

Antiwar Report, by Lew Jones, November 14, 1967

Events have developed quickly since the October 21 demonstration. Already new activities are projected and a new relationship of forces is developing.

The SMC Continuations Committee, which met November 4 in New York, has called for a December 4-8 "Stop the Draft, Stop the War" week, a national Student Mobilization Committee conference over Christmas vacation, and a week of campus activities, including an international student strike near the end of March or the beginning of April. In addition, the National Mobilization Committee is discussing possible future actions.

Several local areas are also planning demonstrations or projects in the next period. In New York the Parade Committee is organizing a massive demonstration against Dean Rusk on November 14.

The rapid planning of future actions immediately after October 21 is a result of several changes in the attitudes of elements of the national antiwar coalition.

The October 21 confrontation in Washington had a deep impact on the Johnson administration, the American population, activists throughout the world, and the antiwar movement itself. The Johnson administration, embarrassed by masses of people protesting the war in the capital city, was forced by the very size and politics of the demonstration to adopt a "tolerant" position, which was seen as a sign of weakness on the part of the administration. The success of the demonstration enhanced the confidence of activists here and abroad.

October 21 occurred simultaneously with, and helped stimulate, a rapid deepening of antiwar sentiment. The vote of 76,000 people for withdrawal in the San Francisco referendum is indicative of the depth of antiwar feelings. This deepening of sentiment has been reflected indirectly in the newspapers by their usually sympathetic treatment of the recent demonstrations.

By far the most important index of the growth of sentiment has been the wave of campus demonstrations against complicity with the war and the draft. These protests have, to a great extent, undercut any post-demonstration pessimism which has occurred after previous demonstrations.

The most significant aspect of October 21 was a far reaching internationalization of the antiwar struggle. April 15 proved to activists throughout the world that the American antiwar movement was a socially significant movement. Consequently, with a minimum of coordination internationally synchronized demonstrations occurred in Europe, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Hungary, and other countries. This show of international strength has heightened the consciousness of the coalition of its own political importance.

As a result of October 21, related events, and the deepening antiwar sentiment, the coalition is now more conscious of the importance of the role it plays. There is more confidence in its ability to call, lead, and organize massive actions. This effect has gone beyond the coalition, convincing new forces of the political need for mass action and building the coalition. Most particularly, this has been noticed in some leaders of the SDS and among antidraft activists.

For example, Rennie Davis, a former SDS "community organizing" leader, has made a series of speeches upon his return from North Vietnam on the importance of the antiwar movement to the Vietnamese and the importance of reaching out to the GIs as an activity of the antiwar movement. Moreover, he has shown a willingness to work with the organized antiwar movement. This shift of opinion has also been reflected elsewhere, most notably in New York where various SDS leaders have developed a willingness to work with the Parade Committee and the Student Mobilization Committee on future actions.

It is apparent that the Vietnamese have exerted an influence on some SDS leaders and radical pacifists. During recent trips to Hanoi and elsewhere the Vietnamese impressed upon the Americans the importance of the coalition and its mass actions, and the need for a propagandistic approach to American GIs.

For these reasons a new situation is opening up in the antiwar movement. Forces previously hostile to and outside of the antiwar movement coalition are now moving in the direction of becoming involved.

This situation can best be shown by developments in New York and is indicated by the decisions of the Student Mobilization Committee Continuations Committee.

The Resistance, the group that organized antidraft activities prior to October 21, called a meeting November 1, to discuss how to organize for their next days of activity, December 4-8. Over 200 youth attended. A YSAer made a presentation, explained the Oakland protest, outlined the need for mass action, defensive formulations, avoidance of arrest, and how to combine an antidraft and pro-draftee approach. This perspective was not only accepted, it was given an ovation. Since then a united front type grouping including virtually every radical youth group in the city has been established to organize December 4-8 in New York. Nearly 50 groups have endorsed the action in New York. But, more importantly, the SDS chapters and the draft "resisters" have enthusiastically pitched in on a coalition basis.

As planned now, the December 4-8 week will include: December 4, the return of draft cards for those who wish, organized by the Resistance; December 5, civil disobedience by traditional pacifist

groups; December 6, a mass demonstration to close the induction center and to speak to the inductees. Organized around the slogans of "Stop the Draft," "Bring the GIs Home Now," and "Release all Inductees," thousands of participants are expected.

This is the first time that such a united front has been established on the student level in New York. It can be a harbinger of similar developments throughout the country.

The New York developments, and similar reports from other areas make it clear that a change in the character of the draft protests is beginning to occur. Previously, opposition to the draft has often been a diversionary gimmick, proposed as an alternative to mass antiwar actions. We have demanded that the draft protests be in conjunction with antiwar action; that they be of a political rather than an individual moral character; that they be massive; that they be done in such a way that they would appeal to GIs. Not only have large numbers of youth been drawn into the antidraft protests, but it is now apparent that there is wide support for this general approach and we want to be in the forefront of helping organize it.

The SMC Continuations Committee is trying to turn the New York Stop the War - Stop the Draft action into a national one. It is calling on all local areas to have similar massive demonstrations December 4-8.

In addition, the SMC has called a national conference for the Christmas vacation to lay plans for the spring activities. (The precise date and location will be determined shortly.) The conference will provide an opportunity to reorganize and broaden the SMC, drawing in activists from SDS and the antidraft protests, and the activists that have sparked the recent campus demonstrations.

The recent demonstrations have all revolved around the themes of "withdraw the troops," "end campus complicity," and "end the draft" -- the program of the SMC. The SMC's job is now to try to organize the numerous forces supporting that position into a single organization. Thus, the building of the Christmas SMC conference is a prime task. The biggest step toward this is the broadening of ad hoc united front actions like the Stop the Draft - Stop the War week, that draw in antidraft activists and any SDS chapters that are willing.

A proposal for an international student strike will be considered at this conference. Various groups in other countries have shown interest in this idea, making it possible for it to be a significant world political event. In the United States, the total number of students participating would be counted and that figure released. It is possible that the number could exceed 250,000.

It is a tacit assumption in the national coalition that another mass action will occur sometime in the next six months. The NMC, however, is still considering future actions. A special expanded administrative committee meeting will probably be held within a month to make decisions. It is most likely that the next date will be set as a culmination of the SMC week of activities in the spring. This however must be worked out in the coalition as a whole. Particularly important for the next demonstration is that it be international in character. Our call should be for 1,000's of October 21st's in every major city in the world, rather than one centralized demonstration as in New York or Washington.