

**INTRODUCTION:**

For years the IS has been stagnant. And for years our internal documents have commented on the maturity of IS labor work, the professionalism of our activism, and the solidness of our core politics. These same documents have gone on to describe the poor state of the IS organizationally and our seeming inability or unwillingness to recruit. These two phenomena are related. If the branches etc. functioned well there would be some structure to recruit people to. If there was recruitment there would be an impetus to maintain branch life.

There has also been an understanding (albiet a silent one) that at root our failure to recruit (both a failure to motivate ourselves to recruit others and a failure to motivate contacts to join) was not due to a lack of energy but a lack of confidence in our future, a crisis of perspectives.

The IS membership is composed of dedecated and serious activists. We have time and again been willing to make tremendous personal sacrifices in order to play the role we do in the union reform movement. That willingness comes from a political conciousness that it was worth it because our work would be advanced.

On the other hand, that willingness to sacrifice is notably absent when it comes to the IS. It is expressed in the dwindling number of comrades who take political leadership. It is expressed by a series of questions like "what is the role of the IS?," "what is it we are trying to recruit people to?" etc. These are questions which neither the political committee nor anybody else has developed credible answers to.

These symptoms could be masked for a time by the regroupment perspective. If the IS did not have a perspective then at least we had

the hope that in the near future we would be in a new, larger and self confident organization. But we are no closer to regroupment today ~~than~~ than we were when we first adopted that perspective. The sense of holding on until regroupment ~~lacks~~<sup>lacks</sup> efficacy when the prospects for such a development loom ever further down the road. ~~(~~( We will argue below that regroupment as we have previously understood it will not happen). So we are thrown back to the question of IS perspectives, the question of building a revolutionary socialist tendency in this period.

Our adoption of a regroupment perspective, the reevaluation of our party building perspectives was our first attempt to draw the lessons of the 1970's. The failure of the regroupment perspective now requires a further reassessment and a new perspective.

We believe that the growth of DSOC and its immanent merger with NAM is reshaping the American Left and imposing a new set of problems for the future of our tendency. Our answer is that the IS should join the new organization that the merger will create. We are well aware that this discussion will be a painful one. We are convinced that silence will in the end be more painful. Without a new and credible perspective the stagnation of our tendency will continue.

What follows is first an examination of our experience as a socialist organization; a critique of the current regroupment perspective, an assessment of the IS today. From there we will reevaluate the factors behind DSOC's growth in order to understand what it is becoming—a mass socialist center. Finally, we will set out the arguments for joining in this process.



Another part of that challenge was the test of whether we could win a section of this new layer to socialism. Could we revive and implement the perspective of building a revolutionary current in the working class?

The activities around the strike revealed to us a possible road forward. We had gotten a feel for what a mass movement would be like. It was obvious that if any serious movement was developing the IS was too small and the left too fragmented to become a significant current. Our perspectives and work for the past 8 years had shown us that revolutionary socialists could win credibility even within the conservative American working class if they could provide leadership in the day to day struggle. Our experience in the "turn to agitation" had demonstrated that this was not a sufficient basis to recruit but it was a necessary prerequisite. That lesson drove home one point- size is critical. Without enough cadres to create a network of leaders there is no possibility of implementing a perspective of day to day leadership. We saw regroupment as a way to create an organization which could carry out that perspective.

We also thought that regroupment was possible. We saw that more and more of the left was orientating in a serious way toward trade union work and that as various party building strategies went into crisis the left was also shedding some of its sectarianism. The movement in the unions would be the glue that would pull together the healthiest sections of the left. The new layer of union activists would be the human material for a revived American socialism organized in a broad multi-tendency organization.

### III. Why hasn't regroupment worked?

One reason is clear enough, the dynamic we were counting on- the movement in the unions did not occur. Without that glue many of the forces we were looking toward for regroupment became unglued.

The OCIC went on its white chauvanism rampage. NaM is merging with DSOC.

*Handwritten notes:*  
OCIC  
NaM  
DSOC

As it became obvious that the reform movements in the unions would not provide the positive dynamic for regroupment, our motivation for it shifted. We began to emphasize the need for the revolutionary left to pose a credible alternative to a reviving social democracy.

The need is real and others in the left recognize it by this approach to regroupment has also failed. The evidence is quite clear. There is not today nor has there ever been any serious motion toward regroupment on a revolutionary, democratic, socialist basis. Our regroupment work may have enhanced our reputation on the left but it has created little else. We have some regular contact with two national organizations. We have a relationship with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters which is based solely on our common work in the union movement. They are pursuing merger with the CPML and have been clear that they see party building as something to do with other "Marxist Leninists", not with "Trotsky-ists".

We also have some dialogue with Solidarity; a Socialist Feminist Network. Much of that relationship is based on a few ex ISers who are now solidarity members. We have no common work with them. Solidarity is not yet for regroupment but may move toward that conclusion if they do not feel that they can survive as a viable independent organization. Even if they made that decision, unity between our two groups would be difficult to achieve. Finally, we have ongoing discussion with a few local collectives some of whom would join in a broader regroupment process but none of which would join the IS without it.

Why is this picture so grim? Solidarity's vision of a potential regroupment provides more than a clue. Besides the IS and themselves the other two organizations they look to are the Socialist Party and Workers Power. That prospect is not attractive to us or any one else.

There is no motion toward a revolutionary regroupment because

any regroupment that would take place along those lines would be more of a salvaging operation than a renewal of revolutionary politics. It would be an ingathering based on the defeats of the past decade, not on anything new or energizing. This regroupment perspective lacks precisely what make the original regroupment perspective attractive the challenge of a new radical dynamic in American society.

Meanwhile the shape of the American left continues to change. On the one hand DSOC continues to grow. On the other the revolutionary left continues to decline both in numbers and morale.

#### IV. Prospects for the IS.

Our response to this set of circumstances has been to try to continue the IS, doing what we can to recruit individuals, building the magazine, and fostering political discussion. This, it is recognized, is a very limited perspective, fundamentally because our prospects for growth are limited.

Most of our external work is in the trade union movement and potential recruitment from this area is almost nil. We have better prospects of recruitment of independent radicals from other movements, but this is limited. First because we are too small to intervene on a national level in any broad movement, and therefore can't offer contacts the possibility of joining the IS in order to effect the direction of say the new anti-war movement. Second, because the failure of all the party building perspectives of the 70's has discredited for many the idea of revolutionary organization.

There is a third reason why recruitment to the IS is a limited prospect, competition from DSOC. This is a recent development but it must be faced. DSOC is successfully carrying out its regroupment strategy. It declares that "as of merger with NAM, any democratic socialist, who is not a member is a dues cheat". The result is that people are not joining DSOC only on the basis of its politics but on

the basis of its size and dynamism. Socialists whose politics are far closer to ours than Micheal Harrington's are chosing DSOC. To the extent that this trend continues it will cut us off from our potential pool of recruits.

As ~~afixthexxibaxx~~ new movements arise the question of size will become even more important because the questions of intervention, our role in shaping those movements will be even more pressing.

All of the above leaves us with a difficult choice.

1. We can maintian the IS, holding on until some new opening is created. This ~~is~~ of course is what we should do unless there is a better alternative.
2. We can join DSOC. Our<sup>point</sup> of view is that joining DSOC is the better alternative. Its growth and growing diversity are cutting off the possibilities for building an independent revolutionary organization but the same development has opened up the possibility of building our tendency and effectuating a revolutionary regroupment inside DSOC.

To make that arguement let's begin by looking more carefully at DSOC.

V. DSOC; from a social democratic sect to the beginnings of a new mass socialist center.

We have regarded DSOC's growth and the merger with NAM as set backs for the American left. We have explained these developments as the result of the conservatism of the 70's that is, the failure of the party building perspectives of the revolutionary left and the lack of mass social movements. That view is correct but one sided. There are other reasons why DSOC is growing besides the fact that many on the left have abandonned revolutionary perspectives.

One~~is~~ reason is a healthy desire for unity in the face of Reagan and the New Right. Another is that DSOC is the oaily organization on the left which aggresively "talks socialism". It is committed to making socialism a public issue, of bringing out of the sloset. DSOC gives socialists a way to be ~~is~~public without being wierd.

Who is joining DSOC? Part of its growth comes from socialists who are moving to the right, but the vast majority of DSOC members are new to socialist politics. ~~There~~ They are generally young people who are moving to socialist conclusions out of their experiences in the anti-war student, women's and trade union movements. They are the kind of people, liberals moving left, who are the well spring of every new left.

DSOC is growing. It has doubled its membership in the past two years. It now claims over 5,000 members. Unity with NAM, now scheduled for early 1982 will immediately bring in another ~~ix2222~~ 1,500. DSOC leaders expect to have a membership of 10,000 by 1983, a realistic projection. The merger could well begin even more momentum. Harrington compares it to the "regroupment" of 1901 which created the Debsian Socialist Party. They project themselves as "the organization of democratic socialism." If present trends continue, they could well succeed.

As DSOC grows it is becoming more politically diverse. DSOC was founded in 1973 as one of three splinters of the old Socialist Party. The DSOC leadership was that part of the SP which supported McGovern in '72 and was linked to the "new politics" movement in the Democratic Party and the social unionist wing of the labor leadership. In its beginnings DSOC could be characterized as an intellectual center for academics, Democratic Party activists and trade union bureaucrats.

DSOC is, in part, still that but it is other things as well. While Harrington and other DSOC leaders want DSOC to continue to be comfortable for those kinds of people, they are also committed to building a mass organization which calls itself "democratic socialist". (The contradiction between these two models of organization are very important in understanding the debate in DSOC and will be explored below.) That commitment has led to an organization which participates in other activities and movements than reforming the Democratic Party. As an organization DSOC has been active in the anti-war and student movements.



It participates in single issue coalitions. The activities of DSOC members is even more diverse. Many DSOCer's for example, were active in the Citizens Party.

This diversity of activity has lead to a growing diversity of politics. DSOC now has a left, right and center. Until now, much of DSOC's internal struggles have been over organizational strategy, with the right ( the smallest of the three tendencies) seeking to preserve the "intellectual center", the left fighting for a mass organization which can recruit young activists and Harrington in the center trying to balance the two.

There has also been some movement on two crucial questions- electoral strategy and trade union policy. DSOC's committment to the Democratic Party is no longer stated as a timeless and unconditional one. The DSOC/NAM unity document, for example allows for support for third party and independent efforts.:" The form of our electoral work is not of primary importance. We emphasize the Democratic Party because in the foreseeable future that is where the forces with whom we ally ourselves are located. If and when those social forces take on other serious electoral expressions-in non-partisan campaigns or third parties- we would support those efforts as well." DSOC 's Left Causus is sympathetic to the ideas of independent political action. Most importantly, in unions like AFGE, ACTWU, and the IAM DSOC members have been actively pushing for independent labor politics.

Officially, DSOC's labor policy is that it has no labor policy. But many DSOC members are active in or actively concerned about trade union politics. That activism spans every position from the Laborer's bureacracy to Labor Notes. A few positive signs stand out. One is the friendly attitude of the Association for Union Democracy (whose staff and advisory board are DSOC leaders) toward Labor Notes and TDU. Second was the successful struggle to drop Jules Bernstein from the DSOC leadership. Third is the position of the DSOC Left Caucus which supported " genuine

rank and file struggles for the democratization of the unions, since militant, responsive, democratic, racially and sexually integrated unions are ~~xxxxx~~ a prerequisite for building a successful mass coalition and labor movement capable of transforming society."

None of this is intended to argue that DSOC or any significant section of it has as yet our politics on these questions. The point is that the range of politics inside DSOC are growing more diverse and open and that that process will be enhanced by the merger with NAM.

What this description of DSOC does argue is that if present trends continue, DSOC will soon become the mass (by American standards) center for a new left. Most importantly, it will be the place where the next generation of radical activists will first be drawn. It also means that every question facing the new movements; mass action, I.P.A., rank and file control etc. will find their expression within DSOC.

VI. The previous discussion does not yet make the case for ~~just~~ joining. It still must be shown that through joining we can more effectively build our political tendency. We think this can be done.

First, we gain a much larger audience for our politics. This will occur through participation in organization meetings, writing for internal and external publications, and greater cooperation with the DSOC left and its periphery.

Second, we gain ongoing contact with activists in many movements. This gives us the opportunity to gain some influence in those movements. Today, our meagre resources preclude our reaching most of these movements.

Third, there is a greater potential for recruitment to our political tendency organized as a part of DSOC. Such recruitment will come from inside and outside DSOC. Today our organization is a barrier to many who view the IS ~~as~~ as too small, too isolated.

Fourth, it is likely that ~~any~~ major events ~~■~~ that change the political landscape in America, ~~will~~ from a labor party to a serious labor upsurge, will be reflected in DSOC and draw many activists and leaders from DSOC. Our ~~■~~ influence will be greater on these events if we take part as loyal members of DSOC, rather than as outside critics.

Lastly, we have to stop ~~noe~~ of our activities in buidling the rank and file movement. While the dominant attitude in DSOC is still that internal union politics are not a topic for DSOC to discuss and adopt resolutions on, there is no restrictions on members activities. And DSOC members have been active in many rank and file activities. Participation in DSOC can potentially strengthen our network of labor activists, give ~~■~~ a boost to labor notes, and strengthen our political work in the unions.

What do we lose by joining? Other than the IS as an independent organization, very little.

Vll. There are several potentially compelling arguements against are joining DSOC. Lets take them up.

1. We have spent 3 years arguing against joining DSOC. A switch now will confuse our friends, generate some hostility towards us , and brand us as opportunists. While some may feel "betrayed", this does not justify maintaining a course of action when the situation no longer warrants it. Our position is that our friends should "regroup" with us inside DSOC.

2. The people we relate to in the trade union movement, the rank and file activists, the "broad trade union left" are not joining DSOC and they will not join a group which includes trade union bureacrats. First, some have and others intend to, including sponsors of Labor Notes and staffers for TDU. In the Laborer's Union DSOC includes Jules Bernstein and members of the rank and file oppositoon. In UAW region 9 both the regional director and members of L.A.W. are in DSOC.

Second, there is little potential here for IS recruitment or for a revolutionary regroupment. It is important to be clear who we are talking about. The "broad trade union left" is a trade union left. To the extent it exists, it exists on union questions. Outside of labor issues, it is a very mixed bag. It includes Iser's, hard Stalinists, independent radicals, social democrats, New Deal liberals, "born again" Christians and even a few socialist-feminists. It contains both indigenous workers and industrialized radicals. Amongst the indigenous workers interest in revolutionary organization is tiny. There is good reason to expect that as these workers become interested in broader questions and socialism they will gravitate to a mass multi-tendency group rather than the tiny fragmented revolutionary left.

Amongst the industrialized radicals, there is no common political outlook. Excluding perhaps some of the "Marxist-Leninists" there is a common mood (this is reflected in the IS as well) that "this is not the time for party building. The "broad trade union left" may indeed be ~~important~~ important in the development of the union reform movement and both Labor Notes and Changes should speak to the questions it faces but it is not a constituency for a revolutionary regroupment.

But by joining DSOC aren't we delivering up our trade union base? aren't we providing it with a left cover? The answer is ~~no~~ no to both questions. First the IS is not a shield protecting the rank and file from the influence of DSOC, nor could we be. We are joining a multi-tendency organization, which means that each tendency has access to each other tendencies "base". If we are "giving" DSOC rank and file workers, they are "giving" us a 1,500 member youth organization.

Joining DSOC does not mean giving various trade union leaders a left cover because we have every intention of struggling against them in the unions and in DSOC.

3. We have no joint work with DSOC. This is only true if we consider it on an organizational level. We do work jointly with many individual members, in the Citizens Party for example, and even in the labor movement.

4. The maintenance of a revolutionary theory and politics requires a revolutionary ~~party~~ organization. This is true, but it does not dictate the form that that organization must take. Revolutionaries have often been organized as a tendency within a ~~larger~~ broader socialist party. There are some who may feel that by giving up our organization we are giving up our politics. This is not true. We are taking our politics into DSOC with us (indeed it is only on that basis that we could join).

5. Related to the ~~■~~ above is the argument that ~~■~~ joining DSOC will intensify conservative pressures to adapt our politics. This danger exists, and will exist even if we don't enter DSOC. We experience it in the trade unions, in coalitions, in fact in all our work. The only defense is a political one,

~~through~~ through open ~~evaluation~~ evaluation and discussion of our activities. There are no organizational barriers to conservative adoption.

6. Why join an organization with which we disagree not only on the strategic questions of IPA or reforming the unions from below but on fundamental questions like reform and revolution?

Let's be frank. We will have to take responsibility for our membership. We will be for people joining DSOC. We will recruit to it as we try to win those recruits to our perspectives. We are not proposing a "French turn", the maintenance of a secret organization or a raid. We are for joining DSOC despite our disagreements with its leadership and most ~~of~~ (today) of its ~~membership~~. We are for joining DSOC because it is becoming the place where a new left is being created and because we want to be part of that process. We are for joining DSOC because the influence of our ideas can grow inside it. We have discussed elsewhere the growing diversity and openness of the DSOC membership. What needs to

be stressed here is that DSOC is not a disciplined organization and members are free to be as active ~~as~~ as they care to. Like others we will exercise our right to choose which DSOC activities we want to build.

We are not for joining DSOC because we are rejecting the politics of the IS. We are joining to be where we can build those politics. This is the only justification for joining. Indeed, the purpose of this document is to establish just this point.

7. Why be a despised minority? The question is despised by whom? it is unlikely

that we would be allowed in DSOC if we were universally despised by their members, and if that were the case there would probably be little point in joining. But we believe we can find considerable sympathy for a number of our ideas. We certainly expect to be a minority, and on some issues a small minority. We will be despised by some. But this should not render us ineffective. The latter will partly depend on how we conduct ourselves, partly on events.

8. DSOC is not really democratic, and ~~so~~ so a minority would find it difficult to organize for its ideas. There is some truth to this. Both by orientation and organizational structure, major policy has been set by the "influentials" with little or no discussion inside the group. Furthermore, votes are often conducted by mail ballot, an inherently conservative and undemocratic procedure. Thus there obviously are difficulties for any minority that hopes to change DSOC's politics. Yet there are meetings where politics are discussed, a discussion bulletin is published, conventions can discuss policy, and there is no limitation on one's political activity or on publications.

But it is important not to overestimate or underestimate DSOC as an organization. In the past it has often been a leadership with a following, but no organization. Many members (of the right and left) are not active in the organization. So not all ~~the~~ activists ~~we can reach~~ can be reached through official organizational channels. Things will be loose. What is important is that there are no limitations ~~on~~ on our right to raise political ideas with members.

9. We agree that DSOC is getting bigger and that good people are joining but if its becoming everything you ~~can't~~<sup>claim</sup> it to be, can't we work with these folks in the movements and intervene if DSOC from the outside? We can work with DSOC activists without joining DSOC but we can not recruit them to the IS. The IS is too small and revolutionary regroupment is not on. DSOC left wingers would sooner fight for their politics in a large organization than join a tiny one. Furthermore, to the extent that we have influence with and/or the DSOC left matures they will rightfully demand (a few already are) that we get off the dime and really help them out.

10. DSOC won't accept us, so why apply for membership? There is nothing in the DSOC constitution to keep us out, no political basis for excluding us. It is true that many leaders may want to keep us out since they will not want a serious minority. Yet they are publically calling on everyone to join and the unity statement calls the new organization a multi-tendency one. If we carry out a successful campaign among our periphery and their members they may not be able to exclude us even if they wanted to. They would pay a high price for it, because we would have shattered their pretensions of being an all-inclusive multitenendency organization. We would then be in a position where we could argue with the revolutionaries inside or around DSOC that they should be outside with us.

11. What specifically would we do to build our tendency as part of

DSOC? This is crucial even if it is only possible to give some tentative answers. The exact form of our activity will be shaped by the evolving politics of DSOC especially its left wing, the impact of the NAM/merger, how many other revolutionary socialists we can take with us into DSOC etc. It is also important to recognize that "our tendency" means more than just the current members of the I.S. It would include all those who are for " <sup>revolutionary, democratic</sup> ~~third camp~~ socialism".

At a minimum our activity must include;

1. Intervention in the development of DSOC's left wing.
2. Maintenance of Labor Notes.
3. Maintenance of an independent revolutionary socialist publication and educational center.

#### IN SUMMARY

We are sure that there are many other questions that must be ~~taken~~ answered before taking such a step. There are discussions that must be held with our friends on the left, and those inside DSOC. New developments might make this proposal irrelevant, or even more urgent. In any event it is a decision not to be made lightly, without thorough discussion.

It is a difficult decision to make, and unfortunately there are no socialist principles to guide us. There are dangers with either course of action, but also potential advantages. We start from a position of weakness, but not one of hopelessness. We must try to remember that the question is how most effectively to build our political tendency today, in the conditions as we find them, not as we would like them to be.

Two years ago we would not have argued for this course of action. However, there have been many changes in these two years. DSOC has grown and its character has changed, while our own position has worsened. We drew a line with revolutionaries on one side, only to find there was almost no one there, or at least not many willing to stand with us.



It is our sober judgement that the left which was created by the massmovements of the 1960's has been defeated (by the conservatism of the 1970's and its own sectarianism) and by and large destroyed. A new left must be created with a new generation of activists. The fact that DSOC will be central to that development maybe distasteful but we will have to join in order to participate, ~~in~~

We still believe ~~that our politics are correct~~ <sup>in a broader sense, the politics of the 60's</sup>. Unfortunately our very organizational ~~exists~~ makes it idifficult to reach and convince others of our politics.

We are suggesting joining DSOC not out of despair, or pessimism, or because of a need to be relevant ", but because we are optimistic that through joining we can more effectively argue for our politics, reach a broader range of people, participate in the reconstruction of an American left, and thus build our tendency.

① - purely org - not class  
analysis gets smooth -

② - Doesn't resolve crisis of neo-politics

③ - Is it true a new left is being created

Questions - how extensive is our  
joint work - detail

- Isn't this a too rosy reality of  
convention - ~~not really~~ <sup>needs</sup> a focus to treatment  
of internal dynamics - spell out ~~for what~~

~~left looks like~~

left looks like

④ - Fight inside DSOC will not change ~~central~~  
contours of left - <sup>just</sup> like the Egres -

⑤ - there's a crisis of neo-politics - + all  
Mark can think to do is join DSOC -

(1a) purely org response to crisis of neo-politics -

no discussion of who - what - when -  
how to get it - no real input -

Sylla + Charibdes

One final point - the ~~general~~ journal is a vehicle to facilitate the discussion suggested above. It is the discussion and its public airing that is key. If corrects before Chays can be such a vehicle, well and good, ~~but~~ but I doubt ~~it~~ it. A honest attempt to allow Chays to develop in this direction will prove far more fruitful in the long run. But the discussion - exhaustive, honest & clear, is ~~key~~ critical.

The audience for such a discussion is smaller, ~~select~~ even self-selected than the broader-based Chays audience

Miss  
 ① - Why an journal - not Chays

② -

~~Good~~ - Good - what is the audience for such -  
 who are the writers - (you will be a discussion - so who will lead it -)

Mandy - who will write for it -  
 - organize discussion -

David - open to special issues - needs & proposal  
Elissa - Levin's two papers