

THE GUARDIAN SUSTAINER

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Guardian
Sustainer
program

FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR:

More thoughts on Guardian Clubs proposal

By JACK A. SMITH

Response from Sustainers to the idea in last month's newsletter about organizing a nationwide network of Guardian Clubs has been positive and enthusiastic.

We're convinced now that as a beginning we should have no difficulty in establishing about 10 Guardian Clubs in as many cities.

The Guardian is waiting until it publishes its party-building supplement and does a little more investigation before taking the next concrete steps. The supplement, which should reach you in about a week, will contain 29 general unity principles for bringing together various party-building tendencies. The principles will also form the specific political basis for membership in the Clubs.

We urge all Sustainers who are seriously interested in participating in a Guardian Club to read the principles very carefully. They constitute a codification of the various positions the paper has taken over the years. If you are in agreement with them and want to join a Club, please write to us immediately inquiring about membership.

Address your letter to: Coordinator, Guardian Clubs, 33 W. 17 St., New York, N.Y. 10011. In the letter please include any ideas you might have about building Guardian Clubs nationally and locally, activities you think the Clubs should get into, etc.

Once we study the responses and get response on the unity principles and the party-building supplement, we'll be getting back in touch with you in a more formal way about the possibility of establishing a Club in your area and other related matters.

We recognize what has been communicated so far about the Clubs idea has been rather general and tentative. We're trying to proceed cautiously and at the appropriate time more information will be forthcoming. It's important to emphasize that we see the Clubs progressing by stages and that to a certain degree practice is going to be our guide for future development once the organization is established.

THE FIRST STAGE

The first stage, as indicated earlier, we will have Clubs organized in only 10 cities with a limitation on the number of members in each area.

There's a very good reason for this: we're new at organization and don't want to start something that would fall apart because we made mistakes. The Guardian is confident it could organize and administer a 10-city network with our existing resources and that productive political activities, study groups and other endeavors we project could go well in this limited set-up.

Further steps would depend to a certain extent on how well the initial plan was working out. It might turn out some cities are ready for a larger and more sophisticated Guardian organization, while others should stay a while longer within the more limited framework. After an initial period of experience, we might find it possible to expand membership in existing Clubs and charter additional Clubs, for instance, as well as consider some of the longer-range implications of such an organizational entity.

In response to your mail and to additional discussion here and with our friends in many areas, we've refined somewhat our conception of the tasks of the various Clubs. We see three main duties:

CLUBS' RESPONSIBILITIES

•**Party-building.** The Clubs would be an organizational vehicle for helping to develop a distinct political trend within the Marxist-Leninist movement, a trend based on the 29 principles of unity. The Clubs would engage in discussions, debates and forums with other Marxist-Leninists. They would, in some cases, help initiate local Marxist-Leninist organizing committees or other appropriate organizational forms. The Clubs would engage in organized study of theory and also set up Marxist-Leninist study groups for workers and local activists.

•**Local political action.** The Clubs would join in and initiate political work in trade unions, community organizations, local coalitions and demonstrations on a broad range of urgent questions from strike support to solidarity work around southern Africa and Puerto Rico, for instance. It would be entirely possible for us to mount simultaneous actions in 10 cities at appropriate times. The Clubs could bring to these actions—which they would initiate or participate in—the Guardian's general political perspective which would be applied to the concrete conditions in each locality.

•**Work to help build the paper.** One of the great strengths of the Clubs is that they would be linked together in a network, with a large-circulation, serious and politically influential newspaper as their focus. Building that newspaper in the areas of circulation, promotion, fund-raising and news-gathering would be an important Club responsibility.

This would include such activities as placing bundles in local bookstores and newsstands, distributing at work places and demonstrations, obtaining new subscriptions, sending in news reports on local and regional developments, organizing fund-raising parties and other events, appearing on local radio or TV to discuss stories from the Guardian and constantly evaluating the paper itself and sharing criticisms with the Guardian staff. The Clubs would sponsor local speaking engagements of Marxist-Leninists, representatives of national liberation movements and Guardian staff members.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

A number of people have questioned the name "Guardian Clubs." We're not wedded to it and could work the problem out. Others have asked about the relationship of the Clubs to party-building. Right off the bat we can tell you we don't see the Clubs, at the stage we're talking about, as a pre-party formation. Essentially, the Clubs will try to build the antirevisionist, antidogmatist trend along with the 29 points we're putting forward, recognizing that we do not possess the Alpha and Omega of political wisdom. The Guardian is part of a trend. Within that trend it has its own specific point of view on a great many questions. The task of the Guardian and the Clubs would be to build that trend and influence it as much as possible in the direction of Guardian Clubs politics.

There are many other questions (such as the specific form of structure-organization, how to deal with supporters of the Clubs idea in areas where we are not yet prepared to organize, the relationship of Clubs to existing Guardian bureaus, the precise stages of development for the Clubs idea in general, etc.) that we will address in detail in the coming weeks and months.

Be assured that when the time comes to
(Continued on page 2)

You can help improve our labor coverage

By BEN BEDELL

In developing the Guardian's labor coverage, we draw upon a variety of sources.

Decisions about what to cover are often molded by news events—workers' actions such as strikes; developments within the labor movement, such as union elections, or government initiatives such as the public works bill. We also try to provide as many background and analytical pieces as possible—the trends beneath the news events.

Once an article is decided upon, I'll generally draw on three types of sources for information.

The starting point for a good story is talking to workers themselves. How are they affected? How are they involved? What do cold, hard statistics mean in human terms?

The second step is to get in touch with company, government or union officials which often provides some revealing quotes or information. The business press—the Wall Street Journal, Business Week and so forth—gives the capitalists' perspective on developments and is also

helpful.

Finally, I try whenever possible to get an analytical overview from progressive and communist participants in a struggle. Sometimes, a progressive on the union staff will give me the "inside story" on the union bureaucracy's plans.

J.P. STEVENS

In the recent series on the struggle to organize J.P. Stevens, all three of these elements were present. I was able to go first-hand to Roanoke Rapids, N. C., the sort of on-the-scene reporting which gives a solid foundation to any story. Besides talking with workers at the Stevens plant about conditions in the mills, I was able to develop an analysis and critique of the union's strategy. Interviews with the union officials and the insights of Marxist-Leninists active in the struggle were especially helpful in this regard.

I hope to do more in-depth articles like the Stevens series. We also plan to strengthen coverage of the rank-and-file movement itself. Many readers have also suggested that the paper carry more

theoretical articles on trade union strategy and the work of communists in the unions.

Our readers, on many occasions, have written in with suggestions and information for stories. We'd like to encourage more of this, particularly from our Sustainers.

BUILDING LABOR COVERAGE

In the coming months, we'll be making a push to build our labor coverage both in terms of stories covered and the quality of articles. Sustainers can be a valuable part of this process. Your involvement can range from sending in clippings from your local newspaper, providing us with photos, alerting us to developments, being a contact person and writing articles. Several Sustainers have already provided the background information and contacts for following up on a story—a good initiative.

It's impossible for the Guardian staff to keep on top of developments throughout the country and our coverage can only be as good as our contacts. We're counting on you to help.

Labor editor Ben Bedell

Whether it be a march of 200 workers in Omaha or a wildcat strike in the coal mines, the various labor stories appearing in the paper each week are coordinated by labor editor Ben Bedell.

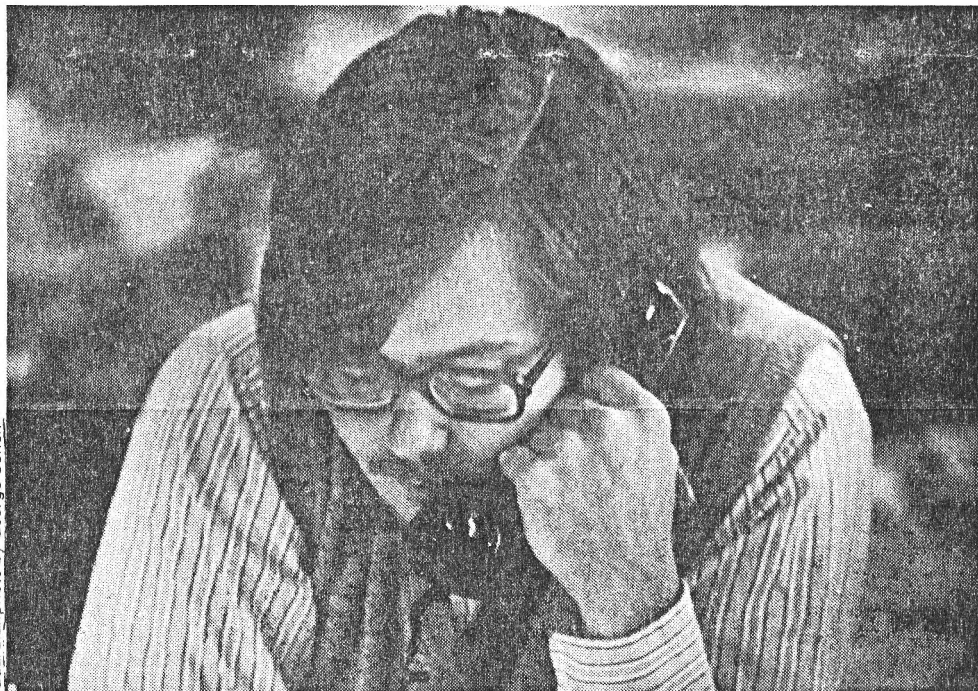
Ben has been with the paper for over three years. While only 24 years old, he has had a broad range of experience.

First active in the student and antiwar movements of the 1960s, Ben then spent a year in Latin America. "That year gave me a good first-hand understanding of the realities of imperialism," says Ben, "and provided a valuable international perspective."

After that was a year working as a news assistant at the New York Times. "They gave me excellent technical training but you can only put it to use in the service of the ruling class at the Times," Ben commented. "So I started doing volunteer work at the Guardian—whatever needed to be done."

Within a short while Ben was brought on as a full-time staff member. While starting with general news stories—"everything from housing to student news to general political developments"—Ben was appointed labor editor in the summer of 1975.

"When doing the labor news, I try to alert the progressive movement to what the union bureaucrats, the corporations and the gov-



Guardian photo by George Cohen

Labor editor Ben Bedell

ernment are up to and then to reflect the fightback against it," says Ben.

In recognition of Ben's political abilities and his responsible attitude toward his work, he was elected by the staff in 1976 and 1977 to serve on the paper's 5-person Coordinating Committee.

How does Ben see the paper's future? "In three years at the Guardian I've seen the paper survive and defeat the political views of the Revolutionary Communist Party, the

October League and those who would have us abandon proletarian internationalism," replied Ben. "I have confidence in the paper. I know from my experience that the majority of progressives and communists in the trade union struggle are independent of any national formation. They are the Guardian's constituency. And they constitute the 'main trend'. The thing that the left must now do is consolidate, sharpen and organize that trend."

FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR:

Liberal slanders justify imperialist war

By IRWIN SILBER

This is a story of three newspapers—the Wall Street Journal, the New York Review of Books and the Guardian.

It might seem to some that three distinctly different political perspectives are reflected by these papers—what one might in shorthand call conservative, liberal and radical.

But in capitalist society all political stands ultimately boil down to two: the stand of the bourgeoisie and the stand of the working class. And as we shall see, the middle ground between these papers quickly disappears. The particular point at the moment has to do with the present "controversy" over what is now happening inside socialist Vietnam.

Like some others who opposed the U.S. war in Indochina, the New York Review has undertaken to give credence to the current campaign of slanders about rehabilitation and reconstruction in Vietnam. Not long ago, the Review reprinted without any editorial comment of its own the text of an interview by a French priest, Andre Gelin, who was expelled from Vietnam shortly after liberation in April 1975. Gelin told the traditional story of "ruthless repression" and "widespread executions" which have now become the stock-in-trade of a small corps of disgruntled anticommunists and paid CIA agents.

Our concern here, however, is not so much with Gelin and his kind. Their horror stories have been thoroughly exposed any number of times. Guardian readers already know this from a number of articles which refuted these lies on a factual basis. This has been further confirmed by the recent on-the-spot reports by Guardian correspondent Wilfred Burchett. (One of Burchett's articles on the subject was reprinted in the May 8 Sunday New York Times as a paid advertisement by long-time Guardian supporter Dr. Corliss Lamont.)

At the moment, our concern is more with the New York Review of Books and some of

the others, such as Joan Baez and Daniel Ellsberg, who have lent themselves to the odious enterprise of slandering socialist Vietnam. Perhaps these people have not seriously considered the political implications of their irresponsibility. Perhaps they consider that they are motivated solely by a sense of "justice" and "compassion." Their intentions actually make little difference. In fact, their "credentials" as people previously identified with the antiwar movement are now serving the imperialist system far more effectively than if they had been among those who justified the U.S. war of genocide in Indochina.

To their credit, several of the antiwar people who had unwittingly lent themselves to the anti-Vietnam campaign realized they had been misinformed and that their own concerns were being exploited by the very people whose policies had led to the U.S. aggression in the first place.

THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

But the campaign goes on. Which brings us to the Wall Street Journal, for this organ of the ruling class makes no bones about the political conclusions to be drawn.

In a remarkably candid editorial, the Journal compliments the New York Review for reprinting the interview with Gelin and sees it as a "sign of the distress in the old antiwar movement." The editorial goes on: "The present awakening is not without its interest to those of us who watched the antiwar protest grow during the 1960s. One sees, first of all, that many of its leaders were well-meaning men and women."

Praise from this corner should be a cause for suspicion on its own merits. But the bourgeoisie's favorite newspaper is leading up to something else. "These atrocities in the new Vietnam are not universally surprising accidents of history," they declare. "These were things that were predicted and could have been known." Therefore there is no excuse, they say, for those who "reviled America and American

motives in Vietnam."

The ideological switch from praising some in the antiwar movement to justifying U.S. "motives" in Indochina is made without the blink of an eyelash, for the Wall Street Journal knows, even if our antiwar friends do not, that they have lent credence to Lyndon Johnson's rationalization of the war.

But justifying the past is only half the task. The Journal continues: "Perhaps next time in our debates around foreign policy, we can be spared this particular kind of blindness about the nature of the world we have to deal with." And that's where this political howling inevitably leads. For the U.S. ruling class is indeed very worried about "next time," whether it be in Zimbabwe, South Africa, the Middle East or Latin America.

Perhaps imperialism will not be able to rally the New York Review of Books or Joan Baez to its side "next time," but if it can neutralize antiwar sentiment even with a "plague-on-both-their-houses" ideology, it will have won half the battle.

Bringing us finally to the Guardian. These stories of "communist atrocities" have been floated after every revolutionary struggle. They appeared in 1917 after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, in 1949 after the Chinese revolution, in 1959 after the Cuban revolution and after every imperialist defeat. The stories never stood up and newspapers like the Guardian have helped to refute the slanders.

But there is an even larger question involved. It cannot be denied that every revolution must ruthlessly suppress the most virulent and recalcitrant of its class enemies. But people's revolutions are always successful primarily because they have the support of the overwhelming majority of the masses. Naturally, there are always some who, by virtue of their class position and political connections, have their own interests bound up with the deposed class or with the puppets of imperialism—and many of them will actively engage in counterrevolutionary activity if permitted to do so.

Are there such people in Vietnam? Of course. And while we expose the lies being spread about socialist countries such as Vietnam, we also make it clear that we firmly support their clear revolutionary right to defend their hard-won triumph in all the ways which the continued threat of imperialism and counterrevolution makes necessary.

The Guardian Sustainer is published monthly for members of the Sustainer program of the Guardian independent, radical newsweekly. All correspondence should be addressed to The Guardian Sustainer, 33 West 17th St., New York, N.Y. 10011.

More on Guardian Clubs

(Continued from page 1)

officially launch the Guardian Clubs organization sometime this year all of these problems and questions—as well as specific tasks for the Clubs, study-group materials, etc.—will be dealt with in detail. We have our own views on many matters, of course, but if this is to work it's going to have to be a synthesis of our views and your views—and that's what we're waiting for. In your letters to us, be as lengthy and explicit as you feel is necessary.

We're taking a while on this because we're aiming for results, not empty rhetoric

or a paper organization. For obvious reasons, we are proposing a relatively small, tightly-knit organization at first. But we have every expectation it will grow, not just in size but as the organized expression of a political tendency that has a real future in this country. We begin with a tremendous asset—a significant, established radical newspaper that is determined not to isolate itself from the broad progressive forces, even as it moves to define itself organizationally. If we do this correctly, the Clubs will make a very large contribution toward developing the revolutionary forces in this country. Let's hear from you!

Letters from our Sustainers

This spot in The Guardian Sustainers will be reserved for your letters every month. Try to keep them as brief as possible. All letters will be printed with the author's initials but you must send in the communication with your full name.

GUARDIAN CLUBS—1

J.S., Los Angeles: I think the Guardian Clubs are long overdue. With another Guardian reader I chanced to meet, we discussed a similar idea, the forming of a Guardian readers' study group. I would be very interested and supportive of putting the idea into practice in the central Los Angeles area. Please move as fast as possible on the Clubs organizing, as there is much work to do.

GUARDIAN CLUBS—2

J.C., Somerville, Mass.: I think your decision about Guardian Clubs is a good one. You seem to be proceeding firmly but cautiously, avoiding errors of either inactivity or self-centered arrogance on the question.

One criticism: I think the name "Club" sounds very Mickey Mouse, very unserious. It makes membership in them sound more like a hobby than a serious political commitment. I think "Guardian Organization" would make it sound too much like you were in fact trying to "form a party around the paper"—but how about the "Guardian Groups" or "The Guardian Association"?

GUARDIAN CLUBS—3

J. & R. Q., Berkeley, Calif.: We received this month's Sustainers newsletter and were pleased to read about the plans for Guardian Clubs. We have been frustrated with some of the local political groups, and as you state in the newsletter, would like to be active in a "concrete way." Although we both work more than full time and have a child, we

hope to be able to participate in some way, particularly if a Club is planned for the East Bay area.

GUARDIAN CLUBS—4

P.J. & R.S., Pittsburgh: The Guardian Clubs idea is interesting and sounds like a good one. We have some questions that would have to be answered before we could completely endorse it, however.

You said in an answer to a letter in the last newsletter that you "have never considered launching a party around the paper." What will distinguish a Guardian Clubs organization from a preparty formation? What will be the relation of the Clubs to the Guardian? Will there be democratic centralism, or will these be merely service organizations which do what the Guardian tells them? Finally, what would be the relation of Guardian Clubs to independent Guardian supporters in cities which do not have Guardian Clubs?

We have very firm agreement with the Guardian on most questions (the main exception being on the nature of the USSR, which we believe is capitalist), and hope to be able to work with the Guardian as the party-building movement moves forward.

SOVIET UNION

M.S., Washington, D.C.: There are many areas in which the line of the Guardian needs to be developed and sharpened. The nature of the Soviet Union, and the origins of Soviet revisionism is chief among these. I still see the Guardian wavering—seeing Russia now as imperialist, now as engaging in proletarian internationalism. This must be clarified once and for all. My own view is that the USSR is indeed a state-capitalist society in the early stages of imperialism. The revisionism of Soviet society did not arise from the "revisionist Krushchev clique" but had its roots in Stalin's programs. After all, it was Stalin who announced in the 1930s that the class struggle was over.

But to view the USSR as a social-imperialist nation does not necessitate opposing all liberation movements backed by Soviet aid. The Soviet Union exploits the class conflicts and neocolonial struggles in third world nations to gain a foothold. But similarly, the third world peoples exploit the conflict between the superpowers to aid them in their own struggles. To ignore the second half of this dialectic leads to the chauvinist position of the October League.

ZAIRE COVERAGE

G.D., St. Louis: The Guardian is to be commended for presenting the truth about the Zaire situation, while the OL and RCP

Help promote the Guardian

Circulation is key.

That was the assessment made at the beginning of the Guardian's financial crisis and it remains true today. Every plan to get the paper through the crisis is predicated on increasing the subscription base—the most basic form of political and financial support.

Recent events have further highlighted the need to work on what is the flip side of producing a good newspaper—distributing it.

First, recent events in Zaire and southern Africa have demonstrated that we have information simply unavailable anywhere else in the country. Consistently, our correspondent in Luanda, Angola—Sara Rodrigues—is exposing the slanders and distortions of the bourgeois press. But we must ensure that ever-increasing numbers of people have access to that information.

Second, summer is almost upon us—traditionally the period when new subscriptions and income drop off as people leave on vacations or summer recess.

Therefore, this year we're planning a summer circulation campaign. And we consider Sustainers a natural ally in this effort.

As part of our campaign, we're planning to build a network of people on the local level who will be willing to work on Guardian distribution.

We have many circulation tasks, everything from opening new outlets at bookstores and newsstands, to promotional distribution at special events, to circulating promotional posters and advertisements, to direct subscription sales.

Promotion and circulation tasks are serious political work—equally important as efforts to improve news coverage. No matter how good the paper is, its effectiveness depends on getting it into people's hands.

If you have time this summer to help with circulation work, let us know. We can supply promotional materials and guidance—and the best people's paper in the country.

are outdoing the bourgeois press in defending the French-Moroccan-et al invasion as a legitimate defense of "territorial integrity." However, I would like the Guardian to provide some more information about the Zaire rebels (who you characterize as "patriots" in one issue). What evidence is there that they have changed from a reactionary to a truly progressive force—have they renounced their anti-Lumumba activity? While we must, of course, support the anti-Mobutu forces against the imperialist onslaught, I don't think we should endorse them as "patriots" until we know more about them.

Kim Il Sung book now available

You've probably seen the ads for our newest publication: Volume I of a collection of writings and speeches by Kim Il Sung, "On Juche in Our Revolution." This work introduces the thought of an outstanding world Marxist-Leninist leader who is relatively little-known among the U.S. left. His writings on the importance of self-reliance are particularly important to our present party-building movement in this country. (See the review in the April 20 Guardian.)

We are sending a complimentary copy of this book to all our Sustainers, along with the new pamphlet "Grasping Revolutionary Theory: A Guide to Marxist-Leninist Study Groups," by Irwin Silber.