

REPORT ON THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONVENTION DEMONSTRATION  
TO A JOINT MEETING OF THE SWP & YSA IN NEW YORK

by Lew Jones  
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This is a report on the Political Committee discussion of the Democratic Party demonstrations and our intervention. I'm not going to try to explain or speculate about why Johnson, Humphrey, Daley et.al. decided to use the force and the tactics they did during the Democratic Party convention. Whatever the reasons or source for those tactics, when they took it to the extreme of indiscriminately attacking delegates, radio and TV men, demonstrators, McCarthy forces and others -- mass sympathy for the civil liberties developed on a nationwide scale. The possibilities of waging a big protest for civil liberties and the right to demonstrate came out of that.

That brutality plus the nomination of a man as unpopular as Humphrey does nothing but contribute to the instability of the support for the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. In short, the situation we face after the Democratic Party convention is all-systems go for our election campaign. What has happened is that the ruling powers have nominated Humphrey and what's his name, and Nixon and what's his name, and Wallace and an unknown. The Peace & Freedom Party is not on the ballot in that many places and, where they are, they're split over whether to put Gregory or Cleaver on the ballot. They're not having great success getting on the ballot. It looks like they'll be on in fewer states than us. We'll be on in 19, 20, or 21 states. It's unlikely that they'll make ten.

On top of that, the summer antiwar actions and the combativity of the youth at the Democratic Party convention shows that there is going to be a deepening of the radicalization we've seen around the antiwar movement. It'll deepen to the point where there will be a possibility of many mass actions on the campuses.

The demonstration in Chicago, organized by the National Mobilization Committee, the Yippies, to some degree the McCarthy forces, has a long history to it. The demonstration was at this stage the culmination of a split over perspectives for the antiwar movement between the pacifists and the Communist Party on the one hand, and ourselves and other militants on the other.

Essentially three groups of people developed ideas about this Democratic Party convention. First was the pro-McCarthy forces themselves, starting with the McCarthy organization and going through the Communist Party and other groups, most of the leadership of SANE, Women's Strike, etc. Their aim throughout in building this demonstration was, of course, to have a pure and simple pro-McCarthy demonstration where everybody gets out with a banner

and marches, and the banner says, "Nominate Eugene."

Secondly, is what can be called the pacifists but in actuality goes a little beyond that and takes in a whole layer of former social democrats, or left social democrats right now. It includes people like Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, peripherally Dave McReynolds and people like that, including Dellinger. Most recently this group's attitude towards the Democratic Party convention was that they assumed that Humphrey would get the nomination and that the hundreds of thousands of McCarthy youth at the convention would go through a cathartic experience at that point. The thing to do would be to move in and recruit all those people to their banner.

It might be best to personify this in Dellinger. What he sought throughout in building this demonstration was a derailment of the antiwar movement and the creation of a new movement. That is, he and others around him, while they may give lip service to the progressive character of the antiwar movement, think it is inadequate to whatever task they see and feel that birth must be given to a new movement, a new coalition. What they are after is a generally "radical", ~~multi-issued, direct~~ action, "New Left" type of organization. That is, a grouping around a variety of issues that has no clear-cut political aim, but engages in direct action.

One of the things that has characterized Dellinger and this group throughout the history of the antiwar movement is that they have stood on the opposite pole from us in terms of mobilizing people around the antiwar movement. Their general line has been that rather than mobilizing the masses of the American people in action in the streets against the war, their line has been to mobilize fewer, 2 or 3,000, and engage in so-called militant confrontation actions the purpose of which is to "expose" the real character of the state and thereby galvanize the masses into action. That theory is known by other names such as the spark theory and is also popular with groups like the Marcy-ites.

Tom Hayden spells it out in an interview in the August 19 New Left Notes. He talks about what's going to come out of this demonstration. He says, in talking about election day: "We can have demonstrations on election day voting with our bodies. We can have an enormous number of arrests that day to again demonstrate that the whole political system is not working, is not operative." That is, the aim of such a demonstration is to have a lot of arrests and thereby prove that the system is repressive. You carry that logic to its ultimate conclusion and you end up with, a successful demonstration is when you go out and get as many heads busted and as many people arrested as you possibly can. That has been Dellinger's approach.

The history of the dispute between that grouping and ourselves, and the development of the division in the antiwar movement and the division on the Democratic Party convention goes back to April

15th, the prototype of an antiwar demonstration organized along the lines we would like to see. That is, it was organized by a broad coalition to reach out and mobilize masses in action. And some 500,000 people turned out. If you remember, there were an awful lot of polite cops that day. It's not because policemen are polite, but because there were 500,000 people out in the streets that day. The nut element periphery of the antiwar movement was quarantined at that demonstration and did not have much of an impact. It was limited to Dellinger and some 50 or so people at one corner of Sheep Meadow and the rest was a serious protest.

That was a political success. It was organized on a line to reach the masses of the American people and organize them in mass action against the war. In the context of getting those masses of people out, Dellinger, of course, could not do what he wanted. He tried but was isolated in that demonstration. To some degree, that has determined his course ever since. Since then, Dellinger has deepened the course away from mobilizing mass actions and more towards building actions that will build his own particular little base so that he can carve out his own particular little movement.

We began to see this on October 21st where Dellinger made known that rather than mobilizing thousands of people to come to Washington, what we ought to do is have 2 or 3,000 people engaging in civil disobedience. At one point, he seriously put forward the proposal that the action in Washington ought to be, in its entirety, a number of people equal to the war dead lying down around the White House. And they they'd sit until the authorities did something about them. That line didn't carry, as you remember. Nonetheless, Dellinger's attempts to do that type of thing had their effects.

Following October 21st, we went into the Stop the Draft Week experience which was a further deepening of this tendency to engage in the guerrilla actions of a small group taking on the state to the exclusion of trying to mobilize masses of people. What it really came down to in Stop the Draft Week was a further deepening which took the form of substituting tactics for political aims or a political line. That is, out of the Stop the Draft Week in Berkeley and other actions that followed around the country what you had was the utilization of what was called the "mobile tactic" -- substituting that type of "militant" action for an action designed to accomplish a general political aim. Since then, Dellinger has continued to deepen that.

All that is sort of background to the history of the Democratic Party convention demonstration. In December of last year, the National Mobilization Committee met and Dellinger and the Communist Party put forward the proposal of having a demonstration at the Democratic Party convention. That was in December and the Democratic Party convention was in August, a nine month difference.

We said that was deliberately missing opportunities, deliberately avoiding the possibilities that exist and deliberately not going out and trying to mobilize people. And we counterposed to that the April 27th demonstrations. We said that's what is important. We need another mass action right away to continue to mobilize people. Once we get that done, then we can discuss the Democratic Party convention demonstration.

Dellinger disagreed but did not oppose April 27th in words. He did in action. A few weeks before April 27th, he convened a conference outside of Chicago known as the Lake Villa conference. He called it in the name and authority of the National Mobilization Committee. There, Greenblatt, Davis, Dellinger, and the Communist Party tried to gell a new coalition that was decidedly not antiwar, but covering a broad range of issues, and whose first purpose was to organize the Democratic Party convention.

He didn't get any real agreement at that conference. There was division between the CP with its pro-McCarthy line and Dellinger's anti-electoralism and the SDSers local organizing bias. The whole thing was dashed to smithereens about one week later when Johnson made his famous April Fool's speech declining the nomination. So Dellinger was left with the National Mobilization Committee. But at that point, the Democratic Party convention idea was dropped.

The next time the idea of this demonstration came up was in the course of the Student Mobilization Committee fight. The right-wing exclusionists in the SMC favored a Democratic Party convention demonstration, although the issue was never directly posed. We countered that and said that no, that would be a mistake to have a demonstration there in the context of a massive McCarthy campaign in Chicago. It would be very difficult to tell an antiwar demonstration as separate from a McCarthy demonstration. Rather than do that, it would be much better to hold demonstrations August 3rd and then again in the fall of this year. The fall actions in the course of the elections when we can reach the most number of people would be especially important. And we called on everyone to call these demonstrations regardless of who the candidates were and not go to Chicago in the hope that one nice guy or another might be nominated.

Then in June, the National Mobilization Committee decided to hold the demonstration over our opposition.

At every stage in the history of this demonstration, the idea of this demonstration has been raised by those who sought to retreat from the antiwar movement and the fight against the war.

Up until the eve of the demonstration, the whole thing was pitched around the idea that there would be thousands of McCarthy supporters. There would actually be two demonstrations -- an antiwar demonstration and a pro-McCarthy demonstration. It would

have been very difficult to tell them apart, but that's not the point right now.

However, on the eve of the demonstration, it's obvious that the McCarthy machine got word of the preparations Daley was making and they decided not to come. McCarthy himself told all his supporters not to come to Chicago because he wanted to prevent violence.

The demonstration then organized mainly by Dellinger and those around him was explicitly to be a confrontation with the Daley machine and with the Democratic Party. And Daley, as you know, took him up on it. What happened at Chicago should not be a surprise to us or to Dellinger because it's more or less what he said he was after -- a confrontation. A confrontation with state power and with the Democratic Party without offering an alternative at all, without educating or showing people alternatives to the Democratic Party or the state. That is, a pointless, aimless demonstration that makes a virtue out of confrontation and physical battles in and of itself.

The entire leadership fell into Dellinger's hands. This demonstration in Chicago was more organized by Dellinger than any previous demonstration. It had his stamp more on it than any other previous one. Up till now, at least, the demonstrations have been balanced out by other forces. As a consequence, rather than being a demonstration with a clear political aim -- like demonstrating to Bring the Troops Home -- the demonstration became a confrontation type demonstration where there's no clear cut political aim and the explicit purpose of it, which the Guardian and others point to, was to "expose" the real character of the Democratic Party and thereby galvanize masses of people.

When it became clear that Mayor Daley was not about to allow demonstrations to occur, the possibility for turning the whole thing into a massive demonstration in favor of the right to protest, assemble, and free speech became obvious. But Dellinger and all those around him refused to do that. Instead, at one point Dellinger when told that he would not be allowed to march, marched everybody into a mass of cops and then told everybody to sit down. They were surrounded by two or three times as many soldiers and cops. Not exactly known as brilliant leadership, but there is reason to his madness. That is, he wants that kind of confrontation. He feels that the way to radicalize people and win people to his banner is to put their heads on the line. Luckily, the demonstrators were smarter than Dellinger. They got up and left, found their way out of that situation.

What should have been done in Chicago in the face of this continuous disruption of demonstrations would have been to go out and build a massive demonstration for civil liberties. They should have gone right to McCarthy and asked him to lead the march for the civil liberties of the protesters. Put him on the spot.

McCarthy got away with murder. He was able to sit there and watch everybody get their heads clubbed in and all he had to do was make a couple of little statements about how that was too bad and then, on the last day, go over to a rally. Rather, he should have been put on the spot and made to come out in favor of these civil liberties and to side with the masses of the demonstrators. If such a demonstration would have occurred, it would have rocked the country because it would have been a defeat for the Daley machine. But the leadership of this demonstration refused to turn it that way and, as a result of that and other factors, McCarthy became the hero.

Rather than educating people to the character of the Democratic Party and to the fact that McCarthy is a diversion to the anti-war movement, what actually came out was that McCarthy became the martyr and the hero of the week. This was proven by the rally on the last day. The National Mobilization Committee called a rally, had several speakers, and then said, "This concludes the National Mobilization Committee rally." A couple of leaders left and then McCarthy came over to speak on the same microphone with Eric Weinberger standing there at the dials and Dick Gregory standing right next to him. McCarthy spoke and he received a standing ovation, the biggest ovation of the whole rally, from virtually the same people who had been at the National Mobilization rally fifteen minutes earlier.

What the youth that took part in the Chicago demonstration were taught was that the Johnson-Humphrey-Daley machine is bad. But they were not taught that McCarthy is bad or the Democratic Party is bad. That's what happened with that kind of leadership.

Our estimate of the demonstration, that it would end up as a more or less anti-Humphrey, pro-McCarthy demonstration, proved to be correct. By that I don't mean to say that everybody was out in the streets carrying pro-McCarthy signs. But the demonstrators were seen by the press and everybody else as anti-Humphrey demonstrators. And partially as a result of their actions, McCarthy ended up as a martyr.

Suffice it to say that the basic character of the demonstration in Chicago was adventuristic. That is, what was done was a confrontation with state authority -- armed bodies of men. The confrontation was organized against the state knowing full well the state was preparing to take them on. And Dellinger and that leadership did nothing to prepare people to deal with that.

Our idea about taking on the state or armed bodies of men is that you don't do it with a handful of people. That's what lies behind our whole line in the antiwar movement. We reach out and try to mobilize masses of people to demonstrate in the streets against the imperialist war. The basis upon which this demonstration was organized is the polar opposite of our approach. Our prototype, the example we base ourselves on, is the Berkeley type

demonstration. There a rally was held in support of the French revolt and an attempt was made to suppress it which immediately changed the character of the demonstration. We recognized that and immediately went out and tried to build a demonstration on a civil liberties basis, got as broad a support as we could -- went to the businessmen, the church, and so on -- put pressure on the City Council, backed them down and won a clear victory around a clear cut political goal, the right to assemble. As a result, we won many people to the banner of the YSA, to the antiwar movement and to the cause of the French revolution. That's the polar opposite of what was done in Chicago.

All along I've been saying that this was a demonstration of the National Mobilization Committee. That's not at all true. It was a demonstration of a tendency within the National Mobilization Committee.

Part of the split and the process that's been going on in the National Mobilization Committee and the antiwar movement is what went on most blatantly and clearly in the Student Mobilization Committee. In the SMC, this same group made an attempt to exclude not only the revolutionaries, but everybody else so that they could carve out their own little movement. That was what the Radical Organizing Committee [ROC] was all about. And Dellinger and like-thinkers around him succeeded in doing the same in the National Mobilization Committee. They've been trying now since April 15th. They succeeded in doing it at this demonstration.

When the demonstration was first called, the first meeting that discussed it had a normal distribution of leadership of the coalition -- one or two representatives of the Communist Party, a number of pacifists, a number of local leaders from the Ohio area where the meeting was held, Student Mobilization, YSA, SWP, and a couple of other unaffiliated radicals like Jack Spiegel from Chicago and Abe Weisburd from New York. By the time of the demonstration itself in Chicago, the meeting I attended was entirely made up of people from Dellinger's general outlook. That is, the Women's Strike people were not there, SANE was not there, and most everybody else failed to appear. Dellinger had succeeded in taking over the National Mobilization Committee for his own purposes in trying to carve out his own little movement.

This take over reflects a coalescence of a number of pacifists and social democratic types around common aims. Hayden, as you remember, was long identified with the Newark Community Union project. Rennie Davis was working in the JOIN community union in Chicago. Dellinger, of course, is a pacifist. They are now coalescing into a group and are trying to organize actions for themselves, not for a broad coalition.

As far as our intervention, we opposed the demonstration and at one point were frozen out of the leadership of it. That dictated that our intervention in Chicago be mainly a propaganda inter-

vention. We wanted to go there and get our ideas out to as many of these youth as possible. With that in mind, we asked each local to send two carloads to Chicago. Some fifty comrades were there.

Our propaganda intervention at the week of demonstrations in Chicago during the Democratic Party convention was very successful. About 3,100 Militants, 390 "Truth About McCarthy" pamphlets, and \$75.00 worth of socialist literature was sold. In addition, 7,500 pieces of campaign literature was distributed.

Many organizations set up "movement centers" where people who were interested in their ideas could reach them or help them with their activities. We distributed 5,000 leaflets publicizing our two movement centers -- Debs Hall, the SWP headquarters in Chicago, and a room at Roosevelt University where we had a literature table. We urged people to help us distribute and sell campaign literature and to meet Paul Boutelle. A number of people did come and speak to Paul while he was at Roosevelt which is in the Loop area.

Paul Boutelle addressed a "Free Huey Newton" rally of about 3,000 people organized by the Peace & Freedom Party. He also held a press conference which resulted in news coverage on one of Chicago's major radio stations. The coverage included Paul's protest against the brutal use of Daley's cops. An attempt to have Boutelle speak at the final National Mobilization Committee rally on Thursday afternoon in front of the Hilton Hotel was rebuffed by the NMC leaders.

We were the only radical political group that sold our newspaper. Challenge, Workers World, the Daily World, Guardian, and New Left Notes were given away. We had considerably more salesmen than any of our opponents and were the only socialist group to set up and publicize "movement centers."

During the demonstration, a confrontation by 2 or 3,000 people facing 10,000 cops and troops looked like it was going to occur. The steering committee of the fraction decided to pull everybody off the demonstration except a couple of comrades to observe it. That decision was done in order to protect our own ranks. In a demonstration whose general political focus we did not favor -- a demonstration to have a confrontation with the police which, of necessity, is going to get confused with anti-Humphrey actions and in which we were not in the leadership -- we did not want to endanger our own comrades. There's no point. Our first and sole interest is in maintaining our own cadre and we decided to pull out of that confrontation. It was a correct decision and one we'll want to explain throughout the antiwar movement. That is, we're interested in serious confrontations with the state -- mobilizing masses of people that can win. There's no point in victimizing countless numbers of people in this type of demonstration which accomplishes nothing politically.



On the future of the antiwar movement after this demonstration: The Student Mobilization Committee conference called for massive fall antiwar action. The conference was well attended. (See report by Larry Seigle.) It put out a call for a fall action and generated a lot of enthusiasm around the idea of supporting GIs. The fall action, in fact, was called in solidarity with GIs.

Since the Chicago demonstration, the National Mobilization Committee has made two different statements about the future. On the one hand, Rennie Davis said that the National Mobilization Committee is going to have a series of actions this fall, and one of its primary activities is to educate people on how they can vote for fourth party candidacies such as Eldridge Cleaver. The next day, Dellinger made a statement saying NMC would have demonstrations this fall in solidarity with GIs. So you can see right off the bat there's a split in this new group between the Peace & Freedom supporters and the Dellinger anti-electoral approach.

In any case, it's clear that a mass action will occur this fall. The Ohio Peace/Action Council, for instance, prior to the SMC conference, called for fall demonstrations. The only question is who is going to organize and lead these actions. That is what's coming up next: the struggle to build a broad coalition on the right line that can organize the fall actions. What will be involved is a push and tug match with the present NMC leaders over what kind of demonstration we're going to have this fall. Are we going to have a brigade of 2 or 3,000 people going around getting into confrontations with armed authority, the armed state; or are we going to have a demonstration that tries to get across the basic themes, such as bring the GIs home, to masses of Americans and mobilize them in the streets? That's what is before us now and it is around this that our tasks for the fall period will be pivoted.

Our job now is to go out and start organizing fall actions, start putting coalitions together for local fall actions and educate people once again, as we have throughout the history of the antiwar movement, to the need of orienting the antiwar movement to mobilizing the masses of American people. With that perspective, we can look forward to possibly the biggest demonstrations in the antiwar movement's history this fall.

#### SUMMARY

It's important to see this demonstration in the context of the history of the struggle within the antiwar movement for a line for the antiwar movement. There are essentially two alternative lines before the antiwar movement. Our line says that around two or three simple themes, such as end the war, bring the GIs home now, the movement should go out and mobilize people into mass actions in the streets.

The other line which Dellinger has more and more deepened and tried to organize around is the idea that what is necessary is to get small brigades of youth, confront armed authority, by doing that expose the real nature of the system, and by doing that masses of people are influenced. It's the so-called spark theory. That's what was really involved in this demonstration.

Organizing a demonstration at the Democratic Party changes all the ground rules. In order to make it clear what you're all about, you have to oppose the Democratic Party including its politicians, namely McCarthy. Dellinger and the leadership of the demonstration refused to do that. It went to the point where Hayden said at a meeting: "We will consider the nomination of McCarthy a concession to us." The same slogan as "Part of the Way with LBJ" in 1964.

Had it not been for McCarthy calling off his supporters at the last minute, and had it not been for the Daley repression, it is likely that there would have been a big march of McCarthy people in which a small number of Dellinger's brigade would have been swamped and not much attention would have been paid to it. But Humphrey and the forces around him for some reason chose a different course. They told McCarthy about it. McCarthy called his people off, leaving the whole thing in Dellinger's hands. And Dellinger proceeded to organize it on his own -- his own little clique -- as a confrontation of a little brigade against armed forces that outnumbered him by 3 and 4 times. He sought, and it's explicitly stated by them over and over again, that what they sought to do was to confront the "real" character of the Democratic Party and the Chicago government.

When it became clear that Daley was going to bust up every demonstration they had before it got to the confrontation stage, it's true the question of civil liberties was posed. But Dellinger blew it. He could have organized a demonstration that would have rocked this country. There was mass sympathy for those news-men, for those delegates. A leadership that was worth its salt would have gone out and organized those people. Well, Dellinger didn't do it and he didn't do it for a reason. He doesn't want to do that. What he wants to do is gell out his own little political organization of non-electoral, confrontation, brigade-type actions.

I said in my report that the country was electrified by what happened there, by the brutality, but that does not mean that what you should do is to go out and organize demonstrations where you're sure there's going to be brutality. That's not the conclusion you draw from that. No, sir. On the contrary, we advocate organizing demonstrations that will do the job better and with less casualties.

Now, what do we say to people about this demonstration? First, we condemn the Daley machine up and down for being brutal,

suppressing every notion of civil liberties with the most brutal police methods. Secondly, we solidarize with those youth there on their civil liberties. But where we draw the line, the thing we're opposed to, is the leadership of the demonstration -- that is, Dellinger and Hayden and so on -- who, if they keep up and are able to continue having demonstrations like this, will dampen the radicalization. More of these kinds of demonstrations are not going to radicalize people. On the contrary, it will have a demoralizing effect and it will turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy about repression in this country.

What was learned from the demonstration? A lot of people were electrified and shocked by police brutality but what basic political lesson was learned? The lesson that was not learned was that the Democratic Party is corrupt and is controlled by the ruling powers, that you have to break with it and form a labor party or a black party. That wasn't what was learned. It wasn't learned because of the basic premises of the demonstration, and because of the leadership. But what was learned is that the machine within the Democratic Party -- that is, the Humphrey forces within the Democratic Party that control the party right now -- are bad guys. As a corollary to that what was learned is that McCarthy is the martyr of that machine -- "the hero of the hour and the martyr of the day." It's in that sense that the demonstration played into the hands of the McCarthy forces and it's in that sense that it was pro-McCarthy. The demonstration did not teach the lesson that it had to teach if you're going to confront the Democratic Party. You've got to expose it. You have to explain what it is and then point to the alternative and not on your last day's rally, when you're supposed to have a free speech rally, exclude the Socialist Workers Party twice and three times.

We want to condemn the leadership of this demonstration when we talk to people. But we don't want to do it in a sterile manner. We're not interested in making sterile polemics. There's no point in it. Rather the way we want to condemn them is by offering an alternative leadership in action. And the way we want to do that is through the fall antiwar action by mobilizing massive demonstrations on October 26. And not only that, we want to involve these "leaders" in those demonstrations, make them part of the leadership and make them part of those demonstrations as we did in April 15th. That's the appropriate answer and that's what we want to go after.