

FROM THE NEW LEFT CARL DAVIDSON

"But the more I thought about that thing, 'fight the people,' it's not that it's a great mass slogan or anything, but there's something to it."

—Bill Ayers, SDS education secretary, in "A Strategy to Win," New Left Notes, Sept. 12, 1969.

Activists who have belittled the ideological struggle within the movement over the past few months have often viewed the "left" adventurist line and practice of the SDS Weatherman faction as something either completely irrational or the result of a series of tactical blunders.

Superficially, both of these impressions are true. Irrationality and tactical mistakes are a hallmark of Weatherman activity.

On another level, however, the political practice of Weatherman is the logical result of their political line. Here is where the basic mistake is made, in asserting that the mass of workers within the U.S.—white, brown and black—have a short-range real class interest in common with the imperialists. Once this line is taken, everything else follows.

And "everything else" has been quite heavy in the past few weeks.

The most dangerous case has been the gem of Weatherman wisdom that calls for movement activists to refer to GIs as "pigs." According to the Weatherbureau (the name they give their central leadership), any GI still in the Army, rather than Weatherman's infantile "red army," even those agitating against the war, is now lumped together with the Chicago police, Mayor Daley and the likes of Nelson Rockefeller.

What the Weathermen have failed to do, to use Mao's terminology, is to make a distinction between the contradiction between the people and the enemy and those contradictions that exist among the people.

Most revolutionaries understand this, especially the Vietnamese, whose leadership the Weathermen profess to follow. Even on the battlefields in Vietnam, where the NLF has every immediate reason to express a burning hatred of GIs, none of the NLF

propaganda directed at the ranks of the U.S. military refers to GIs with anything approximating the term "pig."

In fact, the opposite is true. Every effort is made to distinguish the interests of the ordinary GI from those of the Pentagon brass and to show that the true interests of the American people are not served by the imperialists responsible for the war.

Weatherman propaganda is somewhat different. It usually runs something like this: (1) there's a worldwide struggle going on, (2) whites benefit from the system and (3) join the other side or be wiped out.

With the exception of the moralistic exhortation to join the other side, there is little difference between the Weatherman point of view and that of the bourgeoisie. Since they have made the short-range interests of working people coincidental with imperialism, they have counterposed fighting for the immediate needs of the people to fighting against imperialism.

For instance, within the Army, Weathermen oppose GI struggles for certain democratic rights of free expression while supporting GI rebellions. What they fail to understand is how the struggle for the former has usually led to the latter.

In fact, Weathermen see almost all struggles for immediate reforms, whether for material needs or for equality and democratic rights, as struggles for "more privileges." While white workers and students in this country have fought to maintain and extend certain white privileges, no one, except the Weathermen and the ruling class, has maintained that these struggles served or met the needs of the people.

In fact, in relation to the student movement, Weathermen in the past have opposed the slogan, "the schools must serve the people" with the line "destroy the university." With that in mind, when black and brown students raise the demand for open admissions this year, it might be interesting to see which way the wind blows the Weathermen.

(to be continued)