4) Demonstrations at an East Coast and a West Coast location, e.g. New York and San Francisco. Question: is the coalition united and ample enough to pull off another April 15 demonstration? What advantages are there to this proposal as compared with proposal #3? But with a very broad coalition behind it, this action might even exceed the turnout on April 15, 1967, with the added ingredient of large numbers of GIs.

One of the proposals on the date for the action is that it be held in the early part of a month, just after GIs get paid and can think in terms of coming to a demonstration. The most likely dates with that in mind are April 5 and May 3, both Saturdays. April 26, a Saturday, is the anniversary of the 1968 International Student Strike. Other April dates are the 12th and the 19th.

This conference, geared toward establishing a spring action oriented toward GIs, can provide an arena for discussion and workshops on how links between GIs and civilians in the antiwar movement can be initiated, reinforced, and carried out most successfully. This can be a valuable experience for antiwar activists and leaders on what the general, strategic, and tactical problems of GI activity and organizing are and how best this work can be furthered, and what has been learned in this new focus of work to date.

Please let us know your thoughts on these diverse proposals and any other suggestions you might have.

Sincerely,

Howard Petrick

Howard Petrick
Student Mobilization Committee
to End the War in Vietnam