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These discussion articles and resolutions were written for the Young Socialist National Convention being held at the Manhattan Center in New York City, December 27-31, 1970. They were written by members of the Young Socialist Alliance from around the country.

Similar resolutions and discussion articles have dealt with other activities in which young socialists are involved. They are being circulated prior to the convention to assure the fullest possible discussion on political perspectives and activities before the convention meets.

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WOMEN'S LIBERATION PRE-CONVENTION REPORT TO THE NEW YORK LOCAL

by

Ruthann Miller

The oppression of women in our society has many aspects to it. On one side is the economic function women fulfill which allows us to be subject to the most degrading work at the worst wages, where men earn \$5,000, we earn \$3,000, where they earn \$10,000, we earn \$4,000. There are also the side benefits of having someone beneath you whom you can command, eye, pinch -- someone who's view of themselves mirrors what you think of them.

There is the oppression which women with children suffer due to the lack of childcare facilities, as well as the lack of alternatives open to them. They are forced to bear the full responsibility for the care of their children; and the destruction of the mind and the functioning of women who must day after day be unable to as much as take a walk or read a book, let alone work without having to find, pay for and then worry about whoever it is that is taking care of their children. The psychological effects of having another human being totally dependent on you for their existence for 24-hours a day is one of the highest causes of suicide among young mothers. It is also a major factor in the thousands of children who are brutally beaten to death each year.

The forced mother or forced sterilization syndrome which most women still face given the lack of efficient, safe free abortions, the lack of women having any control over the institutions which affect them, such as hospitals, and the lack of birth control information, keep women in the same position our mothers were in -- pregnant! But by the time women reach that stage, we have been so well prepared to accept it that we hardly even notice that we're in the same position as our mothers, only the guy's got longer hair. Our mothers had abortions in the same way we are forced to have them -- in someone's kitchen.

The talents and ambitions of young women are eliminated and destroyed by an education system bent on educating them to be inferiors and bent on destroying any sign of self-confidence they might show. Their ability to function in anything other than a subservient position is year after year destroyed. Any three year old male child can tell you that the boy is supposed to win at everything, everytime. All the media -- TV, radio, magazines -- project and reinforce the image of women as mothers, sexual objects and general all around servants to men. The media is a part of the education of women to be inferior and one of the most effective tools used to keep women in their place. The media do this a at the same time they are selling women loads of useless items. Almost every woman is convinced that she is not like the women

portrayed on TV, but she is equally convinced that if she buys and trys false eyelashes, or perfume or wigs, she will fit that image. In reality, no one fits that image. As one comrade pointed out -- capitalism could not afford to have every woman think of herself as beautiful, because then who would buy that junk they sell?

There is the deeply ingrained -- if not constant, then at least nightly -- fear women experience. That is the fear of being attacked, beaten, robbed by a bigger, stronger, more powerful, and generally armed, man. Most victims of such attacks are women -- most attackers are men. Women are the most vulnerable victims. We have never learned anyway to defend ourselves other than running, and even there the boys are always supposed to know how to run faster. These attacks and the fact that any female who passes any group of males is openly verbally attacked denotes the powerlessness of women. It is similar to the insults given to Black people when they walked past a group of whites.

This powerlessness ---the feeling of being unable to direct or control your own life and a deeply buried anger which has been building for centuries has emerged in an unprecedented outburst. We are as tired of being patted on the head or asses as we are of working for meager pay, of being denied our right to control our own bodies and of the lack of any facilities for child care. We demand to be treated as human beings and not as organs of reproduction and sexual exploitation.

This deeply ingrained oppression of women and the objective situation and contradictions we face in the U.S. have been the factors causing the emergence and the rapid growth of the Women's Liberation movement. In the last ten years massive movements for social change have appeared -- the Black struggle, the movement against the Vietnam War, the general radicalization of students and young people, the Chicano movement. Now another movement has sprung from this radicalization, the movement for the liberation of women. The extreme contradictions women now face are at the root of this movement: the contradiction between the fact that more and more women are receiving higher education than ever before and the fact that the jobs and opportunities open to them are becoming more limited rather than less; the fact that the gap between the wages and opportunities for women as opposed to those for men has increased in the last three years, not decreased; the contra-

diction between the technological possibilities that exist for women to be able to control their own bodies -- and the fact that reactionary laws, medical institutions and the entire government of the U.S. continue to deny women that right. But the deepest contradiction, however, is that which is embodied in the family. The family is the institution most connected with the oppression of women. The family as we now know it is often times presented as an eternal entity. It has always been and always will be. But that is not the case at all. The nuclear family plays a specific role in capitalist society. It provides the mechanism through which the next generation of producers can be brought forth, fed, clothed, educated and inculcated with the values of those in control, without any cost or effort to them. It also isolates small groups of people from other groups of people and forces them to compete with each other in order to survive. As regards women, if first and foremost assigns to them the task of the cleaning, the caring for, and the bringing forth of new workers. It isolates women from each other and forces each woman to repeat the boring repetitive drudgery of menial jobs. It institutionalizes the role of women as being that of wife and mother and aids in closing the door to all other opportunities and alternatives by placing on us the full burden of childcare and personcare. The family, and the women's role in it, is used to supply the reason why women receive only half men's wages. As long as the family unit defines women's role as being in the home, caring for children, then that will be used as an excuse for not paying women equally.

It is essential to capitalism that women continue to produce workers as cheaply as possible. The cost of paying for the services women perform and the cost of doubling the salary of every working woman is one which Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Kennedy will not pay, and incidently is more of a motivating force for Kennedy's position on abortion than his religious morals. The family is a main way of passing on the morality of starvation for some and wealth for others. For the woman, it forever locks her into a role of economic dependence on men -- relying on them for their very existence -- both economically, socially and in the way she sees the world through the man in her family, be that her father or her husband.

While this movement has many parts of in which can be viewed in similar ways to other struggles, its attacks against the family and the logic of our demands leading to a replacement of the family with a more rational, woman-benefitting, human way to organize the gathering of the needs for human beings existence, is one of the reasons for the unique nature of this movement. The fact that this movement affects a majority of the population and directs itself to one of the most deeply ingrained and oldest forms of oppression, the fact

that it is a movement which discusses personal relationships and the basis on which they rest as an expression of the total oppression and degradation of women, mark it as a totally new movement, and one from which revolutionary socialists can learn in our struggle to build a society where all forms of oppression are eliminated.

It is in the context of the role the family plays as one of the bastions of capitalism that the demands of the women's liberation movement are revolutionary. The reasons why these demands are directed at the government and ruling class stems from the fact that the family functions in the interest of that class. The logic of the demands of the women's liberation movement such as the demand for free community-controlled childcare is the replacement of the nuclear family as part and parcel of the replacement of the entire system of capitalism with socialism.

The rapid changes and growth the women's liberation movement has experienced in the last year are only an indication of the continued expansion and continued changes which will occur in this movement. It has gone from a few women discussing the unheard of concept of a separate all women's movement -- one which would struggle for the liberation of women and deal with every issue, expressing the effect and reality of the oppressed role women are forced into -- and has developed from that into a movement which was able on August 26 to mobilize thousands of women in actions clearly directed against the ruling class in this country, action which raised the demands of free abortion on demand, no forced sterilizations, free 24-hour childcare centers community controlled and equal job and education opportunities.

We are now at the stage in the women's movement where viable coalitions of women organized around issues and demands they agree on have been and must continue to be formed. These coalitions are able to include in them a broad spectrum of groups and organizations: the YWCA, women's caucuses of unions, campus groups, all the many consciousness-raising groups, women organized in the professions, in the schools and in the communities. Such mass action coalitions are the only way in which masses of women will be brought into the women's liberation movement and the only way to directly attack the system and rulers who are causing and profiting from our degradation. Therefore the building of these action coalitions are an essential and central job that the women's liberation movement, and we as part of that movement, must take on. These coalitions as well as the entire women's liberation movement must be open to all women. The oppression of women is felt by all women to one degree or another. All women are potential feminists and in order

to build the kind of powerful movement necessary to win this struggle and to change this male supremacist society, the women's liberation movement must not allow any woman or group of women to be excluded from the movement. The demands of these coalitions must be ones which can move thousands of women into action such as the August 26 demands have been able to do, they must be demands which deal directly with the oppression of women and which are able to raise the consciousness of women about the nature of this society. Women are oppressed in many different ways and many different demands have been raised, for instance the demands directed at the institution of marriage. But the most important question in regard to the demands for these coalitions will be whether the demands can unite in action massive numbers of women as the demands of August 26 are able to do. On August 26 we saw a powerful, unprecedented outpouring of support for the women's liberation movement, as well as seeing the beginning of an awakening of a mass feminist consciousness. We and the women's liberation movement saw the effects of and the necessity of organizing action coalitions. We also saw the need to draw women from that first step toward feminism into all-women organizations which can offer a full program and activities around all the aspects of the oppression of women.

The need for consciousness-raising as an integral part of the overall struggle for women's liberation is tied to our strategy for building a mass movement. Consciousness-raising acquaints women with their own oppression. It allows those who suffer this oppression to determine and decide on the direction and the tactics of the fight for total liberation on the basis of an analysis of the extent and character of that oppression. Consciousness-raising is not an individualistic approach to a social problem, such as draft-resistance is in the antiwar movement. Draft resistance is a backing away from the fight to build a mass antiwar movement. Consciousness raising is a building up of the ability necessary to build a mass movement. It lays the basis for breaking women out of their individual isolation and into a social and political struggle to reorganize society. It builds the kind of self-confidence and pride in being female which is essential to organizing a mass movement -- of women.

Mass actions and the building of a mass movement through the formation of coalitions will also help build all of the feminist organizations in the women's liberation movement. The participation and the strengthening of these organizations is an important part of building the women's liberation movement, be they campus groups, consciousness-raising groups, Third World women's groups, high school groups, women's study programs, or special interest groups around issues such as abortion and child-care.

On campus, the women's liberation groups should be able to play the role of

the initiators and leading activists in the coalitions being formed. In New York, the bulk of the support for the next action of the Women's Strike coalition -- the December 12 March on Lindsay has come from the campus groups. These groups will be involved in struggles to make the university a base for the organizing of the struggle for liberation. The campus groups have the potential of linking up the university struggles around such issues as childcare, abortion and equality in jobs and education, with the struggles and demands of the women in the community. Women on campuses have the unique opportunity of having the facilities and atmosphere to conduct far-reaching educational campaigns around the oppression of women, such as mass meetings, forums, classes, lecture series and consciousness-raising groups, and to open those activities to the women in the surrounding communities.

The rise of the feminist consciousness among Third World women is one of the most significant aspects of the women's liberation movement. Already women from the most oppressed sector of the working class are beginning to take the lead in the struggle for the liberation of women. These women are part of and will eventually be in the leadership of the nationalist struggles in this country as well. Because they are oppressed as women in a different way due to their oppression as Blacks, as Puerto Ricans, Chicanas and Native Americans, they are organizing separately from the other organizations of the women's movement. Since their organizations have to deal with their special, compounded oppression, our movement as well as the women's liberation movement must understand, explain, support and defend that right. These women can directly bring the experiences of one of the most powerful movements in our country -- the Black struggle -- into the women's liberation movement and can likewise aid the further development of the Black movement through their struggle against their oppression as women. There have been different organizational forms in the Black Women's liberation movement just as in the rest of the movement. And in general we see that masses of Black women will be brought into the feminist movement through mass actions around specific demands. They will have become feminists around the same issues and demands as the rest of the female population and will join Third World feminist organizations which will deal with all aspects of their oppression as women.

The women's liberation movement is still a new changing movement. In its short history it has been able to affect and change concepts of humanity which have been held for thousands of years. It is a movement which has been and is a real test for those who call themselves Marxists. Those who are our opponents on the left have responded to this test by using

Marxism as a dogma and discrediting themselves in the eyes of women searching for a solution to their oppression. The Communist Party, PL and IS have failed to understand the revolutionary potential of this movement and have spent their energies trying to convince women to go home -- or trying to convince them to struggle around any and every issue except those which are "women's issues." We, on the other hand, of all the "Marxist" tendencies, recognize the validity and power of a movement of women, organized around fighting any and all forms of their own oppression. We are the only ones who have learned from this movement, and who have contributed to it the true wealth of Marxism, that is, the ability to use it as a tool to analyze reality, to analyze the nature of the women's liberation movement. This has enabled us to see it as the powerful revolutionary movement it is. We must continue to convince feminists who want to be part of the organization of an entire struggle to change this society and who want to unite all oppressed people in the gigantic task of defeating

the system of exploitation and oppression in this country, that they should be in the revolutionary socialist movement, in the YSA. We must continue to immerse ourselves in this movement, to learn from it and to wholeheartedly embrace it as new forces for a revolution in this country.

Women in the YSA are part of the women's liberation movement because they are oppressed as women and see the women's liberation movement as building the forces capable of ending that oppression. And as socialists we see that struggle totally connected with the struggle to change this society into one where no people are oppressed. There can be no talk of being too much of a feminist for revolutionaries. Rather it is our job to aid in making sure that every woman in this country becomes too much of a feminist.

New York

November 29, 1970

DEVELOPMENT OF GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S LIBERATION

by

Margaret Scott

George Washington Women's Liberation was formed in late August, about a week before the August 26 demonstration. The group was initiated by the YSA, when we discovered there was no campus women's liberation group. We then decided to call a meeting of all women interested in forming a women's liberation group.

The number of women who showed up for the first meeting was surprisingly large. We did not expect very many people since school was not in session, and many working people were out of town on vacations. But the meeting went very well: it left us all with a feeling for the enormous potential of the women's liberation movement. In fact, at the first meeting a contingent was organized of about a dozen women to march in the August 26 demonstration under the banner of George Washington University Women's Liberation.

At the first few meetings after the August 26 action, the women talked more or less generally about the kind of strategy for the group and decided on the idea of calling a conference. The conference was seen as a vital step at that phase in the movement primarily because of the confusion that existed with respect to the various political perspectives within the movement as well as a general ignorance about the issues. The group projected the conference as an open forum, for the purpose of education. At that first meeting, the women unanimously agreed that as a group we would not define our politics to such an extent as to direct the political bias of the conference. Such politics as we would eventually develop as a group could only evolve out of lengthy debate and a larger organization.

Along with the educational benefits to be gleaned from the conference, we saw it as an excellent basis for strengthening the George Washington group. We saw the activity of working together on the project as having an unifying effect and drawing good, seriously inclined women in to work with us.

When the University opened in the fall, we did extensive publicizing for the first large meeting through leaflets and announcements in the university paper. At this particular meeting we made some fairly serious mistakes about the kinds of issues that would mobilize the women on campus. These mistakes were to slow our progressive building of the group considerably. The fundamental problem was that the women who had been part of the organization in mid-summer were already well into planning for the conference

when the large influx of college women came into the group. At the first meeting after the opening of the fall semester about 150 women attended. Most of them came wanting to be informed about the movement itself. Most had not come out of a pre-formulated decision to be active in the movement, but rather out of a genuine interest in orienting themselves concretely with respect to the movement.

Instead of an orientation geared specifically to their expectation, they found a central group of about 15 women already involved in the logistics of conference planning. They felt cut off; most of them returned either a few times or not at all. However, about twenty new women did join from these meetings at the beginning of the semester. These women, already to one degree or another committed to the women's liberation movement, were excited about the conference and worked very hard to build it through the next month.

The National Organization of Women worked very well with the George Washington group in planning the conference. Some of the women we had invited to work in various aspects of the conference with us were reluctant to do so as a result of being still shaken by the political hostilities brought to the fore in the August 26 coalition. We explained that the conference had been called and projected by George Washington University Women's Liberation precisely in response to August 26, to attempt to clarify some of the debates going on within the movement and that the conference had been planned flexibly so that new workshops could be added by any women who felt that women's problems were not comprehensively covered by other workshops. Several workshops were added, in fact, which had not been planned by the George Washington group and which were totally organized by the women who formulated them (we had provided for workshops on: Media, Abortion, Day Care, Lifestyles, Third World Women, Equal Rights Amendment, Fundamental Causes and Working Women). NOW formed a workshop dealing with specific problems of marriage. A men's consciousness raising group was formed for men who wanted to talk over their responses to the movement. With respect to the women in NOW, the conference and the work leading up to it formed a very good focus of activity between the two groups, especially leading to subsequent work together on the Equal Rights Amendment.

Our ability to work with the Citywide Women's Liberation group was far more limited in a number of ways. The local feminist paper, off our backs, which is closely affiliated with the Citywide group,

decided it did not want to participate in the conference Media Workshop on the grounds that there would be women from the bourgeois media participating. While efforts to discuss the matter with them proved difficult, they eventually did end up coming to the conference and participating freely in the debate.

The Citywide group in general grew increasingly antagonistic to the conference in a number of ways. Their tendency throughout the weeks before the conference was to see the efforts to build it as a battleground of political in-fighting, a three-way struggle for power between NOW, YSA women and themselves. At their meetings and in private conversation with politically inexperienced women from the group, they worked to develop suspicions and doubts about YSA women's role in the conference. The most overt manifestation of this tendency was their attempt to set up a workshop entitled: "Differences Between Women's Liberation, YSA and NOW." "While we maintained a flexible attitude with respect to the workshops, we refused to comply with this demand. The general feeling was that a conference calling itself "A Conference to Unite Women," projected for the purpose of drawing women together, had no interest in forming a workshop directed at concentrating on points of disagreement as opposed to those issues which could draw us together.

We had planned two general sessions for Friday and Saturday night. For Friday night there were speeches by Wilma Scott Heide of NOW and Ruthann Miller and a guerrilla theater created by the George Washington group. The plans were to have a speaker from Women's Liberation, a speaker from the George Washington group and a Karate Demonstration from Boston for Saturday night. Those plans were changed in the last week in order to accommodate the Citywide's request that they participate on Friday night with the other key speakers. They also helped organize the play Everywoman for Saturday night, which was very successful.

I will go over briefly the experience of the conference itself and the ways in which it pointed us in the direction we are presently moving and why I consider it to have been a vital and positive step in the development of the George Washington group.

To publicize the conference, there were announcements on several of the public service radio stations, all of the major college papers in the area and a very small blurb in the Washington Post. We also leafletted heavily with printed brochures showing detailed schedules of the conference. We leafletted in town, out in suburban shopping centers and around all the universities.

The conference was attended by about three hundred people over the two day span of events. The women attending were of various ages, occupations and background. There were more older, middle-class type

women attending than is generally the case with conferences of this type, due undoubtedly to the participation of NOW. The result of the varied backgrounds of the women present was to bring out some crucial debates that have been prevalent in the movement. Debates centered around such issues as the draft and the Equal Rights Amendment, the usefulness of alternative institutions, the extent to which women should work within the system and a number of others. This debating was much more marked at our conference than it has been at other women's liberation conferences I have attended in the past. These conferences tended to be much more homogeneous, attended by radical women and consequently left those attending with a delusive sense of sisterhood without coming to grips with the kinds of struggles we must face.

The only discouraging thing about the conference was the small number of women who came from the George Washington University dormitories. When we saw how few women were coming from the largest dormitory, we sent a couple of women over there to try to get women to attend. There was very little enthusiasm according to those who went over. The women were either busy getting ready for dates (it was Saturday night) or they were hostile.

This problem determined the central focus for future activity at George Washington. We realized that we had not been getting at the consciousness of university women on a practical and realistic enough level to introduce them into the movement. We realized that for most women, the time spent in a university is the least degrading in their lifetimes. We saw that a lot of women were simply not ready to give up their Saturday night date to talk about their oppression, that they would come to articulate that kind of sex-role-object kind of oppression via involvement in the most immediate and pressing manifestations of discrimination against them.

So, to close, in educational terms the conference was a good experience. It brought into being a tight core of 25 women or so who have become consistent, serious members of the organization. Two members of the group have joined the YSA and a periphery of about five or six are very friendly to us and likely to join. Moreover, after a period in limbo, the group has begun to grow again and develop strength through a struggle around a Student Health Center that will meet the needs of the women on campus. So the group is growing and likely to continue to do so.

Washington, D. C.

December 10, 1970

ON THE DIVISION OF THE BOSTON LOCAL

by

Stu Singer

The division into three locals in Boston has accomplished most of the improvements we originally intended. The transition from one local to three has not followed a blueprint, however, and there are still areas where the division of responsibility is evolving.

We had hoped to achieve increased efficiency and development of new leadership. It was possible to go ahead with the division because of the large recruitment from the May upsurge. During the summer the YSA membership reached over ninety. With graduations and people leaving who had been here just for the summer, the number declined by about fifteen at the beginning of school. The number today is about the same, with the number of dropouts, graduations and transfers approximately equal to the recruitment.

The division into three locals was passed unanimously by the YSA, but there had originally been other proposals including division into two locals and strengthening of campus fractions but no division. Everyone's agreement that some change was necessary led to recognition that the plan for three locals was the most logical. The locals are concentrated on the three major campuses, Harvard, Boston University and Northeastern. The names of the locals, Cambridge, North Boston and South Boston are geographical and may be changed to the names of the campuses when we build strong bases. Other campuses in the city are assigned, mainly according to geography, to the different locals. Comrades were divided among the locals first according to where they went to school, second according to where they lived and third to guarantee a fair distribution of experienced comrades among the locals. Each local started with twenty-five to thirty members.

In the first week of the division into locals there was a citywide meeting which elected a ten-member city executive committee. The election of local executive committees of eight members each gave twenty-four comrades, many very new, the experience of being on the leading bodies of the YSA. It would have been impossible for so many comrades to serve on the executive committee without the division--a twenty-four member body would not be an executive committee in the sense we understand. The first local organizers were all experienced comrades. There are now three new organizers,

all young campus activists, who indicate the new layer of leadership that has developed. This recent change also freed the original organizers for major responsibilities in other areas of work. This change also corresponds to a general feeling of increased confidence on the part of the executive committees. One of the best results of the division is that about one-third of the YSA members in Boston are members of executive committees and there are four organizers. In addition to these responsibilities, many other comrades have important assignments in fractions and internal work which were generally carried out by a much smaller number of people before the division.

Our work fractions and especially their steering committees are organized citywide in order to provide coordination between the campuses. In spite of the division, the three largest fractions antiwar, women's liberation and campaign, did not suffer much on a city basis. The steering committees of these fractions usually meet weekly; they are composed of people in the fraction involved in each area of fraction work plus a representative from each local who has the responsibility of reporting from the fraction to the local. Full citywide fraction meetings are held infrequently. Although each local has its own fractions in antiwar, women's liberation and campaign, none of them have begun to function much. Their work tends to be covered by either the citywide fractions or the campus fractions. As our campus base expands the fractions within the locals will become more important.

The city executive committee is the highest body in the Boston YSA. Its function is to provide political direction and coordinate the general work among the three locals. The city organizer is a full-time paid assignment. The city exec has held city YSA meetings an average of about once a month since the division. There will be probably fewer city meetings in the future. The three organizers are not all members of the city exec but they are automatically invited to its meetings. The role of the city exec is still evolving. Some of its coordinating functions are being accomplished through meetings of the four organizers.

Each local holds weekly meetings at the same time (about noon Sundays). This

avoids difficulty in scheduling fraction meetings and educationals. The Cambridge and North Boston locals meet respectively at Harvard and B.U.; South Boston meets at the YSA-SWP headquarters which is next to Northeastern University. The bookstore and the Militant Labor Forum are citywide. The expenses for citywide activities (including rent, organizer, etc.) are divided equally among the locals.

The initial transition from weekly meetings of around 70 people to meetings of 25 felt awkward to a number of members; the locals felt somewhat weak. This feeling has passed. The small size encourages greater participation in discussion and decision-making by each comrade because each comrade has more responsibility and there are fewer comrades whose experience intimidates others from speaking after them. This factor speeds the political development of new members.

There is general agreement that the division into three locals has been successful. But other locals should proceed carefully in trying to follow our experience. Right after the division there seemed to be too much responsibility concentrated on the experienced comrades. This situation has eased as the

process of new leadership developing has speeded up. It is probably not a good idea for many experienced people to graduate from the YSA just prior to a division. Some of the factors which helped our division may not be present elsewhere. For instance, Boston is a fairly compact city and it is not difficult for comrades to travel from campuses to the city headquarters. The ability to divide the city among the three important campuses fit exactly into the number of locals we wanted to form.

A big test of the local will come when political activity picks up this spring. Our work in the fall surpassed all our opponents but did not result in large recruitment. As activity increases, we should make gains in membership along with seeing the mass movements strengthened on the basis of the consistent work we did this fall and will continue to do. The increased familiarity each local has with the campus where it is based should both improve our efficiency and make us appear more relevant to the campus activists.

Boston

December 15

ORGANIZING A SMALL LOCAL WHILE RUNNING

A SOCIALIST WORKERS ELECTION CAMPAIGN

by

Jerry Freiwirth

As comrades can see from reading Dan Fein's contribution to the pre-convention discussion, the Providence local ran a very successful statewide campaign for the Socialist Workers Party in the elections this fall. As a result of our experience, we are recommending that other small locals mount similar election campaigns where possible. To facilitate this, I would like to briefly describe how we dealt with one of the largest problems we encountered--organizing the local, during the campaign, so as to maintain the rest of our work at the same time.

Such an organizational problem can present difficulties even for large locals located in areas where there is a branch of the SWP. But for a local like ours, with only approximately 20 comrades and without a branch in Rhode Island, organizing local resources became a major consideration.

We attempted to meet this problem first by running the campaign itself as efficiently as possible. Once the petitioning drive was completed, we tried to have most, if not all, of the campaign work done by the candidates themselves. As November approached, and we learned the ropes, our goal became more and more a reality. This method of organizing the campaign kept to a minimum the number of comrades involved in day to day election work, and freed other comrades to take charge of our work in the anti-war and women's liberation movements, internal local business, etc.

The campaign committee included the candidates, the organizer, and two other comrades. Such a structure has the potential for establishing the most effective method for handling the work that the candidates themselves could not take care of. That is, the non-candidate comrades on the committee, although they had other major assignments, would be responsible for doing the "excess" campaign work, the overflow that the three candidates could not effectively deal with. This system would make specific who would be responsible for such work, instead of it being indiscriminately and haphazardly farmed out to other comrades. As such a tool for organizing division of labor, our committee was only partially successful. A more efficient operation could have been probably achieved if the

functioning of the committee had been more thoroughly thought out ahead of time.

Our candidate for U.S. Senate, Dan Fein, was also the campaign manager. Such a situation has obvious disadvantages, and I would suggest other small locals try to avoid it. In our case, because of our manpower shortage, it was necessary.

Another way that we were able to effectively maximize the strength of our cadre was by having five comrades on full time without pay: the three candidates, the anti-war fraction head, and the organizer. One candidate was receiving unemployment insurance (he had to quit his job because of a law prohibiting state employees from seeking public office.) The other four were students whose studies were such that they were able to take leaves of absence, official or unofficial.

In many ways the campaign complimented and aided our work instead of competing with it. In mass work this took two forms:

1. propagandizing about the issues and demands of the various movements
2. physically building and participating in these movements.

The first of these forms is self-explanatory. Probably the most successful example of the second was that through our candidates' participation at a state-wide Conference of Social Workers, we were able to get their endorsement of October 31 and to get them to join the R.I. Peace Action Coalition.

The campaign also bolstered the more strictly YSA work of our local. By speaking all across the state, obtaining supporters and contacts, and making us known as "the Socialists," our contact and regional work was given a shot in the arm.

There did exist, however, some special conditions that helped us in organizing the local's work. Not the least of these was our ability to have five comrades on full time without pay. The fact that Rhode Island is so small a state also made a difference. It was therefore relatively easy to cover the

entire state with our election campaign. And because the campaign was made easier, the stress in maintaining the rest of the local's activities was decreased.

Comrades should also remember that the objective conditions of a national or off year election also play a significant role in the amount of the local's mass work. Although less this year than ever before in the recent period, an election time generally signals a slump in the mass movements, the anti-war movement particularly. It does appear that the current trend indicates a lessening of the effectiveness of the election year propaganda barrage of the ruling class against activism and for returning to the fold of the capitalist parties. However, as long as the capitalists are to some extent successful we must not ignore the existence of what some comrades have labelled an "activists' lull." This by no means is to say that we should back down in our mass work, that we should let it slide. Nor does it mean that there is some pat formula that can be used to arbitrarily and across the board determine the particular state of the movement at any given time or place.

However, in such a period it would be futile to exert the energy and man power necessary to function in an upsurge of the mass movement. In Providence this fall, for example, we did not pour as large a part of the local resources into the anti-war movement as we had done in the past year. We did assign two highly competent comrades to head up this area of work, and regarded the anti-war movement as an integral, major part of the YSA's activities. But under such conditions the law of diminishing returns comes into play. That is, if we had assigned

two or three times the manpower to anti-war work, our long and short term results would have not even come close to correspondingly increasing. Of course, at the same time we attempted to stimulate movement, to cut away at the inactivity. But it was this recognition of the overall, objective condition that contributed in a major way to our ability to allocate the local's resources so as to run the campaign, our effectiveness on almost all levels, including anti-war work, was improved.

As mentioned in Dan Fein's article, our biggest mistake was in getting the campaign started so late. This not only hampered our election work, but forces us to go through the necessary process of local reorganization at the beginning of the fall (about half of our cadre were in other locals for the summer). We had to do this at a time when both our campaign and our work in the mass movements was already under way, making it doubly difficult.

The campaign helped the Providence YSA not only by putting us in a position of relative predominance over the entire left movement in the state. In many ways it also aided the overall functioning of the local. Although at times a strain, the campaign forced us to attempt to maximize our efficiency in all our work, to firm up factions, and to put the entire functioning of the local on a higher level.

Providence
December 16, 1970

DEFENSE OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AGAINST THE IRS GUIDELINES

by

Don Sorsa

When schools reopened this fall students found new restrictions on political activity awaiting them. During the summer, college and university administrations across the country created new rules and regulations strictly limiting the amount of political activity which could effectively be done on campus. These new rules are based on the Internal Revenue Service regulations which threaten universities and colleges with the loss of their tax exempt status if they allow their facilities to be used for "political" purposes. These regulations represent an attempt to roll back the gains which were made during the massive upsurge last May.

When the President of Columbia University announced the guidelines which the university had adopted, the Young Socialist Campaign Committee invited Paul Boutelle, SWP candidate for 19th Congressional District, to speak at Columbia University, challenging the guidelines. The YSCC also announced that it was considering court action against the University and the IRS for restricting their civil rights. The administration apparently decided at that time not to enforce the guidelines and they have not attempted to do so since. (The guidelines were enforced earlier and resulted in Movement for a New Congress being thrown off campus.)

These guidelines are part of a campaign by the Nixon administration to crush the student movement. The guidelines, even though they are not being consistently enforced at this time, represent a threat to the movement and we must lead a campaign against these guidelines. The YSA must provide the leadership in this fight and play an active role in order to maintain and extend the rights of students.

In mapping out our strategy, we should know exactly what we have to gain from this case. The most obvious goal is to expose the guidelines and get them thrown off the books. This will serve as a warning to other universities that they should not try the same thing on other campuses and it will make our work easier without these regulations. The defense should be conducted so that the entire movement sees how we build a defense case and the importance of building an effective defense whenever civil rights are threatened. The largest number of people possible should be drawn into the defense and become active supporters of this case. This way we can set an example of how a defense is built and get our ideas out to the maximum number of people. With this general perspective in mind we can set out to build a broad, public campaign which will

accomplish these goals.

At Columbia we are supporting plans to file a suit against the administration of Columbia and the Internal Revenue Service. This suit can be utilized to expose the role that the university is playing, to show that the university should have taken action against the IRS for creating these unconstitutional restrictions instead of complying and re-enforcing the IRS code. The plaintiffs in this suit will be representative of the people that are affected by these regulations. Students, professors and representatives of campus organizations will be included as plaintiffs.

In addition to being plaintiffs on the suit, we plan to help build a committee to oppose the guidelines. This committee will include individuals and organizations who are not plaintiffs in the suit. One of the major activities of the committee will be to build support for the suit. This is an extremely important part of this case. As revolutionaries we realize the limitations of the capitalist legal system so we do not rely on this system. The committee will be playing an integral role in the open hearings to be held at Columbia University after the Christmas break. The University Senate has not yet taken a position on the guidelines and this can be an opportunity to get them to take a stand against the guidelines. The defense committee will also do the fundraising that is necessary for the suit.

This defense can become the focus for a national campaign against the regulations of the IRS. Comrades should be making this an important part of their campus work and should follow the regular reports that will be appearing in The Militant and The Young Socialist Organizer.

New York

December 16, 1970

THE YSA DEFENSE POLICY

By

Marian Thelan and Kevin Fitzpatrick

(Introduction: The following is the text of remarks made by Kevin Fitzpatrick and Marian Thelan to a discussion of defense policy held by the Citywide Boston YSA. They have requested that this text be submitted to the pre-convention discussion bulletin.)

Kevin F.: (EC Minority Report) Now I think the major point that has to be made in discussing defense is the question of political versus physical struggle. Is there any separation necessarily between political and physical struggle? That is, for instance, in the case of the Progressive Labor attacks last Spring. The first actual physical attack that took place by Progressive Labor, took place on the platform on April 15th. Now we didn't physically defend that platform satisfactorily. The reason that we weren't able to was in large measure due to the fact that we had alienated ourselves from the large number of students who couldn't see why Progressive Labor was being excluded from that platform. They would not respond to any pleas for a United Front Defense on that day. The only people we could get were a bunch of shit-head pacifists that stood around and held our comrades back. The point about that day is, if we had 150 goons there armed with baseball bats with lead in them, that would have been a political defeat for us because it would have been clear to all the people there that Progressive Labor was trying to do something which they saw as being clearly right and we were trying to stop them, with physical means alone.

In the case of the Hoover propaganda against the student movement and general government pressure. That's absolutely right. There's no way we can meet that with arms. There's no way we can meet that with arms at all. We're not talking about dual power in this country right now. What we're talking about is a political defense. Clausewitz, the Prussian military theorist, once made a famous remark, "that war was a continuation of politics by other means", you don't separate a physical defense from a political defense if the political situation of that time involves the question of violence. Last Spring Progressive Labor was waging a political campaign against us because of their poor situation in the student movement and apparently because of internal difficulties; they were trying to defeat a Trotskyist organization, that is the YSA and the SWP, defeat them politically. That political defeat also involves driving them off the stage of the student movement. They knew that driving off the stage could not be accomplished without a

physical confrontation. April 15th they attacked the platform, and were successful in getting a speaker. A few weeks later they attacked Bob Bresnahan in an Educational Conference that we were holding, and we put out a leaflet! Comrades that day who attempted to physically respond to the PL attack in a like style were prevented from doing that by people who now defend what they regard as the National Line. If you're going to say that a political defense is merely propaganda and general statements of what we'll do some golden day then you're not fighting a political defense at all. You're just talking. When Progressive Labor attacked us by means of violence, carrying on their political campaign through violence there was no way that eventually the question of violence would not have to be posed. No way, but we could have put out leaflets until doomsday, til the day after doomsday and that would have not stopped Progressive Labor attacks. What did stop them was the fact that we were able to construct a United Front Defense Committee, in essence a workers defense guard, on that day at MIT which wouldn't stand by and say, "Yeah you guys should have the right to hold your meetings, I'm fully in accord with that, but I'll see you later." But which stood by us and with one or two exceptions, fought, that was the first physical defeat Progressive Labor ever suffered in Boston. They've never been stopped from disrupting any political organization's meetings before in the history of this city. When you have a record, a track record like that, and you get stopped by physical means then your political campaign begins to suffer also. There's no way that that can be separated.

Now let's check out the actual concrete results of the political campaign that the YSA has been waging across the country. For instance, in Chicago and DeKalb, by the right wing Legion of Justice. I fully agree that there is no fascist organization around, of any size functioning in the United States today. There's no fascist movement. I think he should write our press and tell them because the Legion of Justice is consistently described as a fascist organization. At any rate, I would just like to read, the articles from the Militant about the Legion of Justice attacks in DeKalb and Chicago, in chronological sequence: "Right wing thugs attack Socialists; Mobilize opposition to right wing thugs." On this particular page, I don't know how many people can see it, there's a picture of the demonstration in DeKalb by the Legion of Justice before the physical attacks on our comrades there. There was

no mobilization, there was no demonstration there was no attempt to show the strength of people who would be opposed in action to what those people stood for. Just sat there quietly, maybe put out a leaflet, I'm not sure. The next headline is "Notice to Right Wing Thugs" which is an article about the YSA convention where Lee Smith says at the end that "Sutton made this mistake, not only in regard to Laura and the others in DeKalb, but in ever daring in the first place to touch one hair on the head of any one of our people." Pretty tough talk. The next headline is "Chicago Court Stalls On Right Wing Case." We went to the police, we went to the bourgeoisie to stop an insignificant, small, right wing group, which may not even be fascist. The next headline, "The Socialist Workers to Legal Victory over Rightist"; the next headline is "New Chicago Attacks by Right Wing Thugs"; "Another Attack by Chicago Right Wingers;" "Chicago Report Rips Legion--Cop Tie-up", report by the Independent voters of Illinois. The next headline is "Chicago SWP-YSA Hall Attacked by Right Wingers." This is all in chronological sequence. This is the concrete results of a political campaign which excludes the possibility of physical response to a physical attack. When you only can carry out your political campaign by means of propaganda and general bluster, you don't get anywhere. There's no way you get anywhere.

Now let's look back at the concrete results of the Chicago case. There is right now apparently, on trial in Chicago (this trial was suppose to start October 20th, I'm not sure if it did or not) a particular individual by the name of Stuart. That is one right winger, after a year of propaganda, is going to go on trial, maybe. Maybe he'll be convicted, and maybe if he's convicted he'll be sentenced, and maybe if he's sentenced he'll go to jail. But the Legion of Justice hasn't been touched. All those people whose sentiments are with an extreme right wing, and who are potential fascists have not been intimidated in the least. So they sacrifice one screwball, what the hell do they care? The response to that: we've had two or three attacks on our members, two or three attacks on our headquarters, disruption of our functioning, and the arrest and trial of two of our leading members in Chicago. That's not a very good record. That's not even a good balance.

Let's go into the question of the police in more detail. This isn't exactly what you'd call a prerevolutionary period that we live in. Not exactly at all. It's about as far away from it as it can get-- but not quite as far away. There was a worse period not so long ago. There was a period of McCarthyite reaction in this country where most of the organizations on the left were driven out of the factories,

driven out of all kinds of work that people had, people lost their jobs, people were sentenced for all kinds of bullshit crimes, like purgery, and not saying you belonged to an organization when you were 12 year old, in 1932, deadly crimes like that.

The SWP put out a statement in 1953 called "A Capitalist Witchhunt and How to Fight It," where it said, "The working class and the minorities cannot entrust the protection of their liberties to the capitalist regime. Even when under pressure government officials pretend to move against mobsters and Klu Kluxers, they only make theatrical gestures to appease outraged public opinion without actually punishing the real criminals." That's a completely correct statement of what happens every time you do that. That's a completely correct statement of what's happening in Chicago. They're perfectly willing to sacrifice one screwy right winger, who may not ever be sacrificed, for the interest of preserving the illusions that they hold over people. Now, if we in 1953 in a period of McCarthyite reaction told people that they should rely on their own strength and not on the police, how can we now, in 1970, in a period when a radicalization is beginning, when every day we find more and more allies who are willing to side with us; how can we now tell them that the role of police has changed? How can we do that?

Now the question of workers defense guards. The workers defense guard, or the workers defense committee or a workers militia; it doesn't much matter what you call it, the essence is what is important, is an organization to protect the existence and functioning of working class organizations like the YSA and SWP. Now Trotsky and the Trotskyists of the earlier period didn't dream that concept up out of their heads, they didn't suck it out of their thumbs. They analyzed this period as a period of the death agony of capitalism. They said that the old minimum and maximum programs no longer applied: that this wasn't a time when you could say that something we can do now and in the golden days to come, who knows when, we'll be able to do a whole lot of things that we can't do now. They said there was a connection between what we could do now and what we would be able to do later, but if you don't prepare the masses for struggle on the basis of their own experiences now, that you won't be able to do anything later; it will be impossible. Around this they articulated the transitional program. A workers defense guard is a transitional demand. People realize that they have the right to protect themselves by any means necessary. That is a principle of bourgeois legality; self defense is a principle of bourgeois legality; it has been since William the Conquerer. The period in which

we live now is a period in which we can find more and more allies who are willing to accept that. Pacifism is on the down grade in this country. There's no more talk about non-violence as a response to ruling class violence. People know that they can't get anywhere by appealing to the hearts and souls of the people who don't understand what's wrong with the world. What we're talking about is in the case of a physical attack that we search out people who are willing to fight, and not fight verbally, not fight by signing a proclamation alone, although that's important too, but who will be willing to fight on something that's really important. If we get physically attacked will they be there to help us? That's the point. Now we can't begin to build a nucleus of a red army right now, there's no way we can do that, but what we have to talk about is propagandizing in our press for the workers defense guard. What we can not talk about is the question of violence and the use of rifles. Anything that you use to defend yourself is an arm. Baseball bats are arms. There's no question about that. The question of guns and lethal weapons, primarily lethal weapons because anything can be lethal, even your fist, has to be put off for a long period of time, because the means that right wingers use against us, the means that the ruling class uses against us, will increase as our strength increases. And as our strength increases the means that we can use against them will also become greater and more expanded. I'll give you a good example of what we shouldn't say. In Derrick Morrison's article in the last issue of the ISR he gives an example of "armed self defense." This guy in a Chevrolet plant in Detroit, when he got fired from his job went home, got a rifle and went back and shot two union stewards and a skilled craftsman. That was given as an example of armed self defense. All that is is an example of a nervous breakdown. What we have to propagandize for is taking the level of the masses as it is now, educating, patiently explaining the fact that the police will not protect you, that's you can't waste your time visiting the police. But you have to comply with the norms of bourgeois legality, yes, but then be done with it. That in fact that you can't demand Gusanos be put on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List as was done in Los Angeles. That's unbelievable that anyone could be foolish enough to advocate that. We have to talk about physical defense. Defense, not violence, but defense. And in days to come if we've sown our seeds correctly then out of the workers defense guards, or the united defense committees, or whatever you want to call them; will grow a workers militia, and out of that we hope, will grow the Socialist Revolution.

Marian T.: The Nov. 27 issue of the Militant is very instructive—"Houston police and the Ku Klux Klan." In here it says,

"the news conference reflected the outpouring public reaction against the right wing attacks that have been plaguing the area." Later on in the article it says that "the police will undoubtedly continue looking the other way unless pressure is brought to bear on them. With the November 2 news conference an effective ground work was laid for mounting the kind of pressure that will be able to eliminate such right wing harassment and establish a new atmosphere of freedom of expression in Houston." Two-thousand miles to the west, "L.A. Gusanos Win Trial Delay." This after six attacks on the YSA and SWP in two years. After several months of propaganda the L.A. Gusanos have won a trial delay. Why? Because they want to find out the addresses of the witnesses for the SWP. It says in the article that "the attorneys for the witnesses protested revealing the addresses of the witnesses in view of the continued threats from Cuban exile terrorists." It also said here that, "on October 18 the SWP office received a threatening phone call saying you people can expect to be exploded." So this is the atmosphere of freedom of expression which a propagandistic defense creates which separates political defense into two aspects, propagandistic and physical and then rejects the physical aspect. This is where it leads. In Chicago over one year ago our hall was attacked several times over a period of six months. To this date no right-winger has even been brought to trial as far as we know. There haven't been any articles in the Militant on it. Two comrades were tried although both were found not guilty. Since then, for the last six months or so there haven't been any right wing attacks on the SWP headquarters in Chicago, but then to the best of my knowledge in the discussions at the time there hadn't been any right wing attacks on the Chicago headquarters for its entire history up to last fall. There's another question of the Jewish Defense League which has not directly attacked our movement yet, but it has attacked other groups which defend the Arab Revolution. All right, so going to the police has not created an atmosphere of freedom of expression. Has it exposed the police? Yes, to some people it has exposed the police, but they haven't done anything. But in the meantime we're being attacked and other movement organizations are being attacked and we have to defend ourselves. We have to remember that to the bourgeoisie there's no distinction in their political offensive between physical and propagandistic aspects. At the same time they are having a propaganda, if you will, campaign against the left wing which we've been talking a great deal about. They are also physically liquidating the Panthers. The Panthers have opened themselves up to this by permitting the bourgeoisie to use its legal open arm, the police force, to destroy them because of their program and their strategy. At the same time the bourgeoisie is support-

ing rightwing terrorism, not directly, not directly funding it perhaps, but they're still supporting it through the state. A few years ago when the Gusanos were going around bombing travel agencies and such things there was an expose that the CIA was supplying the dynamite that was being used for this. I don't think we have any grounds to think that has stopped. Now the articles on the Houston Klan tie-up with the police here. I remember in Chicago about ten years ago there was a big expose that the Chicago police had a great number of Klansmen on the force also. Civil libertarians at that time were screaming about the rights of the Klansmen to be in the police force. Then there's the case of the Gusanos whose trial has been delayed. In Chicago along with being attacked, and I was there at the time, at one point the Chicago police came into the hall with drawn guns trying to provoke a fight. They did this because they said they had received a telephone call that we had arms in the hall which was later traced as having come from the Legion of Justice. If the comrades there hadn't kept their cool we might have had some dead comrades. Another case: Chicago police arrested two comrades as I mentioned earlier. They were brought to trial on charges of illegal restraint. An absolutely unfounded charge, comrades, and that our comrades were not put in jail should not be seen as a victory. It should be seen as an incredible waste that we had to go to court and defend these people against this charge, when we still haven't been able to get a single right winger to court. In DeKalb when, after our comrades got back from the hospital, from having their eyes treated for the tear gas that was sprayed into them, they called the cops who came and confiscated literature and searched the apartment and did nothing against the right wing. OK. Today the bourgeoisie rules by means of illusion to a large extent. It tries to maintain the illusions. But as soon as its property rights are threatened by a workers movement it's going to throw off those illusions and rule directly from the barrel of the gun. Carol Seidman says that what we see today is a frustrated response from the right, what we see today to a large degree is a frustrated response from the right, from miniscule rightwing organizations as they've been described. But if this radicalization is as we analyze it, the beginning of a mass movement, these frustrated responses from the right are going to grow into a fascist movement where fascist hoodlums are being funded by the bourgeoisie and permitted to operate by the bourgeois state. If you wait until fascism has triumphed before we begin to defend ourselves physically then we're really going to be in trouble comrades. We've analyzed both fascism and bourgeois democracy as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and they will try to maintain that at any cost. So just as the bourgeois

political offensive is at the same time propagandistic and physical, so must our political defense be at the same time both propagandistic and physical. Other groups in the movement have been threatened and attacked in Houston. It's reported in here in L.A., again reported in the Militant--and also in New York with the Jewish Defense League where we haven't been attacked but we should consider them a threat to our security. We should perhaps be working more under the slogan that a threat to one is a threat to all. All we have to do is get everybody who's threatened by these miniscule, rightwing groups together into a joint defense guard, to defend our mutual meetings. Not to take on bourgeois state power, but to take on these miniscule rightwing groupings. If I may quote Cannon in Socialism on Trial: "The guard is not something that we can suck out of our fingers. It is a natural process growing out of the development of the struggle and we try to see it in advance, try to accelerate it, try to popularize the idea, convince the workers that it is a good thing and bestir themselves about it." We're talking not about going out tomorrow and setting up a workers militia at Western Electric which I assure you we could not do but of getting together the groups who are threatened to accustom the radical movement, the working class movement, the vanguard of the working class movement in the United States to the concept that when you're threatened you mount a political defense which is at the same time propagandistic and physical. So that in a situation such as the one when Bob Bresnahan was attacked comrades wouldn't be confused. They would know what to do. They would know that when you're attacked you physically defend yourselves, so that not just our comrades but the entire movement whenever attacked will know that it has to set up a united front political and propaganda offensive so that an organization when it is attacked by the Jewish Defense League will know that it should put out a call for a political and propagandistic united front including a workers defense guard. We have to propagandize for this in our press and we have to carry it out in our own activities.

Kevin F.: When the case of the right wing attacks started in DeKalb in 1969, I think everyone just took what The Militant said as the exact, correct policy of what was to be done. But, as time wore on with one big headline after another turning out to be, the next week, another defeat, certain questions began to arise in my mind. (I'm not too sure about other people at that time.) At the time of the problem of Progressive Labor it became clear to me at least, that there were many people in the YSA who had not been educated in what some members of the majority regard as a traditional position. They accept the traditional position of physical and political defense not being contradictory but

a large section of people who were participating in those discussions at that time couldn't understand that concept at all. I think that has been shown again here. And over the summer when the Carol Seidman article came out I was very upset by it, very upset especially about the idea of the state being bodies of armed men no longer applying in the United States at this time because they rule primarily by illusions. I'd like to go into that later on. The final straw was the chuckling attitude that was taken towards the attempted attack on the forum one night by a couple of Nazi armband wearing individuals, where the word "brutalization" was tossed around as if there were people who had nothing better to do than to go out and beat up little kids. This I think gave a tremendous concession to sections of the YSA who still don't understand the relationship between physical and political defense. And, also, since we don't live in a vacuum, when we try to explain our defense policies outside our own internal functioning, some people get very confused. During the summer I began to talk to some people whom I know, my friends, about this particular question. Some of them responded in just the way I did and some of them didn't. And, I think it's been pretty clear that the minority has a fairly consistent position--that is: that we advocate propaganda around the slogan "workers defense guards," that we reject the separation of physical and political defense, and that we reject the concept that the ruling class is maintaining itself in power by illusion. In regard to the Seidman article, its whole political argument rests on the contention that the ruling class maintains itself in power by illusions. That's how she says she resolves the contradiction between calling in the agents of the ruling class, the police, and the fact that the ruling class actually sympathizes with and perhaps gives underhanded aid to extreme right wing sects. If that resolution fails, if that contradiction exists and is not resolved by the idea of the illusions of the masses about the ruling class maintaining itself in power or the illusions that the ruling class propagates, then the whole argument falls, and the whole thing is up for grabs. I think the reason we asked for this discussion, those of us who felt opposition to the Seidman article, was partly to determine whether people who would defend the Seidman article felt that that was a valid argument. (Some do and some don't, apparently) and to encourage discussion all around the country, which is why we voted to have this discussion submitted as a discussion bulletin. I don't think we had to have a formal document in order to make our position clear in the discussion bulletin that would be published. I hope it will be published. I'd like to say something about the concept of illusions. A lot of people have illusions about bourgeois democracy in this country. There's no doubt about it. There are very

few people who don't, as a matter of fact. The problem is how to break people of those illusions and at the same time protect yourself from the arms of the state. A perfect example of somebody who understands that democracy is an illusion but who has no idea of how to deal with it is the Panthers. The Panthers have no idea of how to go about fighting for their rights in any organized fashion at all. The question of the Cairo United Front is a very good question. I'm glad Joe brought it up. There is one example of where we could have educated around "workers defense guards." Because I don't think it's sufficient to say we're on their side. Obviously we are on their side. Obviously we defend them. We defend anybody. We even defend the Panthers, even though they have a very poor way of putting themselves into indefensible positions. So, we could have shown the difference in the way the Panthers organized their defense and the way the Cairo United Front organized their defense pointed up any contradictions related it, to ideas that we have articulated over the past 34 years, and began to educate not only our membership, which was remiss at the time of the PL attacks, during the discussions before it, and during the discussion about the 2 individuals with the Nazi armbands. Not only our own membership but also for the large numbers who read our press and get their ideas from people who read our press, which is an even wider circle of people. And, I don't think that was done. And, I think that is one of the prime faults of neglecting the unity of physical and political aspects. Now, you don't have to think Fascism is on the horizon, that when the sun breaks tomorrow morning the police are going to arrest everybody, to be ready to talk about the slogan "workers defense guards." Because then you have to say "we don't want a workers defense guards, that if we could have one now we wouldn't want it. We don't want to talk about physical defense at all." Then we get right back into that formalistic separation between political and physical defense. I think Louie's contribution was very good. It was a very serious discussion. I don't think he showed though, that if we accept the idea of "workers defense guards" means then we accept the context of the 1938 as being applicable to now. I don't think he showed that at all. I think what Louie's arguments are that 1938 was a different time is very true. I think he's done a little romanticizing especially in the U.S. about the 1930s. The CIO was already on the downgrade at the time that the SWP began to talk about workers defense guards, because the transitional program wasn't even written until 1938 and didn't begin to be popularized until a couple of years later in this country. Probably in 1938 we were no stronger numerically than we are today. We had a different social composition. We had a different area of work. There's no doubt about that. It made it easier to build

defense guards. But there is no reason that we can't educate ourselves, educate our periphery, educate people who read the newspaper, and people who are coming in, to the basis of what we are really for in a good situation -- that is, workers defense guards. Some people have done an awful lot of shadow boxing and beating up ultra-left straw men that weren't there. I think 5 or 6 ultra-left straw men have bit the dust since the beginning of this conversation. No one has advocated fighting the cops in the streets of Berkeley. There hasn't been any ultra-left position put forward by anybody who agrees with the minority. You said "We do not agree with the use of arms." If by arms you mean firearms, knives, handgrenades etc. we agree. If by the use of arms you mean your fist, or a steel-toed boot or club, that's something that we haven't ruled out at this time, -- even the majority position. If you mean is "fascism on the horizon?" no one said that. Now let's take a look at the relationship between physical and political defense and how it works out in Boston in the last few months since the PL business. We had a rally around Hiroshima Day, shortly after we had begun to build a so called "united front defense committee" which involved nothing more than putting your name on a piece of paper and promising something. The majority position, I believe, advocates united front defense committees. But, that rally was defended by no one else but the YSA, that is, that people on that defense committee were not contacted not even contacted, not approached and have not been to this day. Steve and I after that Hiroshima Day meeting asked -- the defense on it was poorly organized in a number of ways, besides the question of the united front -- whether or not that group the "united front" would be asked to defend Oct. 31. The answer was "no, that they were keeping the united front a political defense." Keep a "united front" that was no more than a scrap of paper. It was nothing! If the united front isn't a living organization then it's nothing. It's nothing. Questions of illusions. Bourgeois democracy in the U.S. wasn't created by the ruling class to fool the masses of the It needed it during the period of its own revolution as tools against the feudalists. It maintained these instruments, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech all the things that are called civil rights and civil liberties throughout its history. Partly to create illusions, partly because it helps them to understand what is going on without maintaining a large army or police force. That is, if they allowed trade unions to function they wouldn't have to hire a police force or undercover agents to go in and penetrate the trade unions. If they allow the press to publish they don't have to worry about what people are thinking, they can read the papers. If they allow opposition groups to

agitate they can openly find out what they are doing. That's no problem. Why do they hold elections? Do they hold elections just to fool people or do they hold elections also to settle differences among different sections of the ruling class-- to see who fools people the best--by seeing who fools them the best in the elections--who gets the most votes--who's the most popular ruler. So that as long as bourgeois democracy exists in this country, which they intend to maintain for their own reasons, consequently it will create illusions. But they don't rule by illusions! Suppose the police went on strike in this city tomorrow. What would happen in this city? With everybody's illusions still the same--believing this country to be a democratic country. Still believing that imperialism didn't exist. What would happen in this city? What happened in Montreal in 1967 when the police went on strike? All hell broke loose. They had to call in the Canadian armed forces to suppress what was going on. Those illusions were still operating. But the police were not. And chaos ensued. What happened to this city in 1919 when the police went on strike. The same thing. That could have happened tomorrow or tonight. The state power, that is bodies of armed men, did not exist and did not function. You can create illusions all you want, you can encourage illusions, but illusions alone do not rule. I might add that there is an dimension in democracy due to the fact of many rights being conquests of the workers, gained in blood and struggle.

Boston

December 18, 1970

NEW YORK CITY CAMPUS REPORT

by

Bob Rowand

The major problem that faced the New York local has been its inability to make its campus orientation more real than token, with only a few comrades on campus out of a large local. This failing of the NY local was brought to the fore last May when we were unable to lead the mass upsurge here in New York. We have tried, since May, to turn that situation around.

The local in New York had become too large to function efficiently. Although we have the National Offices as well as the print shop and other people involved in full time assignments there are still a large number of comrades that are directly active in local activities who are not on the campus or playing a leadership role in the local. It became obvious that the solution to our problem lay in our ability to carry out our campus orientation. This solution points to the eventual division of the local into smaller campus locals. This, however, could not be done while we were weak in exactly the areas a division would depend upon; a sturdy secondary leadership and a base on some NY campuses. This is even more important considering the general political situation in New York City. We have a very strong and sophisticated Democratic Party and bourgeois press. This is reflected on the campus by the different social democratic organizations seeking to draw radicalizing youth into social worker programs and capitalist politics. To aggravate the situation even more New York campuses are the home of the whole spectrum of our political opponents; from the YWLL, who are only now beginning to show their faces; the Workers League; the Labor Committees; a whole range of Zionist groups; and Progressive Labor and some remnants of SDS. This situation makes the New York campuses important for us to be on as well as difficult for us to establish ourselves as locals.

It was with this one overriding idea, that the campus based fractions should grow with respect to becoming locals and strengthening the YSA campus base, that we went onto campus in September. This involved shifting to the campuses the necessary operations of a local; mass work in the anti-war, women's liberation and Third World movements; sales; fund raising; education and recruitment; plus any special projects that came up such as the Mid-East teach-ins. By taking such an approach we were able to train and develop our campus based fractions in dealing with these problems while coordinating and supporting these activities

through the NYC-based local. The experiences of the Queens College fraction, of which I am a member, can help explain the progress of this approach to NYC campus work.

The political atmosphere on campus was mixed. The elections and Nixon's "peace plan" along with his general assault on the student movement and a growing number of terrorist acts, which were played up by the Nixon administration, caused many students who were active in May to be demoralized. On the other hand, there occurred the August 26th Women's Liberation demonstration, the growth of the New York Peace Action Coalition (NYPAC) and successful Oct. 31 antiwar actions, the growth of women's liberation groups on campus which conducted successful women's actions on campuses in and around NYC.

What this means is that while cynicism and demoralization has affected a part of the student population there is also a significant number that understand the need for mass action in the women's and antiwar movements and are generally interested in political questions. These students represented in Chicago Dec. 4-6 and the women's actions the following week will be the ones who will lead even larger numbers of students in the spring.

Women's Liberation

One of the more successful areas of work on New York campuses over the past period had a generally slow start at Queens College. Q.C. Women's Liberation, responding to the impact of August 26, grew from being primarily a consciousness raising group to a group also seeking expression through mass action. The group entered a day-care project which has bureaucratically ruined by the Free University, a multi-issue reformist tendency on campus. The women's group reacted against the Free University very consciously seeking autonomy from any other group. This desire for autonomy was also strong among all other women's groups. Although there was a strong move toward excluding the YSA-SWP from the Women's Center in New York City, this feeling did not penetrate the campus or transform the sentiment for an independent women's group into an exclusionist movement. What finally pulled the group into action was the December 12 demonstration and the campus Women's Liberation Day.

On other campuses, although the

problems faced by the groups in getting started varied, the one thing which successfully activated the groups was the Women's Strike Coalition and the December 12 demonstration. Barnard College was the model campus women's group around the city. There they had a whole week of campus actions culminating in the Dec. 12 March on Mayor Lindsay. There were several teach-ins on campuses across the city on Dec. 10 with the one at New York University attracting 150 women from Brooklyn College, City College and High School women's groups.

The success of the campus orientation of the Women's Liberation movement can be seen in that over 1/2 of the women that demonstrated in the freezing rain on December 12 were from the campuses. Campus fractions will continue this work of strengthening the campus women's liberation movement by engaging in actions relevant to each campus and by strengthening the ties of these groups with the Women's Strike Coalition in future mass actions.

Antiwar

When we went back to campus this September we expected large turnouts of antiwar activists on the campus. The initial reaction was good, with early SMC meetings attracting between 50-100 people at New York University, Queens College and Brooklyn College. This interest did not persist on all campuses throughout the semester, reaching its low point following the escalation in North Vietnam where a rally at Queens College was only able to draw 50 people. This rally however, was organized to handle a much larger crowd by the ten activists on campus.

The tasks that we were faced with in regard to SMC's on campus were twofold. First we had to build the October 31 action to solidify the New York Peace Action Coalition. Second we had to build campus SMCs and make them known to both the left circles and the general community as the only consistent and persistent antiwar group on campus. The SMC's aimed at responding to on-campus issues as well as Nixon's escalation.

One of the most interesting developments in the antiwar movement this fall was that the city schools were shut down for a pre-election recess in accordance with the Princeton Plan, conceived last May. This was an attempt by the capitalist parties and the Board of Higher Education to disperse the antiwar students and pull them into electioneering where possible. Although they were successful in limiting our ability to mobilize students on campus they also failed to attract significant numbers to their own campaigns.

The limitations felt by the Q.C. SMC were not as narrow as the initiators of the recess might have hoped. We started the year by circulating a petition calling for use of facilities during the recess period. This campaign was ended a few hours before our Oct. 15 campus antiwar rally when we were able to reserve rooms for reach-out workshops during the election recess. This, in essence, was a policy decision by the college administration to allow us the use of the campus as an antiwar university.

The experience we gained during this petition drive and building the Oct. 15 rally, which was held in conjunction with other rallies on campuses in New York City in an effort to build the Oct. 31 action, pulled us together as a functioning SMC. We were then able to go full steam ahead to build October 31. The success we had at this, even though school was closed, was considerable. In essence, we functioned as a mini-regional office. With a core of activists working with phone lists we mobilized teams to leaflet high schools and set up tables in the surrounding community. Through these efforts we were able to distribute about 30,000 leaflets and collect about \$150.00 for the SMC regional office.

At other campuses around NYC school was not let out for the "pre-election break." At NYU the students voted in a referendum against the idea. With this situation other campus SMC's were able to concentrate their efforts on the students. At Columbia they held a Kent State defense rally which was counterposed to a PL-SDS defense rally. The SMC rally attracted over 200 while the SDS got themselves -- 30. This success was important in building the SMC at Columbia. October 15 and 31 were successful on other campuses drawing antiwar activists into organizing activities.

Between October 31 and Chicago there was a falling off of participation which was not coupled with a letting up of activity. Besides the emergency rally we built at Queens College that was only able to draw 50 people in 20 degree weather, we also built a symposium with radical professors and an SMC spokeswoman to explain the escalation. This meeting drew 140 people and raised about \$100.00 to send people to Chicago. This response was not duplicated on other campuses, however.

Sending people to Chicago became our next project. At Queens we raised \$100 above the cost of seven seats needed for Queens SMC'ers. Other campuses raised money by showing films. In the end we sent two busloads of SMC'ers to Chicago.

Our campus fractions have successfully led the SMC's in establishing them-

selves as the on-going antiwar organization and prepared a whole layer of activists who will be prepared to organize and mobilize students to the April 24 action in Washington, D.C. By continuing to explain the war policies of the Nixon administration and actively protesting these actions the SMC has helped clear away the government's "peace" smokescreen and pave the way for future mass action involving the majority of students.

Defense of the Palestinian Revolution

The fractions have carried out propaganda work on all the campuses. With New York having the largest Jewish population in the United States and their heavy concentration on campus, our job was to explain that there was another side and bring that side to the masses of people.

In the SMCs we presented and urged that the SMC take the stand of "No Second Vietnams--No Troops to the Middle East." At Queens College we were successful with this in that Zionist antiwar activists supported this while understanding that YSA had a position in support of the Palestinian struggle. This position of No Troops to the Middle East was accepted in the citywide SMC.

At Queens College and at New York University we helped initiate and organize Mid-East teach-ins. We organized the NYU teach-in right on the heels of the civil war in Jordan. We were successful in drawing the Arab Students Club into active participation and received the endorsement of Indian and Latin American student groups. Although the Zionist groups refused to endorse it, the pressure was great enough to cause the Radical Zionist Alliance to speak. The other speakers were Jon Rothschild of the SWP, Rasheed Hasaan of the PLO and the anti-Zionist Rabbi Elmar Berger. The success of the teach-in was considerable. It was the main campus activity at NYU for the beginning of the semester, getting the attention of most students on campus and getting the YSA's ideas to them. About 500-600 people attended a very emotionally charged session.

At Queens College the situation was somewhat different. The Student Zionist Organization which sponsored and built the teach-in with the YSA did not want endorsement or speakers other than their own and ours. Consequently, the teach-in did not have the impact on campus it could have had. Between 200-300 people attended to hear Jon Rothschild, SWP; a spokeswoman representing the ideas of Matzpen; a Palestinian representing the ideas of the PLO; a spokesman for the

Radical Zionist Alliance; Allen Pollack, a professor at Columbia University and member of the American University Professors for Peace in the Mid-East; Dana Zohar of Haolem Hazeh; and a spokesman from the Columbia Israeli Student Organization.

It is interesting to note that only left Zionists felt compelled to openly defend their position while the right Zionists generally abstained. Of those that attended, 90% were Zionists and most questions were directed towards Jon Rothschild. The campus press gave it minimal coverage.

The major failing of the Queens College fraction's efforts was its inability to draw sympathetic Third World student groups into the teach-in. This hopefully will be changed in the future.

Our next propaganda offensive is the Peter Buch tour. He is scheduled to speak at several campuses in the NYC area prior to the YSA convention. These propaganda efforts we are making now will lay the basis for future mass united action in defense of the Palestinian Revolution. For this reason we must do our best to draw in other sympathetic forces in this stage of the work.

Education and Recruitment

Our use of educationals on campus has lagged considerably. Initially we laid out an ambitious series of classes dealing with topics of wide variety. Although we were able to hold two of these classes which were modest in size, it soon became evident that we had set too rigorous a schedule. Because of the amount of time spent on these classes and the effort to save them when they floundered, our work in other areas was adversely affected. It would have been wiser to devote the time spent on these classes selling our press.

However, educationals remain one important aspect of our work. Class series or forums can be applied to aiding our general mass work as well as educate and train our own comrades. At Queens College we moved to a different approach than the original class series concept. We are now planning to have bi-monthly forums, the first of which will be Peter Buch on Defense of the Palestinian Revolution. This concept of educationals will be more suited to the capacities of the fraction and make many more gains for us in the sphere of propaganda and recruitment than before.

Recruitment is one area of work we should be very conscious of if we are to grow on the campus. Besides selling

the Militant and ISR to all the activists we encounter, there are several other things we experimented with at Queens. In the beginning of the semester we organized a dinner party with all our contacts invited. This was rather successful but we failed to follow up with anything else along similar lines. This can be done in the future as we develop more contacts in the women's, antiwar, and Third World movements. We also made use of phone lists, calling people about pre-convention discussion and other YSA activities. If we are to make the most gains from recruitment our approach must be as organized as all our other work.

The actual recruitment we've made on the campus has developed slowly. The people we've recruited, however, have been key activists at Queens college, Brooklyn College, York College, and New York University. Organized recruitment can only be an addition to our general recruitment in mass work and an aid in that recruitment.

Sales

Sales are a fundamental part of any local's activity and are important for campus fractions to develop on a regular basis. This work at Queens as well as on other campuses has not proceeded as it should have.

Sales should be organized in two basic ways: they should be integrated into all our other everyday work and they should also be an independent activity on campus. We have been more successful in developing the first aspect than the second. At both the Mid-East and the Women's Liberation teach-ins we had literature tables dealing with all our material on the specific topic. Militant sellers were also assigned. Where we have fallen down is in independent sales. This can only be changed by putting a priority on it and then organizing the fraction to go out and sell. This part of our work must improve if we ever expect to develop locals on the campuses.

Fund-Raising

No local can exist without funds. In the N.Y. local part of the fund-raising burden was shifted to the campus fractions. This gave us the advantages of tapping new sources and training the fraction in organizing fund-raising projects. We were successful in showing films and in getting honorariums. The one major honorarium of \$200 was granted by the NYU YSA after they received a \$500 YSA budget request from the University.

Election Campaign

Because of our general weakness on campus in September, most fractions chose not to run candidates in student elections. At NYU, where they decided to run a campaign, this fraction was unable to carry it through successfully. We were able to bring the New York campaign onto the campus for several speaking engagements and succeeded in getting interviews with the campus press.

Summary

With the perspective of developing locals on campuses in NYC, it became necessary for fractions to take on as much of the work of the NY local as possible. It is in this way we will develop the skills and understanding of the tasks that have to be taken on by a local in NYC. In order for us to coordinate our fraction work with the whole city, the people working in different areas on campus belong to the larger fractions which are city-wide. This organization and back up not only exists in women's liberation and antiwar work, but also in sales, fund-raising, educational and recruitment work. This city-wide coordination would not disappear when new locals develop on the campuses for the basic reason that NYC not only functions in subdivisions on the campuses but also as a whole political unit.

The gains we made were not spectacular but are certainly noticeable. We were able to aid the development of women's groups on campuses giving a stronger base to the whole movement. In the antiwar movement we have made the SMC known as the only serious student antiwar group and developed a core of activists with a clear concept of mass action. Through our propaganda work in defense of the Palestinian Revolution we have set the basis for future actions involving more people. We've started to recruit the campus activists to our movement. Most important, however, was the experience the fractions gained in solving these problems and gaining the perspective of what will be necessary to set up campus locals in NYC.

New York

December 20, 1970

ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1970 YSA CONVENTION

by

Kevin FitzPatrick and Marian E. Thelen

"Fundamental to the concept of democratic centralism is the principle of majority rule. That is, after a free and open democratic discussion in which all opinions are expressed, a vote is taken. The position of the majority of the organization is the position that is implemented in action." Organizing the YSA page 5.

"Section 3. The National Convention shall be called by the National Committee which shall provide for a pre-convention discussion period of at least 90 days" YSA Constitution Article 5 Section 3.

"However, the first priority should be to get every member to the convention." Convention call, YS Organizer October 28.

The organization of the 1970 YSA convention has violated both the letter--the Constitution--and the spirit--the Organizer and Organizing the YSA--of our procedure. The actual pre-convention discussion period was about one month; even the convention call did not come out 90 days before the convention. All opinions were not given a chance to be expressed, therefore, free and open democratic discussion was not possible. Because of this, it is possible that the vote taken will not represent the will of the majority. Certainly, in scheduling the convention time and location, first priority was not given to getting every member to it.

The scheduling and location of the convention prohibited many comrades from attending and being delegates. Scheduling the convention for Sunday through Thursday means that the working comrades have to take off an entire week to attend the convention. During the busy Christmas season this is impossible for many comrades. Also, in many companies it is necessary for an employee to be present the day before and the day after a paid holiday in order to receive pay for that day. Since the convention will not be over until Thursday, many working comrades who go to the convention will lose even their pay for January 1st. New York is in no way a central location for comrades. The comrades from West of the Mississippi will have to travel farther to New York than they would to practically any other place. Providing them with free bed space in New York does not make up for either the added expense or the added time and inconvenience of traveling to the East Coast. Also, the cost of the New Yorker hotel--in which a majority of comrades must stay--is prohibitive. Most comrades simply do not have enough money to spend \$8.25 a night for a room

while living in New York. The reason the National Office gives for this situation is that we want to have the convention in New York to consolidate the gains we made on the campuses there this fall. In New York, there was no hall available over a weekend, so we could not schedule the convention better. The National Office's inability to get a hall for a weekend is another indication of their lack of foresight and their lateness in beginning convention preparations. Surely, if they had started looking several months ago, some hall could have been found in New York. We are told that we have to stay in the New Yorker because that is the best place for us to have facilities other than the hall and because it is near the convention site. But, "first priority should be to get every member to the convention" and to assuring no comrades are unable to be delegates simply because they cannot make it to the convention. We do not think that the political gains we may make over vacation on the New York campuses are worth having some comrades not be able to attend and be delegates because they cannot make it to New York, others because they cannot take a week off work, and others because they cannot afford the hotels. Surely there is some central city in the United States where we have a base and where reasonably priced facilities are available over a weekend.

The YS Organizer with the convention call is dated October 28. This is two months (approximately 60 days) before the convention. The first time the majority of Boston comrades heard about the call was on October 18 when Rich Finkel came through on tour. This is 70 days before the convention. The call states that the written discussion will begin with the publication of the first bulletin. The first NEC draft resolution is dated November 9, that is 47 days before the convention. It did not arrive in Boston until November 27, 30 days before the convention. Further, in most locals, pre-convention discussion had to be over by December 22 or 23 because of comrades going home for xmas. Thus, the required 90 day pre-convention discussion period was more than 2/3 over when the first document was received and the discussion actually began. With the first document arriving at the end of November, and five documents expected (No comment on the fact that the NEC did not even get one of the "line" documents out at all) it was impossible to have pre-convention discussion without scheduling extra discussions apart from the meetings--especially because of the Chicago antiwar conference. It is to be expected that when

extra meetings are called some comrades will not be able to attend. Also, tele-scoping the discussion in a short period when we were continuing our normal activity cut down on the amount of time a comrade could spend studying and responding to each document. Is this free and open democratic discussion?

The first document which came out was the Women's Liberation draft resolution. It would have been mechanically possible for a comrade to write a discussion contribution or counter document to this and have it distributed to the locals before the convention--provided the NO was able to print it rapidly. For the latter documents this is impossible. The political resolution draft is dated December 7. It did not arrive in Boston until December 12. It was then absolutely impossible for any comrade to write a discussion contribution or counter document which could be discussed in the local pre-convention discussions. Is this free and open democratic discussion?

It is non-sensical for the political draft resolution to be the last published. It is the most important, the one which gives our over-view of the current political scene in the United States and around the world and our tasks in the face of this situation. As such it should come first. We should have in mind our analysis of the general political situation and tasks before we discuss how we will function in different movements and areas. Discussing the specific movements and then the general situation on which we base our analysis of these movements is backward.

Several comrades including ourselves have serious political differences with the political draft resolution, and would have written a counter line document if the NEC draft had come out the full 90 days or even 60 days before the convention. To expect comrades to be able in a few days to write a thorough document, presenting a complete political analysis of the situation in the United States and the world and able to stand by itself as the most important line document is completely absurd. The NEC says it got the documents out so late because "it did not have time to write them." Individual comrades, on the other hand, who are not in the political leadership of the YSA and who are working out a line counter to that presented in our press, are supposed to be able to write a document in a few days while carrying on their normal activity. This is equally ridiculous. The NEC members should have considered it their primary responsibility in the pre-convention period--beginning more than 90 days before the convention--to write their draft resolutions. If they did not have the time to do this, they should have brought in other comrades to the National Office to carry on the day-to-day

activity while they found a quiet place to study and write. It is the responsibility of the leadership to carry out our constitution and norms--in this case to insure a free and open democratic discussion before a vote is taken at the convention. Failure to do this is, at best, irresponsibility based on the false assumption that there are no serious disagreements in the YSA in 1970, or at worst an attempt to have a position adopted without full discussion, and preferably with no differences expressed at all. The NEC is, in fact, in actual violation of the provisions of the constitution, and its tactics in this case reduce pre-convention discussion to practically nothing more than a joke.

There are two basic arguments--with innumerable variations--which are used against our position, both of which hold that we should have written a document. The first is that the line presented in the political resolution draft has been expressed at Oberlin and in our press and that it should have come as a surprise to no one. If we had listened at Oberlin and kept up with our press we would have known the line that would be presented and have been able to write a counter line document before the NEC draft came out. There is an obvious absurdity in expecting comrades to be able to write a document which is counter to something which has not been written. Our press carries analyses of many different problems. It would be nearly impossible to sift out of these personal opinions, editorial comments, and general reporting questions which the NEC intended to cover in its document and therefore write a good refutation before their draft came out. If we relied on the press of our movement for our line on the SMC we would learn that the SMC is a single focus radical organization. In fact, the NEC draft resolution says no such thing. We cannot play guessing games with documents. Writing political documents in a vacuum is impossible. We need something concrete to work with. In fact, carried to its logical conclusion we need not have documents at all at our conventions since votes could be taken on the basis of general impressions from our press over the past year or so. In writing our document before the NEC draft came out we could not have guessed that the term "neo-capitalism" would be used for the first time in a YSA draft resolution. In analyzing our opponents we could not have guessed that the Young Workers Liberation League has grown to the size of the YSA since its founding last February. We also would never have guessed that "the 1905 of the student movement", a vague statement at best, would acquire a programmatic character. These are just three of the major points which a counter document would have to discuss and which we would not have incorporated in a document written before the NEC draft came out. Any

document we might have written before the political resolution was published would have presented a counter line, but it would not have been clearly counterposed to the NEC resolution which would have made discussion of the two documents more diffuse. Also, it would have left out entirely certain important questions raised in the NEC draft.

The other argument is that we should have written a document after reading the draft political resolution--in just a few days. There seems to be two major variations of this position. One is that we should have been preparing a counter document, writing analyses of different things which have appeared in our press, and that when the NEC draft resolution came out we should have fitted these analyses together and mailed it in as a document. The other is that we should have sat down in a few days--while working and carrying out our political activity--and written a critique of the NEC draft. These seem even less reasonable than suggesting we write a counter document before reading the NEC resolution. First, "We do not discuss and debate for the intellectual titillation involved but to decide how to act, to fight to achieve our goals." (Organizing the YSA p5) We have a traditional method of discussing and resolving political differences during pre-convention discussion. The comrades who differ with the national line as presented in the NEC draft resolutions prepare a document and send it to the National Office which publishes it and sends it to all the locals. It is discussed in the local pre-convention discussions if any comrades wish to bring it up. If enough comrades in one local vote for the counter document --the percentages are laid out in the convention call--they caucus and elect delegates on the basis of proportional representation. The majority also elects its delegates. These delegates are not bound to vote for the position on which they were elected, however, if they change their minds in the course of the convention discussion they have to be prepared to defend their change to the comrades who elected them. This method insures that if a counter document has any significant support throughout the country it will have representatives at the convention. It assures the right of the minority to attempt to become the majority at the convention. Suggesting that one who disagrees with the political resolution this year should write a document which could not possibly be discussed in the locals cuts across our norms and prevents full democratic discussion as well as violating this right of a supposed minority position. So far as we have seen or heard, there is no indication of any general discussion bulletin coming out before the convention. This further impedes discussion since there may be comrades in scattered cities who would have similar disagreements as ours, but can-

not find out our position until the convention itself, if there. If one or two comrades were to write a document at this late time and if they were to present it to their local pre-convention discussion, and if they were elected delegates they would be free to present their position at the convention. But the criterion for permitting a minority anything like equal time to present its position is that it have sufficient support around the country. How can the NEC or the presiding committee determine whether a minority has support if the majority of comrades have not seen the document before they reach the convention? Another problem: The political resolution is the first on the agenda and will be finished by dinner the first day. This means that delegates will be able to read the document hastily as they register or over lunch, if at all, before they vote. On the other hand, they have read, studied, and discussed the NEC political draft resolution for a couple of weeks. Is this free and open democratic discussion?

There is another reason that comrades cannot write a counter line document in a few days. When the NEC writes a draft resolution it has time to formulate it very carefully and counter, implicitly at least, possible objections. Their resolutions can be a clear, polished document. It is not possible to do this in a few days no matter how much thinking a comrade may have done on the subject previously. The purpose of a counter political resolution is not to make a few criticisms but to present a clear and full counter analysis. We would not only have to give full analyses of the problems with the NEC draft on the three points listed above: neo-capitalism, the growth of the YWLL, and the "1905 of the student movement," but incorporate this into an entire political analysis. Since the purpose of a pre-convention discussion is to decide our policy democratically, not to snipe at the NEC positions, a counter document would have to be written on a level seriously to present an alternative to the political resolution. We do not think that in a few days it is possible to write such a document on such sweeping concepts as those with which we differ with the NEC draft. A document hastily written now would be open to attack, and justifiably so, because of sloppy statements and an inability to refute every possible argument against it. Is this free and open democratic discussion?

These are the reasons that we did not write a counter line document to the political draft resolution. For these reasons we will abstain in the voting in our locals on the NEC draft political resolution. We do not feel that the position presented in the NEC draft should be the line of the YSA for the next year. However, we cannot vote against this position because we did not have time to pre-

sent a viable alternative. Because this essential element of democratic centralism --free and open democratic discussion in the pre-convention period before a binding vote is taken--has been violated by the NEC we are left no alternative but to abstain in voting on the political line for the next year.

The organizational errors made in the preparations for this convention, which in the long run cannot be separated from politics, cannot be rectified this year. But it is imperative to our functioning as a democratic centralist organization that next year and in all future years there be a real 90 day discussion period with the NEC draft resolutions--

particularly the political resolution--coming out early in this period so the comrades will have a chance to study and the locals to discuss the documents. It is also necessary that the conventions be scheduled and located so that a majority of comrades will be able to be delegates or attend as observers. This responsibility lies with the national leadership, with the National Committee we elect at this convention. We cannot afford to ignore or make light of the basic elements of bolshevik functioning.

Boston

December 20, 1970

THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT:
NEW ISSUES AND NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

By

Fran Collet

"In the interests of socialism and democracy, the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat are duty-bound to be exceedingly sensitive to the feelings and demands of a hereditarily oppressed people, to accord them every possibility of developing their own capacities in their own way and under their own direction, and to lean over backwards in removing any ground for the perpetuation or revival of chauvinist or supremacist attitudes against them so that genuine relations of equality and fraternity between the respective nations can be fostered and achieved."

--George Breitman, summarizing Leninist policy on the national question in The National Question and the Black Liberation Struggle in the United States.

"At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality. Perhaps it is one of the great dramas of the leader that he must combine a passionate spirit with a cold intelligence and make painful decisions without contracting a muscle. Our vanguard revolutionaries must idealize this love of the people, the most sacred cause, and make it one and indivisible. They cannot descend, with small doses of daily affection, to the level where ordinary men put their love into practice."

--Che Guevara in Socialism and Man

I. Introduction

The growth and development of the still-young Women's Liberation movement raise many new issues. Along with these issues comes a debate within our own organization as to which of them do or do not belong in a political discussion, such as the one which took place around the YSA convention document entitled The Struggle for Women's Liberation: Strategy for a Mass Action. To some comrades, the question of man-hating, for example, has no place in a pre-convention discussion or in any other discussion outside of a consciousness-raising session where only women are involved. To others, dropping our policy of excluding homosexuals from the YSA and the SWP is considered dangerous and is seen as potentially interfering with our ability to work with and recruit contacts in areas of our work other than the Women's Liberation movement. These comrades feel somehow that a discussion of such questions interferes with our present task of hammering out a pro-

gram for the coming year, and that what should be discussed instead is another list of demands, the main areas of our intervention in the movement and so on. (Let's take the antiwar movement, change its name, locate a new set of demands, and we're in business.) To attempt to carry out the discussion around the feminist movement in such a limited manner would be to deny the validity or the uniqueness of this struggle.

It is true that the Women's Liberation movement is bringing most people, feminists included, more than they may have bargained for. (Witness the evolution of NOW's "marriage and family" counselling service into a "divorce and alimony" counselling service.) And it's just the beginning! As revolutionaries our job is not only to be prepared for surprises, but also to welcome them, to use them to our advantage. If we are going to support the feminist movement, then we must do so in act as well as in word. We must speak seriously to every question raised by feminists, especially by the most thorough feminists -- our own women comrades -- who as revolutionaries understand the dynamic of this movement and can as Marxist-feminists help to lead that movement in a revolutionary direction. At the same time as we want to influence the direction of this movement, we must encourage the influence of this movement on our own organization through the work and contributions of women comrades.

What I would like to do is to initiate a discussion around some of the "new" questions raised by the Women's Liberation movement and show not only why we should talk about them, but also how they can contribute toward the kind of team spirit and cooperation we need in the effective combat organization we are working so hard to build.

11. The Nature of Sexual Oppression

A. Sexual Oppression as the Oldest Form of Oppression

Before dealing with the specific questions themselves, it is really necessary to go back a bit and examine the nature of sexual oppression, to see what forms it takes and to see how it differs from other struggles, particularly nationalist struggles. All of this will help us to understand why sexual oppression has gone virtually unchallenged for so long, and why it is so difficult a subject to deal with.

As Marxists we base our program and its activities around class struggle. This is not mere rhetoric on our part, but a necessary way of analyzing and dealing with historical events in order to bring about change. We do not conceive of history as being a set of unrelated occurrences that no one can understand or change. Everything is part of a process, from the development of class society to its eventual disappearance. The reason we support feminism is because it is related to class struggle. As a matter of fact, the institution of male supremacy developed concurrently with the beginning of class society. This fact makes the oppression of women the oldest form of oppression known to us. This factor, one of time, is one of the characteristics which is fundamental in distinguishing the depth and scope of women's oppression as compared to all forms of oppression which followed, including national (racial) oppression.

Once we take the age factor into consideration, there are certain observations that follow. Since the oppression of women is the oldest form of oppression known to us, the attitudes and values fostered by it are the deepest, the most thoroughly ingrained, and as such probably the most difficult to discover and to eventually eliminate. These attitudes and values will not be eliminated simply by removing the material basis for their existence, i.e., the abolition of private property and capitalism, but also by the conscious effort of both women and men to understand and do away with the oldest form of class relationships.

Combined with the question of age, and because of it, exists a great reluctance to speak about sexism, or even to admit its existence. Not so for other "social" problems. Racism and racial discrimination have been discussed publicly for years. Programs dealing with the elimination of racial oppression and debates were carried on in the press and at meetings both large and small. While these discussions were going on fast and furiously, women's problems, always thought to be their "own" personal problems, questions of "hygiene," questions of adjustment to the trauma of marriage or motherhood -- that is, to the roles set up by society -- were always discussed somewhere in private where no one would know or hear. What it meant to be a woman was passed on from mother to daughter, and many a mother too frightened or too ashamed to give even this small amount of wisdom to the next generation of women left the job to chance and life's experiences. It is the job of the Women's Liberation movement to bring these discussions into the open, out of whispers into loud angry shouts, into the open where the responsibility of solving women's problems is put where it belongs, on society as a whole and not on one in-

dividual.

We are still in the earliest stages of our struggle; some of us are still recovering from the shock of having such an important thing as a movement that we have built and are responsible for. (Something this significant, and no man to run it!) However, once people begin to understand that women are oppressed as women, there is still a reluctance, especially on the part of men, to discuss openly the extent of this oppression and the various forms it takes. Besides the age factor discussed earlier, there is the additional problem of our values and of bourgeois society's values, from which even Marxists are not exempt, and which Marxists must struggle consciously to overcome. (The feminist movement is speeding that process. The fact that this type of discussion would have been impossible two years ago is an indication of how fast things are changing.) The moral overtones concerning the discussion of sexual problems (and movements) persist, along with the idea that FEELINGS are a sign of WEAKNESS. We have learned that people who show feeling cannot succeed in the bourgeois world. They can only be pitied and pushed aside while the aggressive rush in and take what these poor creatures have been unable to fight for... What we must remember is that no serious discussion of feminism can avoid the issue of how women feel, and that women express those feelings when they deal with their oppression. Those of us who do not like this fact should seriously question our arguments and see if they are not just a learned response to a subject which has always been considered taboo, and should consider whether these discussions really pose a serious threat to the building of a mass movement, as is sometimes claimed.

B. Sexism and Racism, Feminism and Nationalism

In defending feminism we frequently compare nationalism and feminism with the basic and correct argument that since no race or nationality is inferior or superior to any other nationality, then neither sex is superior or inferior to the other. This argument is fine, but should not allow us to equate uncritically the Women's Liberation struggle with the struggles of national liberation. We must see how these struggles differ as well as how they are similar and even overlap in some respects. An understanding of what distinguishes sexism and racism will lead us to an understanding of why the feminist and nationalist movements have different organizations and different types of demands. To mechanically put things of this nature into the same political category is to cut off vital discussion and could eventually lead us to serious errors, such as debating which struggle is more important.

It has already been mentioned that

the oppression of women is the oldest form of oppression and as such very fundamental to the institutionalizing of private property. In order to ensure private property, and to ensure the development of class society in general, you had to have had male supremacy. Racial and national oppression, on the other hand, arrived long after womankind had been enslaved, but the struggles which grew around the abolishing of racial and national oppression preceded and were recognized long before feminism was even laughed at. We know that in this country, for example, it took a struggle for the abolition of slavery for women to become conscious of their oppression and to organize around it.

There are additional differences to be pointed out between national and sexual oppression. One of these differences is the ghetto life which has been imposed on national minorities in capitalist society. The ghetto life, while it has served the function of isolating the most exploited members of society from the wealth their labor has produced, has also had the dialectically opposite effect of uniting them under a banner of solidarity through recognition of a common, national oppression. For Third-World women (and indeed for all women) there exists an additional barrier separating them from the rest of society which in an unconventional way could be considered a ghetto within a ghetto: the nuclear family. Unlike the ghetto, however, the nuclear family as a structure of isolation is much more successful than its larger counterpart in that the relationships exist on a one-to-one basis, (marriage, parenthood), as opposed to a mass basis. This has had the effect, both within the different Third-World communities and elsewhere, of making women's isolation complete, of preventing them first from recognizing their oppression as women and then from uniting around it. This is also why one of our key tasks as Marxists is to educate women on the nature of the nuclear family and on the necessity of coming out of the home and joining a mass movement, as opposed to thinking in terms of solving their problems by "educating" men on a one-to-one basis. Unlike the ghetto, which brings about the recognition of common oppression through ghetto life, the family will never serve as a social base for organizing women as women. The family is not the "community." For women to unite, one of the first things they must do is consciously reject the definitions conferred on them by society. The truly "good mother" will be forced to leave the home, not to stay in it, in order to fight for childcare centers.

The structure of the nuclear family in fulfilling its historic function is what has been most directly responsible for women's oppression. The family is the

place where women have been kept economically and legally dependent on men. It is what has kept them educationally, culturally, and physically deprived, but most important, it is what has kept them, by combining all these factors, psychologically oppressed. Inherent in the family structure is the enforced dependency on men by women. All oppressed sectors of society suffer to different degrees from economic, cultural, and psychological deprivation. But the fact that the oppression of women is dominated by this psychological aspect makes it that much more difficult to deal with and break away from. Where does a woman begin once she has realized that everything she has ever done was to care for, cater to, and be accepted by men? In short, what identity, what history, what meaning does she have outside of how she is seen by men? It remains for women to forge their true identity through struggle.

The way in which women suffer from their oppression necessitates organizations and demands which differ from those of oppressed minorities. Aside from the ever-present need for mass actions, there are two concepts which are unique to the feminist movement. One of them is consciousness-raising groups, the other is the growing study of physical (as opposed to armed) self-defense. One of them deals with the psychological, the other with the physical aspect of female oppression. Both deal with the question of gaining self-confidence. While some comrades may feel that these activities are of second importance to mass action, and for that reason should not be dealt with at length by us, it should be understood that the character of women's oppression which has just been discussed necessitates these kinds of organizations and activities, and that for many women they will precede the desire or the ability to involve themselves in larger mass actions.

III. How Do We Decide What is "Political"?

I would like to discuss some of the most prevalent arguments in our own movement with regards to the new issues raised by Women's Liberation. It should be understood that none of what is said here represents even a small portion of the discussion which should take place around these questions. To go into each one in depth would require much more time than is at our disposal now. Again my idea here is to set the basis for an open discussion around these issues.

One of the most sensitive points involved in our discussion in New York of the feminist movement was the question of manhating. While the words have a myriad of possible interpretations, the fact that they have a highly emotional content makes the idea vulnerable to attack by comrades

with the rationalization that man-hating is not political. The charge is once again (for women) that it constitutes part of an individual's "hang-ups." The effect of accepting this argument would be to cut off discussion of things that women feel are important, to stifle the very badly needed open and honest discussion women have never had before. I don't think we will cease discussing man-hating for several reasons; however, opposition to the question is serious enough to warrant mention of it here. For whatever real reasons comrades have for refusing such discussion, certain ideas have come out in the process of arguing the question. One is the argument that feelings are incompatible with politics, that a discussion of feelings has no place in a political organization. As revolutionaries, we fight against all forms of oppression perpetrated by capitalist society. Alienation of human beings from one another happens to be one of those forms, one of the concrete results of our exploitation under the system. Alienation has to do with roles and relationships in a society that makes everything a commodity, an object. The Women's Liberation movement wants to de-mystify the OBJECT that we have always been and make us into human beings. One of the ways in which we distinguish ourselves from objects is that we have feelings.

Perhaps one of the best points about why discussion of man-hating belongs in our organization was made during pre-convention discussion by a leading comrade in the Black struggle. In essence he said the following: Certainly we all hate or we wouldn't have become revolutionaries; we all hate our oppression. The idea is to give that hate direction and meaning, and that is what the YSA is, organized hate.

We must not allow room in our organization for such discussions only from a sense of duty, but we should also understand that man-hating is a healthy reaction to the particular form of oppression which women suffer. To be against chauvinist attitudes which exist everywhere, without the possibility of expressing that anger and disapproval, would be self-defeating.

There is no need to re-emphasize the fact that many of the issues raised by feminists are very sensitive ones that make people, especially men, rather uncomfortable. But another characteristic of revolutionaries is that we deal with all problems which confront us, that we do not become victims of them, nor do we set up alternatives to facing them. What distinguishes us from other "concerned" people is that we make a point of understanding our social and political environment and the changes that occur in them. Dialectics enables us to deal with any and all of these questions. Contrary to the popular saying, "ignore it and it will go away," turning away from these

questions because they are difficult will by no means eliminate them. In fact, as feminism grows and new women continue to join its ranks, we will have to respond to even more of these questions.

Another point which merits discussion here is the belief that sexuality and sexual relationships have no place in a political discussion. The Women's Liberation movement has already decided that question. Our response to that should be similar to our response on the question of man-hating. What seems to be the real problem in discussing these things is that people are reluctant to speak about them because they are intimately related to everything we do and everything we say when we deal with other human beings, and if we discuss these things, we must of necessity respond to questions that concern us. It demands a lot of time and a lot of effort and creates new problems in our already complicated lives. Thinking about and acting on these questions is part of educating ourselves on feminism. As revolutionaries we have no right to refuse that education. If the education to feminism means that we must rethink the words we use, the way we dress, the way we behave with comrades both women and men, then in the interests of supporting feminism and in the interests of building the revolutionary organization we must do so. Contrary to what many comrades may feel when first presented with these ideas, the motive behind all this discussion is to simplify, not complicate, the relationships between human beings.

Finally, if we talk about women freeing themselves from oppression, we must mean all oppression, not just the oppression that takes the form of discrimination in jobs and education, but personal oppression as well. The relationship between women and men as it still exists today is one of the most subtle yet most effective ways in which any oppression is maintained, through illusion. If women feel that this relationship merits being called political, then it is. Saying that a discussion of sexuality has no place in our organization is once again forcing women to be silent.

There are many other aspects to the discussion about what is political and what is not. Additional issues will arise as the movement wins new layers of women. One of the very important responsibilities of the YSA in the next period is the discussion of our attitude toward homosexuality and the contributions of lesbian women to the feminist movement. Because of the newness of these issues and our inexperience in dealing with them, we will make mistakes. If we can gain early in the struggle an understanding of how we should face new questions and how we should develop new ways of struggle, we will be that much

richer, not only in our experiences but also by the type of cadre we will recruit from the Women's Liberation movement.

New York

December 24, 1970

DEFENSE OF THE ARAB REVOLUTION

by

Val Moller, Larry Birkner, Tom Getts

In the period since 1948, there have been few events in the Middle East that have aroused so much concern over possible U.S. involvement as during the last few months. Of course, since 1948, there has been almost continuous armed conflict between Israel and the Arab governments. These struggles, generally of reaction versus civilians and soldiers in a nebulous attempt of Arab reaction to dissipate interval pressures and to find a halfway solution to the Palestinian refugee problem.

The role of the U.S. in this struggle has been unclear to the average American observer, as it was with Vietnam, until 1965. As the focus of the struggle in the Middle East shifts from Arab versus Zionist reaction, to Arab reaction versus the Palestinian people and Zionism versus self-determination, the role of the U.S. emerges more clearly, that is, to preserve both Israel and the Arab regimes in their present form. The events of September, 1970 exposed to the world the lengths to which the U.S. will go to crush a popular liberation movement and preserve the status-quo of World domination.

The tasks we face, as American revolutionaries, are clear cut--the education of the American masses, as to the American government's plans for the Middle East, through teach-ins, literature, and informal discussions, and the crystallization of mass opposition to U.S. intervention in that part of the world. While, of course, the Vietnam antiwar movement must remain at the center of our activity at this moment, the lesson of this mass movement in America provides us with much material with which to create the movement necessary to tie the hands of the U.S. Government as it attempts to smash another liberation movement and involve the American people in yet another endless war.

Our work in Portland has been greatly enhanced by the existence of one of the Middle East studies centers here. This institute, entirely funded by the Federal Government, is staffed by employees of the U.S. foreign service, and the CIA. The existence of the MESC has attracted a large number of Arab students to Portland State University, generally on scholarships provided by their governments. This situation provides us with a great opportunity to meet and work with many Arab students who have been and will be actively engaged in the Arab revolution. By our work, we have been able to educate a large number of Arab students to Trotskyist ideas.

Portland activities around the Mid-

dle East question since the August conference, were highlighted by three teach-ins.

In October, shortly after flaring hostilities ceased in Jordan, an emergency meeting was called by Arab students and the YSA and was attended by self-proclaimed "movement heavies", who admitted ignorance on the Mid-east question because "We never considered it an important issue before." Accordingly, without consulting with the local Arab community on the best means of defending the Arab revolution, the "heavy caucus" had unilaterally called a teach-in for the first weekend in October, and excluded even the Portland OAS from its planning and organization.

With two days notice, the YSA distributed a statement explaining the Civil War, and urged attendance at the "emergency teach-in" at which 100 people attended. This was our first major political issue on the PSU campus of the fall term. Results quickly followed. The following week we recruited one member and began building a defense of the Arab revolution.

The Peter Buch national tour was beginning and scheduled for Portland on October 20. This gave us two weeks to build, so we encouraged the University Speakers Bureau to find a "willing and able" Zionist opponent. Five hundred attended "The Great Debate", perhaps thousands saw segments on televised news. In the meantime, the local OAS invited two Arab professors, Abed from Berkeley and Haggar from Toronto, for talks later that week. These events constituted the second teach-in and made clear the need for closer cooperation and coordination between interested parties defending the Arab Revolution.

Among the results of this second teach-in, were the radicalization and esprit de corps within the Arab community on campus, and in the city. There was also unanimous recognition of the need for a united front in defense of the revolution which gave birth to the Palestine Support Committee. Similarly, Pathfinder literature, Militants, and subs, were gobbled up like SFEEHA. Later, an incident occurred, subtle but distinct, which better than anything else told us we had been doing our work well.

The incident occurred when Senator McGovern, campaigning for a local hack, spoke to a packed ballroom at PSU. While entertaining the liberal audience with Agnew wisecracks, and gaining wide support for the "defense of civil liberties", he had his crowd responding...enthusiastical-

ly until he voiced support of the Nixon Mid-East policy. Immediately the mood changed to grumbling hostility. The pressure was on; he became defensive and cut the question period short.

The week following the election, the Palestine Support Committee (PSC) was formed and set to work, planning another action. The OAS, YSA, FPL and "movement heavies" agreed on the demands for self-determination and no U.S. involvement, but the YAWF interjected a third demand, support of the program of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and so placed a burden in the path to defend the Palestinian and Arab Revolutions.

But all was far from lost as the main action projected was the building of a well-planned teach-in. Although the PSC obtained national speakers, like Randa Fattal, Editor of Arab World, and Welch, journalist, Colin Edwards, as well as Dr. George Hagggar, a Marxist from Toronto, and other spokesmen, subsequent efforts by the YSA within the PSC to open up and broaden the base building and participating in the teach-in met with little success.

Fortune was ours however, as Paul Boutelle, Chairman of Cobatame, was to be in Portland December 3, and was made the keynote speaker for the three-day teach-in. Nearly a thousand dollars was raised through the speakers bureau and other sources.

Although we are still evaluating the impact of this third teach-in, some progressive impact has been measured. The Arab speakers, especially Hagggar, addressed themselves to the need for building a defense which barred U.S. intervention and explained the inconsistency of Americans claiming to support Palestinian self-determination to programmatically support any one of the Palestinian Liberation organizations. That right was reserved for the Palestinians themselves.

An important lesson we learned early in our Palestinian defense campaign was the need for developing close and constant contact with leading Arab activists. Comrades must not take for granted the political level of Arab contacts, as more of our opponents enter the struggle, debate will tend to focus on issues other than our specific position on the Arab Revolution. Examples of side issues that will develop are the nature of "free speech", is it bourgeois to fight for it?; The Soviet Union, China and their roles in the Mid-East; Who may participate in a "hands off" the Mid-East movement, etc. Therefore, it is essential that Arab activists be exposed to our views on all aspects of the revolution.

A viable movement cannot be built without an effective theoretical and organizational guide, and I cannot stress enough the role the Militant has played in

our Arab work. It has laid bare the fallacies of our ultraleft opponents' assertions about the Revolution being "bourgeois" in character.

Almost as important a role was played by the intervention of SWP speakers. In Portland's case, Peter Buch and Paul Boutelle. Our speakers engagements were the best built and most well attended of the many forums around the Mid-East question.

Comrades must constantly struggle against ultraleftism and sectarianism, in their defense committees.

Ultraleft acts can only end up in deportation and certain imprisonment or execution for the Arabs involved, and a sectarian attitude can leave Arabs open to red-baiting -- a charge that can be hard to defend against, if the committee considers itself "Marxist-Leninist." Comrades must always be aware of the delicate position foreign students are placed in.

Sectarianism also is a road-block in developing our ability to stop U.S. involvement in Arab affairs. The day when the "Marxist-Leninists" can stop imperialism is the day when we hold state power, not until.

Finally, a sectarian attitude excludes new elements from aiding the movement. I will give only one example-- the Jewish Student Union. Although they may not seem very likely allies, all right-thinking Jews eventually come to a personal crisis when faced with the realities of political life. Informing them of Israel's role in Indonesia, Africa and the Third World struggles will bring many so-called Zionists closer to our position on Israel. When forced to choose sides on the barricade, most will come our way, if they are not prevented from doing so.

Portland

December 24, 1970

BACKGROUND OF THE NEW YORK WOMEN'S STRIKE COALITION

by

Sharon Crawford

Last spring, shortly after issuing a call for a National Strike for Equality, Betty Friedan approached Ruthann Miller and Kipp Dawson with the idea of an August 26 action and an invitation to the early planning meetings of her "national coalition." We feel this approach was prompted by the role our comrades had played in building the People to Abolish Abortion Laws and in the first Congress to Unite Women.

In these early meetings, we argued for the need to involve all sectors of the women's liberation movement, and for the necessity of specific demands to serve as a focus for the action. Agreement was finally won on these crucial points, Ruthann Miller was named as coordinator for the demonstration, and we moved into action directed at making the march and rally the pivotal event of the day's activities.

An office was set up and we began the work of building a mass meeting to decide on the demands and to make plans for the demonstration. We made every attempt to contact a maximum number of groups in the city, as well as putting out a mailing to hundreds of individual women.

The first mass meeting, July 15, voted unanimously to make three demands the focus of the demonstration: Free Abortion on Demand--No Forced Sterilization; Free 24-Hour Childcare Centers--Community Controlled; and Equal Opportunities in Jobs and Education. Also discussed and approved were the times and places for both the march and rally. By the time the meeting was over, it had broken down into four subcommittees--literature, publicity, finances, and speakers--which immediately started to work. Each subcommittee elected two representatives to a steering committee, but the main decisions continued to be made at open mass meetings which grew from an attendance of about 40 in July to meetings of 120-150 in August.

During the intense six-week period before August 26, our comrades came to play leading roles in the subcommittees and the steering committee, and established a reputation as being organizationally skilled as well as being the most dependable and persistent builders of August 26. In the debates that arose, we were the consistent supporters of nonexclusion, of making decisions democratically at open meetings, and of continuing to reach out and involve greater numbers of women in the movement.

Considering that a Wednesday afternoon in August is not usually considered the most auspicious time for a demonstration, we would not have been surprised or disappointed with the sort of action that is commonly described as "small but spirited." However, almost daily we received evidence of growing support and in the last ten days before the 26th, attention from the media became so intense that one could enter the strike office at nearly any hour of the day or night and find at least one TV crew or journalist there--including ones from England, Japan, Canada, Germany, Latin America, and Switzerland. But even with all the publicity, surely no one was prepared for the massive outpouring seen on that day, which has been variously estimated from a low of 20,000 to a high of 50,000. Even hostile observers (like the New York Times) could not fail to be impressed by the sight of thousands upon thousands of chanting, shouting, militant women--filling all of Fifth Avenue from curb to curb--elated at this first sense of their solidarity and power. The highlight of the rally, indeed of the day, was Ruthann's speech to the exultant crowd overflowing the boundaries of Bryant Park.

Within a few days after August 26, informal discussions had begun among a number of strike leaders around the idea of continuing the coalition of forces that had come together around August 26. A series of preparatory meetings were held during September at which our comrades advocated the calling of a mass meeting at which the proposal for an ongoing coalition based on action around specific demands would be put forward.

But already there were indications of the problems soon to come. Some of the strike leaders began to express doubts about the efficacy of mass action and the "relevance" of the three demands. Rumors, gossip, and outright slander--alleging the "real" and nefarious motives for the YSA and SWP's participation in the movement--began to be covertly circulated. The phony accusations were based on either deliberate distortions or, most often, were out and out fabrications. These attacks, coming in what was still the euphoric afterglow of sisterhood from August 26, were very disorienting and disheartening--especially for those women new to the movement. But even among more experienced forces and among comrades, it took real effort not to become demoralized by what appeared to be an inexplicable change in the women we'd felt so close to only weeks before.

The first mass meeting was held October 12 and was attended by 300 women including members of the YSA, SWP, NOW, Radical Feminists, campus groups, YWLL, professional groups, lesbian groups, about 60 Black and Puerto Rican women from the Phoenix Organization of Women (POW), and a number of independent women. This meeting voted overwhelmingly to establish a women's liberation coalition, which would be open to all women, and which would be based on action around the three demands of August 26.

By this time, it was clear that the loose group of opponents were fusing into a clique. It was a curious formation by any criteria, including liberals, women opposed to mass action, ultralefts, sectarians, women who are in or around the Communist Party (based on circumstantial evidence, since there are NO open CPers in the New York Women's Liberation movement), and some individuals whose politics are so eclectic and erratic as to defy any classification whatsoever. This group has its strength and base at the New York Women's Center which has degenerated from its original conception as a center for all women, into a sort of "closed club" with an atmosphere that is distinctly unfriendly toward new women.

Such a rainbow-hued clique as had developed was held together by the one idea they could agree on: opposition to the participation of the YSA and SWP in the women's liberation movement. That this was the only basis for unity in the clique became increasingly evident later in the nature of their attacks. For example, a woman would attack the SWP for participating in the "degenerate electoral system" and be roundly applauded by women who were avid campaigners for Bella Abzug, Democratic candidate for Congress.

For the most part, however, at the October 12 meeting our opponents limited their "public" statements to attacks on the strategy of mass action, the assertion that there were too many differences among these women for them to unite around anything, and even a few tentative probes in the direction of dragging out the old argument that the movement is "racist" and "doesn't relate to Third World women and working women." Also raised was the question of whether the coalition should be open to members of "male-dominated organizations," which was the first salvo of the coming campaign to exclude the YSA and SWP from the movement.

These arguments were effectively countered by a number of women from POW who spoke in defense of nonexclusion, and also stressed that the way to bring more Third World women into the movement was to organize mass actions around the three demands--actions like August 26 which had

been the stimulus for the formation of POW and which had brought these women into the movement for the first time.

A second mass meeting was scheduled for October 21. In the interval, the red-baiting campaign sharply intensified. Our opponents at the Women's Center passed a motion excluding the YSA, the SWP, political candidates, supporters of political candidates, as well as members of any groups "controlled" by the YSA or SWP (this was for the benefit of the POW women who had agreed with our ideas and were therefore suspect). At the second meeting, we and our allies distributed a leaflet on nonexclusion. Women attending this meeting had to sit through two hours of incredible harangues against the YSA and SWP before being allowed to get to the business they had come to discuss. When matters at last came to a vote, a large majority voted to call a demonstration against Mayor Lindsay on December 12 around the demands for childcare and abortion.

A few minutes later, the clique staged what was apparently a pre-arranged walkout. About 20 women left the meeting, though not until after several return forays in a vain attempt to attract more followers, and went to the Women's Center where they discussed the idea of forming a "counter-coalition" in order to "expose" the YSA and SWP in the women's liberation movement nationally.

Our response to this was made clear when, immediately after the walkout, Kipp Dawson spoke from the floor expressing the belief that "all of us here want those women to be part of the coalition and we must make every effort to bring them back."

Since then, we have continued to send mailings to the walkout group, have tried to restore at least "friendly" relations with as many as possible, and most importantly have continued to be the most consistent activists and builders of an open, militant, mass movement.

But in the two months since that second mass meeting, the Women's Strike Coalition has become established as a recognized and significant force in the New York women's liberation movement to which activists, including opponents, must relate as a part of reality. The range of women involved around August 26 has broadened out even further.

A caucus of Third World women has been set up within the Coalition and regularly attracts up to 50 Third World women to its meetings. Their first activity was to effectively and energetically organize a historic press conference of Third World feminists urging support for the December 12 action.

One problem during the first period

of formation, was the lack of strong campus support for the Coalition, but this has since been one of the areas of dramatic change. Now, some of our most dependable and enthusiastic participation is from campus women's liberation groups, especially on those campuses where we have fractions. But even on campuses where we have no comrades, women have taken the initiative to contact the Coalition and become active. As a result, building activities for December 12 took place on at least a half-dozen campuses including a whole week of programs, film showings, etc. on the key campus of Barnard-Columbia. Virtually all the organizing work for this Women's Liberation Week was carried out by the Barnard Women's Liberation group, none of whom are YSAers. The week was highly successful, strengthened the campus group, and also produced a sizeable amount of funds for the Coalition through sales of buttons, posters, etc.

As part of building December 12, the Coalition itself staged actions at the offices of Cosmopolitan magazine for two consecutive days. Although the sit-in on the first day and the picket line on the second never involved more than a dozen women at any time, the action was covered by every commercial TV station in New York, numerous radio stations and newspapers. On the second day, the magazine's editor, Helen Gurley Brown, agreed to an appointment with us. The Coalition emerged with an agreement that Cosmopolitan would publish feminist articles submitted by us, and also a regular monthly feminist column, all of which the magazine would pay for at its "top rate." Editor Brown evidently thought she was getting off easily since we graciously agreed to drop our demand for \$15,000 in reparations!

Money from the articles and particularly the prospect of a regular monthly income from the columns, gives the Coalition the perspective, for the first time, of a continuing financial base. The unpredictability of funds has been a source of unending difficulty. Regularizing finances is a top-priority item for the Coalition in the period ahead because of the opportunities that are lost due to the frequent lack of even a minimal level of resources. One idea that we are trying is to contact all the groups, and the more "substantial" individuals, and persuade them to pledge a certain amount of money to the Coalition each month as a "sustainer." Honorariums for speakers from the Coalition are another avenue to be pursued. A continuing finance committee will be reactivated so that possible sources of money can be sought out and followed up on.

More and more, the Coalition is becoming seen as the center of activity in the New York movement. When threatened

with eviction from the campus and possible arrest, founders of the Hunter College Childcare Center came to the Coalition Steering Committee for help. Expressing full support, the Coalition immediately began a telephone campaign to mobilize groups and individuals for a demonstration called by the Hunter women.

A week before, when Time magazine published a malicious attack on Kate Millett which included a despicable attempt to "sex-bait" the movement, several women came to the Coalition with a proposal for a response, which the Steering Committee approved. Made at the December 12 rally, the Coalition's response was a both verbal and symbolic gesture of solidarity with Kate and with all women, rejecting any attempt to divide the movement and reaffirming the policy of nonexclusion. As a result of this action, a whole sector of gay women have been drawn around the Coalition for the first time.

Now, during this critical time following December 12, we are making a maximum effort to consolidate the gains made in the past period and preparing for the next mass meeting of the Women's Strike Coalition on January 7. Meetings with leaders and representatives from the various affiliated groups are being set up by the staff. (Ruthann Miller is one of the two paid staff members.) These meetings are to discuss ideas from the groups, reanimate those groups that have grown inactive, stimulate the active groups to even greater deeds, and generally get appraised of the views of the Coalition's component parts.

While building the January mass meeting, the Coalition also has some "longer range" projects underway. One is to develop and systemize city-wide communications, not only to maintain contacts with groups in the Coalition, but also to reach previously uninvolved groups with information on the Coalition, speakers, etc. Another project is the development of regular correspondence with groups throughout the country to encourage a continual flow of information among all sectors of the women's liberation movement. Such a network will open the way for future cooperation and coordination on a national scale.

Although the "ongoing coalition" has been ongoing for less than three months, it has become an established force in the New York women's liberation movement, and as such, represents a major breakthrough. From the beginning, YSAers have played key roles in the building of the Coalition into an independent, nonexclusionary united front for mass action.

We are only at the beginning of one of the most important and revolutionary mass movements in American history. We have every reason to be optimistic.

New York December 24, 1970

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