

A: PC, M-00, Bob S.,

5504 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15206
July 5, 1978

National Office
New York

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed please find several items on the New American Movement:

1. A copy of a document (three pages) entitled "Thoughts on the SWP and Electoral Politics" by Joe White. This is being circulated in the Pittsburgh NAM chapter, following the chapter's vote not to endorse our campaign but to work with us on specific aspects of it (at our invitation). Joe White gave a copy of his document to Mark McCulloch (an SWP comrade who is a fellow professor of White's). White told Mark that he was using this document as the basis of organizing some kind of grouping in NAM, though you can see how serious this fellow is from the document. White has subsequently been at our hall to listen to the tape of Bruce Levine's forum ("Socialist Unity"), bought Labor's Giant Step, and continued his general friendly stance toward us.

2. A copy of the brochure for NAM's national convention coming up soon in Milwaukee (July 19-23).

3. A copy of the letter NAM sent to Mark McCulloch, along with the convention brochure, inviting Mark to their convention. (The note on the top of the letter is Mark's.)

Mark is on vacation and will return July 10. He was quite incensed at receiving this invitation, especially after White's solicitous remarks about Mark in White's paper, and asked that we respond to it while he's away letting NAM know that he won't be able to attend, but suggesting that they might want to invite the party to send an observer. We haven't done anything on this yet, as we wanted to get this material to you first, have you send us any thoughts you might have on it, and wait until Mark gets back before we do anything (there's not that big a rush on it to have to send a letter in his name).

All of these things have been circulated in our exec, but not in the branch. The exec all agrees that we should do everything we can to avoid being identified with White's activities in NAM, but stay on top of what's happening.

I think it would be valuable to have someone from the party observe the NAM convention, but I don't see any special need to have that comrade be from Pittsburgh. Also, we didn't want to do anything about the convention without making sure our actions jibe with whatever's being done from there.

Let us know your thinking and we'll do whatever flows from that.

Comradely,
[Signature]
Kipp



- this was n...
co-addressed to Sue!!

5420 PENN AVENUE
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15206
(412) 363-0885

Dear Mike

June 19, 1978

Dear Friends of Pittsburgh New American Movement,

We are pleased to announce that NAM's national convention will occur in Milwaukee July 19-23. As the enclosed brochure describes, this year's focus will be on the U.S. Labor Movement, and the role of socialists within it.

We would be delighted for you to attend the convention as an observer and friend of the chapter. We can promise lots of interesting people from nearly every state in our country-- socialist activists with experience to share on a broad range of important issues. In addition to the opportunities for experience sharing which the convention provides, there are educational sessions, films, debates, and a major cultural event.

While this year's focus is on labor, the convention is structured so that participants may pursue their major interest--from energy organizing to socialist feminism-- in workshops and small groups throughout the time of the gathering.

If you would like to attend the convention, please use the enclosed envelope to send us a brief note stating your intentions. Convention costs are described in the brochure. We will be pooling transportation from Pittsburgh, so please indicate if you need a ride or can provide one. If finances are your major obstacle to attending, the chapter may be able to provide some subsidies, although we cannot now make a firm commitment. But let us know, we shall see what is possible.

If you've never attended a national convention before, and the prospect is somewhat scary, you can be assured that we will try our best to make you feel at home. You will have an assigned "buddy" to introduce you to other people, help explain our organization, and answer your questions.

Hope you can make it.

For socialism,

John Haer

John Haer
Organizational Secretary

Enclosures

THOUGHTS ON THE SWP AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Joe White

I see that the chapter has had its annual discussion on the whether-to-endorse-the-SWP question. Many comrades are probably sick and tired of the whole thing. However, the decision not to endorse the SWP in 1978 only means that the question will reappear promptly on schedule come the next elections. So I feel just slightly guilty about raising the argument that the chapter has made an unsatisfactory decision.

Let's begin with John Haer's document. On the whole I find his exposition of the SWP's historic position on electoral politics very clear and accurate, and strongly agree when John says that for the SWP, the most important task is always to "build the SWP." For anyone in the market for a good set of arguments why not to join the SWP, he has certainly provided it.

But the question is not whether to support the SWP across the board, but where we stand on the fact that the SWP is the only Socialist group on the ballot in 1978. John's way of acknowledging the essential accuracy of this formulation is to look at the SWP's program and to note that it includes a broad set of anticapitalist demands that NAM could presumably endorse, and a more specific call for a labor party, which John finds "not terribly clear." In any event John thinks that the SWP "would probably disagree with whatever program any conceivable labor party might put forward." Right around here I lose the thread of his argument. However clear or murky the SWP's conception of a labor party might be, I think that most NAM members would agree that some sort of labor party perspective is incomparably more realistic than either the "orthodox Bolshevik" perspective that holds that by some kind of political virgin birth the American working class will wake up one morning and fall in behind the "Revolutionary Party" or the (in my opinion) equally unrealistic perspective that the Democratic Party can be transformed into a vehicle for socialist revolution. What we're suggesting is that the SWP's call for a labor party -- whatever their motives for doing so -- is not off the wall.

As for John's argument that the SWP would probably adopt a stance of sectarian carping against a new labor party, I'm not convinced. My own hunch is that the SWP has moved so far to the right lately that they would support a totally reformist labor party. But surely the SWP's line toward a (not yet existing) labor party depends on a boatload of factors which it is unprofitable to speculate on at this time. In any case, that's the SWP's problem, not ours. I've got to conclude that John's argument--taken by itself--does not constitute a definitive case against endorsing the SWP.

Turning to Jeff's document, I find two main points in it. The first is that the SWP's approach to electoral politics may already have done the Left more harm than good, and the second is that for socialists to work in the Democratic Party might make at least as much sense in this period.

Jeff, who closely follows Richard Healy's arguments, implies that the SWP's electoral tactics breeds demoralization, passivity, and, ultimately, contempt for the Left. At one level my reaction is one of guarded assent. Yes--the SWP is rigid and simpleminded in their approach to electoral politics most of the time, particularly in their stubborn insistence upon running their own honchos in, say, Pennsylvania and then dispersing the slate of candidates to the four

corners of the country in the name of "building the party." It would indeed be far better for both them and us if they instead selected candidates who had achieved recognition in their workplace and community, and ran them not just once but several times—someone, for example, like Mark McCulloch, whose solid political work many comrades can attest to. But on another and deeper level, I feel just plain annoyed when Jeff asserts with no attempt whatsoever to provide any evidence that the SWP's campaigns are nothing more than a demoralizing farce. This strikes me as being way out of perspective. Even if one accepts fully the contention that nobody on the Left ought to be running candidates in this period (and of course whether other Left groups do so is practically beyond our control) think how much more difficult things would be if the Communist party or the Maoists were to enter the electoral arena! I do not think I'm alone in NAM in feeling that a CPUSA so gutless as to cling slavishly to the Russian CP in a period when almost every other CP in western capitalism has declared its independence is ten times worse than the SWP. The less said about the Maoists the better. But—back to the real world—it is indeed the SWP we have to worry about and on whom we have to come up with a convincing response when coworkers, neighbors, and other folks say to us, "we don't want to vote for any of those republican or democratic party bastards, but there's this outfit calling itself the Socialist Workers Party on the ballot. Should we vote for them?" Well ... it is a matter "of course" that the Democratic party is a bourgeois party. (Jeff). Am I suggesting that we endorse any group running candidates who happens to call itself labor, socialist, or communist? Certainly not! But it would take a case-hardened sectarian to deny the SWP's socialist credentials. As for Jeff's second argument that NAM keep its options open regarding the DF, I'm going to be as brief as I can. That question has been around for a long time and most of the original arguments—pro and con—have already been made many times. But I want to make two points. First: Jeff makes no attempt to cite a single specific historical instance where a tactic of working within the DF has achieved anything for the Left over and above the election or reelection of DF politicians, who upon election or reelection continued to carry on as BP politicians. Now the funny thing about this is that there is a historical record to consult. As I understand it, the CP in the 1940's went way into the DF in such states as Michigan, Montana and Washington. I'd bet that Saul Wellman could tell us plenty about this: how the party bored from within, what was accomplished and learned, and so forth. But so long as I can remember the discussion in NAM has never got beyond the same old appeal to "realism" — the DP is where the working class is at, etc., etc. In fact a marxist analysis provides some of the answers right off the bat: that is, the DP is organizationally and ideologically in such an advanced state of decay that socialists can work within it up to a point. However, to say this only raises the question, which I won't go into now, of why we should want to be political necrophiliacs.

Second point—our theoretical heavies know perfectly well that Ralph Miliband in the 2nd edition of Parliamentary Socialism concluded his analysis of the British Labor Party by writing that "the Labour Party remains...a party of modest social reform in a capitalist system within whose confines it is ever more firmly and by now irrevocably rooted. [The] system needs such a party...." I have never heard any of them attempt to refute Miliband's analysis. Now then: if he's correct for the British Labor Party, which, I can assure comrades, is based in the organized working class in a way that the DF never was and never will be, the same argument applies with redoubled force for the DP. And, as even Healy says, the further your tactics drift from your strategy, the better

your arguments defending those tactics must be.

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What should our position on the SWP's electoral campaigns be? Briefly, this:

1. We should tell them: Yes, we'll vote for you and tell other folks to do the same.
2. But we're going to tell folks lots more, namely, that we think your approach to electoral politics is highly questionable, and that the main reason for voting for you is that you're literally the less^e evil.
3. We in NAM have as our objective a broadly based Left electoral coalition independent of the DP, and we demand and expect the SWP's full cooperation in building such a coalition. If cooperation is not forthcoming, we're ready to roll right over the SWP.

Should the Pittsburgh chapter adopt these perspectives, the SWP question could, at long last, be laid to rest.

NOTE ON TIMELINESS AND IMPLEMENTATION: I am emphatically opposed to the chapter reconsidering its decisions taken **not** to endorse the SWP in November. Since some of the arguments I'm presenting are somewhat novel and controversial, I would like comrades to have plenty of time to consider them. In addition, the SWP question is in my opinion one of medium priority at best, so that I mean it literally when I say I'd like to see it laid to rest.

New American Movement

National Convention

*The Labor Movement Today
and
The Role of the Left Within It*

July 19-23, 1978

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

University of Wisconsin

New American Movement National Convention

(Note: Workshop list in formation. Additional sessions are being planned.)

Tuesday, July 18

6:00 pm Registration begins

Wednesday, July 19

10:00 Workshops & Educationals: Socialist strategy, Middle East, Lessons of the '30's labor movement, Introduction to NAM. Film: *The Word Is Out*.

12:00 Lunch

2:00 Workshops & Educationals: Building a multi-racial energy alliance, Eurocommunism, J.P. Stevens. Film: *Homeboys*.

4:00 Workshops & Educationals: Becoming effective in your local union, Urban crisis, Socialist feminism, African liberation.

6:00 Dinner.

8:00 Mini-plenary: Union democracy
Workshops: Anti-nuke movement, Socialist-feminist strategy, Therapy & politics.

Thursday, July 20

9:00 Occupational Caucuses: Health, Public employees, Teachers, Basic industry, Clerical, Retail Clerks.
Workshops: Violence against women, Organizing against Apartheid, Raising socialist children.

11:00 Workshops & Educationals: Problems for feminists in workplace organizing, Rank & file newsletters, Community newspapers as organizing tools, Bakke organizing, Lessons of UMW strike.
Film: *Gene Debs*.

12:30 Lunch

2:30 Plenary: The Future of New American Movement

4:00 Discussion groups on plenary

8:00 Miniplenaries: Health organizing and the state; Jobs, Taxes and the urban crisis; Reproductive rights; Labor and the fight against racism.

10:00 Women's party

Friday, July 21

9:00 Workshops & Educationals: Reproductive rights/women's health; Neighborhood organizing & development, Gay liberation for straight people, Building the urban coalition. Film: *Union Maids*.

11:00 Workshop & Educationals: Tenant's organizing, Lesbian and Gay caucuses, Union caucuses, How to produce a fundraising concert, Community health. Film: *With Babies and Banners*.

12:30 Lunch

2:00 Plenary: The Labor movement and NAM's role within it

4:30 Small groups with candidates for national office

6:00 Dinner

7:00 Free time; commissions: Energy, Feminism, Labor, Culture, Health, Urban crisis, Anti-racism

9:00 Party

Saturday, July 22

9:00 Miniplenaries: Clerical organizing, What's happening in minority communities, Health issues and labor, Campus organizing.

11:00 Workshops & Educationals: Problems in personal and political life (for women only), Undocumented workers, Clerical organizing.
Film: *The Word is Out*.

1:00 Lunch

2:00 Occupational caucuses; Free time

4:00 Plenary: Resolutions

6:00 Dinner

8:00 Concert

Sunday, July 23

10:00 Miniplenaries: Energy & labor; Culture and daily life; Gay liberation & Sexuality, Labor and the political arena.

12:00 Lunch

1:30 Plenary: resolutions

4:00 Evaluation & criticism

Monday, July 24

10:00 New leadership meets

New American Movement National Convention

The Labor Movement Today and The Role of the Left Within It

The New American Movement holds its seventh annual convention in 1978—a year that has brought new stirrings and hope for the '80's. But it is also a year in which right wing forces have intensified their assault.

In the face of a business and government offensive against them, tens of thousands of rank and file miners fought and struck for contracts for a decent contract. Struggles in Southern Africa have inspired growing anti-apartheid and anti-imperialist activity throughout the country, particularly on campuses, laying the base for a new student movement. Over 20,000 people marched in Washington protesting the Bakke decision. Thousands marched in New York in late May for disarmament. Such actions, and hundreds of smaller ones around the country, provide energy and vision.

But at the same time the New Right continues its attack, using such issues as abortion rights, the ERA, affirmative action, gay rights, undocumented workers and labor law reform. Well-financed, politically sophisticated and thoroughly organized, the Right has won several skirmishes, if few major battles.

Just as dangerous is the new tenor of political times on the direction in which the country is moving. A new ideological stance based on the decline of liberalism feeds a growing hostility toward public spending, public workers, minorities and women. It fosters divisions among progressive forces and creates a climate of fear.

The response to this trend will require serious political thought and action. In NAM's view, two key elements are needed: The development of programs that do not simply rely on tired liberal solutions but bring to bear a class perspective on the issues before us—programs that can speak to people's frustrations and provide a new basis for social action. Secondly, there is an urgent need for new alliances, and the revival of old ones, to defend existing rights and to advance in new directions.

The labor movement is central to such an approach. Its participation is vital to the building of a working class movement that can have the force to win on issues and the ability to forge a new political offensive that counters the right wing claims to speak for working people.

NAM members have been active within the labor movement in seeking to make it more activist and democratic as well as working to build connections with other progressive forces. In one city NAM helped form a coalition involving trade unions, community groups and gay activists to defeat an anti-gay bill in the state legislature. In several cities, NAM is working to bring together energy activists and labor people to attack the jobs vs. energy dilemma posed by business. NAM's abortion rights activists are also concerned with forced sterilization; they link the fight with efforts to stop cutbacks in pregnancy disability, trying to draw these struggles together.

The particular focus of the convention will be the labor movement and how work there is linked to that in other areas. A series of sessions will also be held around each of several areas of interest: feminism, energy, anti-racism, health and community organizing.

We invite you to participate in this process, and make it yours. As a democratic socialist organization, we are committed to the greatest internal and external discussion possible. The NAM convention is a time for discussion, evaluation and interchange of ideas, both among

NAM members and with friends with whom we work. Only in this manner can the cohesion and unity needed to defeat current attacks and forge a new, stronger socialist movement be achieved.

Costs

Housing is available in college dormitories. Bedding will be provided. Double rooms are \$6.50 per night per person; singles are \$8.00 per night. There will be no meal plan, but the university will provide inexpensive food (including vegetarian food) in several restaurants in the convention facility. Registration fee for the entire convention is \$15; \$10 for unemployed; \$3.00 for a single day. For NAM members, the travel pool fee is \$10.00.

Transportation

By car: Take the Locust street exit from Interstate 94. Go east on Locust, turn left on Maryland, which goes to the campus.
By plane: Limousine service from the airport to downtown is \$3.40. For a group of 9-12, the limousine will go directly to the campus for \$4.40. From downtown, get off the limousine on Wisconsin Avenue. Take the 30 Prospect, Maryland bus east to the campus (fare: 50 cents). Taxi service from the airport is \$7.50. By bus or train: From the bus station, walk 1/2 block to Wisconsin Avenue and follow directions from downtown above. From the train station, walk 3-4 blocks to Wisconsin Avenue and do the same. Note: There may be a bus strike in Milwaukee. If so, taxi service from downtown is \$3.50.

Delegates

NAM members apply for delegates status during registration. All members in good standing as of June 15 are eligible for delegate status. Only delegates may vote. The chapter treasurer should bring along local records and be prepared to clarify questions of membership status.

Observers

We welcome friend of NAM as observers to the convention. Observers can attend sessions, and can participate in workshops and small group discussions.

Children

A program of socialist child care will be provided free during convention sessions. The university will not provide cribs; parents of small children should bring car beds. Children can sleep free in their parents' rooms. Provide bedding. Please notify NAM in advance if you are bringing children, stating how and their ages.

Registration

Registration and all sessions will be at Student Union.

Yes, I want to attend NAM's 1978 convention:

Name _____
Address _____

Number of children _____ Ages _____

New American Movement
3244 N Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60657