

WHY I QUIT

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After serving as a member of the steering committee for the SDS fall action for about three weeks with Terry Robbins, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, and the three national secretaries, I resigned and am presently working to build the fall action independently of the committee here in Los Angeles. Since my resignation there has been much confusion, much rumor mongering and speculation about the reasons for this break with the NO leadership over the action. I must criticize myself for not writing this sooner and clarifying our differences. I felt at the time that open ideological struggle around the action would be divisive and weaken the action. Because of recent developments in the direction of the action as well as in SDS in general I believe now that some sharp internal struggle must be waged to build the fall action in a way that will help build the mass anti-imperialist movement in the US and aid the struggle of the Vietnamese at this crucial period.

First, let me say that I would not split with the steering committee over a tactical disagreement or over personality differences. I feel that the leadership has broken from the strategy and tactics which were passed by the National Convention in Chicago. As one of the writers of the resolution TAKE THE WAR TO THE PEOPLE AND BRING IT HOME (NLN Convention issue), I believe that our primary strategic task is to win the masses of working people to a united front movement against imperialism, a movement which cannot defeat imperialism or build socialism in the US without the working class as its main component.

The convention resolution made it clear that SDS saw this goal as being of primary importance and called for literature to be printed by the NO which related the war to the oppression and exploitation of working people in this country.

There has long been a myth in this country of the "bought-off" working class in the US, fat and happy and living comfortably off the riches stolen from the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This myth of the affluent working class has been pushed by rich people in this country in order to pacify potentially insurgent forces. It is a myth that all too often has been picked up and carried by the student movement especially on the big university campuses and mostly by students who had never experienced the day to day oppression of working people in this country. It is a myth which must be destroyed if we are ever going to be able to bring the war to the masses of people in this country and show them that it is not in any way in their interest, either in the short run or in the long run. Working people, black, white, and brown, suffer from imperialism and the war in a thousand ways. Often false consciousness has led them to support the war both in uniform on the front line and on the job (loading ships, building missiles, etc...). However, it is plain that whenever they have done this, they have suffered as they have never suffered before.

To date there has been no literature produced by the NO that relates to the war in this way or that explains the action to working people in an attempt to win them to it. Now, it is clear that even if we did the best we could in this direction, and even though most of the working people in this country are opposed to the war, we still would not bring thousands of workers to the action. We still must rely on youth, mostly students, as the bulk of the anti-imperialist movement. This is in part because workers have much more to lose (jobs, etc...) as well as to gain by joining the anti-imperialist movement. We must win their confidence by struggling with them for their just needs (decent wages, housing, equality for women and for national

minorities, etc...) We must show them that we are on their side, that we are serious, that we are prepared to fight this struggle through to the end, and that we are not just a bunch of rich kids out to serve ourselves. It is also the case that the student movement in the past has encouraged individualism and empiricism (paying attention only to what is in motion now, not having a strategic approach), and has rejected Marxism-Leninism, the only ideology that can lead workers to power.

In the mass issue of NLN there is a story on the "Motor City 9". These SDSers from Detroit went into a classroom at working-class McComb Junior College, having done no previous work there, walked into a classroom, and barricaded the doors during a final exam, and allegedly proceeded to use the karate which they had learned during their summer in Detroit to beat up students who were male chauvinist, racist, or simply couldn't dig the line they were running down. The students then turned them in to the pigs.

Actions such as these, which the national leadership sees as "exemplary", should be fought against. Militancy should be encouraged and so should the will to fight the enemy. However the working class must be won over with patience and not arrogance. We must also realize that students from Ann Arbor can also learn much from working-class youth at McComb as infected as they might be with chauvinism.

On Thursday, October 9, the NO has called for an "attack on the schools" which means that demonstrators will mass outside one of the working-class high schools in Chicago and yell "Jail Break" and then invade the school "freeing" the imprisoned students. On Wednesday the action called for is a "memorial to Che Guevara". On Friday an attack on the courts under the slogan "SHUT DOWN THE COURTS".

Out of all the talk and planning two different lines are emerging. The two lines are characterized by the two major positions put forth at the convention, "Weatherman" and "RYM II". The position put forth by RYM II, the position I hold to, says that we struggle around reforms and raise anti-imperialist consciousness in the struggle.

"The anti-imperialist youth movement must serve the people. That means it must enter into the struggles of the people and help them to win."

This is a key part of building the anti-imperialist movement. At this point there are no proletarian organizations in the country actively supporting the action. In Chicago, the Panthers, the Young Lords, and the Patriots have all rejected the actions in part because the program does not speak to the needs of the people they work with. These groups get the impression that SDS does not care about the day to day needs of the people but simply is trying to use them to build their own thing.

RYM II puts forth the program of raising struggles around demands to transform the institutions to serve the people. For example, we put forth the program "The Schools Must Serve the People" in Austin. In this program

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we demanded such things as an end to tracking, an end to racist ideology, etc. Now if the schools shut down in the process of struggling to change them, that is one thing. Our demands cannot be simply "Shut Down the Schools" or "Jail Break". First of all, the high school kids don't need us to break out of school. They are going to school ("bourgeois" as they are) to get a job. Until they see alternatives to that, any attempt to shut down the schools attacks working people. We must first expose the class nature of the schools and make the people see the lies being run down on them. Likewise, we aid welfare mothers not just to "smash the state", but also to get their welfare rights.

The "Weathermen" on the other hand have rejected struggles for democratic rights, saying that they only increase the "privilege" of the workers. At the NIC, they characterized such struggles as "serve the people shit". This is because the line they hold to says that the working class benefits from imperialism because they share in the profit stolen by the imperialists. This is similar to PL, who won't fight to open up the schools because winning this reform would only make the blacks more bourgeois.

For this fall action to be successful, we must make it relevant to the masses of people in this country. Our approach should be one of transforming the mass discontent with the war into action, not just on the part of the elite revolutionaries, but mass action. We must present a program of action so that we can win proletarian organizations such as the Panthers, Lords, etc. to help build it. Read the latest poster turned out by the NO (in the centerfold of the mass issue of NLN) and see if workers or for that matter anyone but college students could relate to it. Its basic theme is that imperialism kills lots of people (moralism) and does not in any way relate the war to the needs of the people.

The break came in the form of a debate over a proposed article publicizing the action. One of the struggles was over a paragraph I wrote critical of the old peace movement leadership. Once we were clear that it was not a matter of wording but a

matter of principle (they claim that the "old Mobe leadership were basically good but made some mistakes just like us"). At the same time that they attacked my criticism of the old leadership, the NO has completely split with the Mobe organization, who are now also not supporting the action. This liberalism toward revisionist leadership on the one hand and strong sectarianism on the other are simply two sides to the contradiction that is the Weatherman line.

Now many people around the country, reacting to the sectarianism and the adventurism of the leadership and the fact that they have broken from the program put forth at the convention, have become angered and frustrated to the point of not working hard enough to build the action. We must not give up the action but should instead wage an internal struggle to build the action in a revolutionary direction. We must unite all those who can be united, wage internal struggle, and not let the action turn into an ego trip on the part of a few "super revolutionaries". Aside from not aiding the struggle of the Vietnamese or building the mass anti-imperialist movement in this country, the line and program of the Weatherman can only strengthen PL, who are banking on a big flop around the action.

Also at this point, no propaganda or literature or programs directed at GIs have been turned out by the NO. At this time there are massive rebellions going on in forts throughout this country as well as in Vietnam. We must see relating to these struggles as a primary task at this time.

RYM II in Chicago are writing a pamphlet, "The War and the Workers", trying to build rallies in working class communities which people have been working in for some period of time, building boycotts of the high schools, tying spontaneous struggles going on in these schools to the war and repression in the ghetto and trying to bring working people contacted during strike support action to the mass march on Saturday the 11th.

In the various cities throughout the country, meetings should be called with every group that can be won to the anti-imperialist struggle, especially working class organizations. This is the way the action can be built, relying on the people and not just ourselves, and serving the people, not just ourselves.