

Report to the NEC on the SDS National Council Meeting
by Gus, October 13, 1967

Approximately 175 people attended the SDS National Council meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, October 6-8. Very few of these were from Madison, therefore the meeting was a relatively large one. There was little representation (if any) from the West Coast, and although no credentials report was available, it appeared that most of those in attendance were from the larger, more established areas. There were two black youth who attended the sessions. PL had about five people; the CP sent two observers; ISC (Draperites) had a literature table; and Karen Wald attended from the National Mobilization Committee staff.

The meeting was relatively serious by SDS standards, with the general tone of order and parliamentary standards. Our literature table, set up for one day, sold \$30 worth. We obtained two endorsers for the campaign and signed up about 15 on the YSHB mailing list. The standard attitude toward our campaign, however, was, "I don't believe in electoral politics."

The important discussions centered around October 21, the proposed SDS national student strike and general perspectives.

The general attitude toward October 21 was hostile, but a position of critical support was adopted, with the emphasis on the "critical" side. A PL motion calling for a separate SDS demonstration at the White House was defeated. Earlier during the council meeting notice came of the attempts by the Washington police to refuse the demonstration a permit unless the Mobilization Committee dissociated itself from civil disobedience. The council decided to send a telegram to the Mobilization Committee urging it to reject the police demands and adding that "to renege on the original decision to have civil disobedience at the October 21 demonstration is to indicate publicly that the National Mobilization Committee has reached the limit of its opposition to the war at the level of protest demonstration. The rhetoric of the National Mobilization's organizing for October 21 has centered around the phrase 'from dissent to resistance.' The Mobilization now has the responsibility to stand by that verbal commitment in action."

The tone of the discussion indicated a great overestimation of the strength of the civil disobedience wing of the National Mobilization Committee, which is strong in the staff, but not in the coalition itself. The SDSers seem to think that the "rhetoric" of "from dissent to resistance" was due to the pressure of "mass" campus sentiment upon the National Mobilization Committee.

Discussion around the proposed student strike produced no concrete proposals, with a motion passed that "the NC mandates a committee of Greg Calvert (East Coast), John Fuerst (Midwest), Sue Eanet (West Coast) and Carl Davidson to report to the December NC on the state of the chapters and evaluate the feasibility of strikes at campuses with strong SDS chapters. Three chapter members, one from each area, will also be added to the committee. Although major SDS figures are on this committee, the actual discussion revealed support, but no great enthusiasm for organiz-

ing student strikes, the only specific campuses mentioned being Berkeley, Madison, and Columbia. Thus the decision on a proposed student strike is still up in the air.

A panel discussion on strategy led to no decisions, but was important in revealing the general political mood of the SDS leadership. Greg Calvert posed the basic questions that had to be answered within the framework of SDS's local organizing perspective. Local organizing for its own sake is insufficient. So far, he said, SDS has gone into ghetto communities without bringing in the basic issue of American imperialism. The basic questions which SDS has to face are how to take the burning national issues to the grass roots level, how to develop a meaningful political program and how to bridge the gap between organizing around local issues for reform and developing a revolutionary political consciousness. The notion of resistance as a political strategy, he said, was a defensive one. We can expect repressive measures from the government in the wake of the decline of American imperialism and even the possibility of fascism.

It appeared that most of his remarks went over the heads of the SDSers present. Instead, they addressed themselves to Eric Mann's (Newark) lower level expression of the SDS mood. He emphasized the personal problems of how to be both middle class and radical, and how to maintain a "revolutionary perspective" while organizing around reform issues. Although the discussion was liberally sprinkled with the language of radicalism -- working class, imperialism, revolution vs. reform are evidently now "in" words with SDS -- the content seemed to reveal a more clearly expressed rightward shift in the SDS leadership's thinking.

SDS's major perspective around the draft was seldom mentioned during this discussion, although a resolution was later passed urging all chapters to participate in the October 16 events, including disruption and defying state authority.

A resolution noting "with deep concern and regret SNCC's recent inclination towards racism in general and anti-semitism in particular" was overwhelmingly defeated, 25 to 2.

Proposed demonstrations against South African apartheid were voted down, but it was decided that educational work on all of Africa should be carried out.

A motion was also passed that SDS undertake to organize a trip of 10-20 SDSers to go to Cuba during December 21 - January 10. The interorganizational secretary was given responsibility for organizing the trip and, together with the NIC, screening all applications.