

TWO WAYS TO BUILD A MOVEMENT

At the February 19 National Conference of the Anti-Bakke Decision Coalition (ABDC), all participants voiced their loud approval of a nationwide Spring Offensive, including a call for unifying all anti-Bakke forces for a demonstration in Washington D.C. One week later and with high hopes, the ABDC executive board representatives attended a meeting with the National Lawyers Guild, Black American Law Students Association, People's Alliance and the National Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision in New York in order to hammer out principled unity. The ABDC did not agree to limiting the planning of the Spring actions to only these 5 groups. ABDC insisted on a broad democratic planning committee open to all genuine anti-Bakke groups, including regional organizations such as MEChAs (Chicano student organization) and Asian Student Unions. This was a concrete application of ABDC's principle of unity: "Rely on the masses to overturn the Bakke decision".

After the first Planning Committee meeting, the ABDC representatives were fairly optimistic that the forces involved could reach principled unity. Although the ABDC entered the Planning Committee with a recommendation for a demonstration of April 22, they were flexible and agreed to hold a march and rally on April 15, the original date chosen by NCOBD. The Committee also agreed on the following: 1) The Planning Committee would be expanded as we moved toward the April 15th march date. 2) Common slogans and demands were agreed upon which would appear on all literature advertising the march on Washington, D.C. 3) The name of the April 15 Planning Committee would be used on all literature to show that the march and rally were being sponsored by a broad range of groups. 4) A common press release and poster were to be developed. 5) The Planning Committee was being set up just for the march on Washington; it was not to be an on-going coalition or "third force". There were other agreements as well, but these were the ones which the leadership of the NCOBD came to disregard through the course of struggle.

By the time the second meeting was called on March 16, it was clear that the NCOBD had other designs for the Planning Committee. They had not carried out the task of designing a joint poster with the April 15 Planning Committee name on it, indeed the Planning Committee name appeared on no literature at all; they never prepared a joint press release; they blocked all attempts to actually expand the planning committee in a democratic way; and finally they came to the meeting with a new stipulation. They insisted that no future planning for the march on Washington could be done with having a closed, 5-group planning committee on the West Coast. This committee would have the same composition as the April 15 Planning Committee. NCOBD wanted all Spring actions under control of this closed committee. The proposal excluded various regional groups who have been instrumental in building the anti-Bakke Movement. ABDC could not agree to this because it undermined the democratic procedures necessary to build a strong united action.

Brooklyn College Students Fight Bakke

--from a correspondent

BROOKLYN, N.Y.--On April 6 the Zionist dominated student government at Brooklyn College refused to allocate money for buses for the April 15 anti-Bakke demonstration in Washington DC. They had \$2000 in unallocated funds

NCOBD leadership attended the ABDC National Conference. They made a detailed proposal for a joint Washington, D.C. action. They never proposed joint West Coast actions. If the NCOBD leadership was truly concerned with a unified action in the Spring, they should have raised their concern for actions in all parts of the country at the Feb. 19 conference. Instead they chose not to participate as full delegates, they chose to participate as observers only. They were only concerned with how the rest of the anti-Bakke movement could plug into the plans which they had already made. The ABDC conference unanimously rejected NCOBD's proposed planning committee of only 5 groups. Even in the face of these maneuvers, ABDC offered to participate jointly in an open conference, with full NCOBD participation, in order to plan a united West Coast action for May 13.

ABDC has always held open conferences, democratically run. NCOBD--or members of their coalition--have always been invited and attended these conferences. Six hundred people and over 150 organizations attended the February National Conference of ABDC. The wider the number of groups and the wider the political input--the more successful the movement. In contrast, the NCOBD insists on closed conferences and a planning committee which excluded many anti-Bakke forces. The top leaders of the NCOBD act like they fear the participation of the masses in the planning of events. In their view "the fewer, the better". Such a bureaucratic approach can only restrict the movement and make it more difficult to unite all possible forces.

After the third Planning Committee meeting, the NCOBD leadership decided to walk-out because they couldn't force a closed planning committee for the West Coast; they formed a new committee and excluded ABDC. Despite this blatant act of splitting, ABDC still called for people to attend the April 15 demonstration. In fact, ABDC led a contingent of over 1000 people for that event.

The 15,000-person turnout on April 15 was a sign of the mass hatred for the Bakke decision. People traveled from the South, East Coast and Mid-west to attend. The large showing certainly put the ruling class on notice that trouble is brewing if they rule in favor of Bakke. Unfortunately, the speakers and political emphasis of the march failed to represent the views of the masses.

The main speakers did not represent the many major organizations which have built the anti-Bakke movement. The National Lawyers Guild, BALSAs, East Coast Asian Student Unions and ABDC were not allowed to speak at the main event. Instead the marchers were treated to long-winded speeches by reformist politicians, representatives of the revisionist Communist Party USA and of the Trotskyist-initiated National Student Coalition Against Racism--none of whom have done much to mobilize the masses against Bakke.

The dissolution of the Planning Committee weakened the anti-Bakke movement. The top leadership of the NCOBD is primarily responsible for the split in the Planning Committee. With the Bakke decision to be handed down any day now, it is not in the interests of the masses for the NCOBD to have behaved in such an irresponsible fashion.

There are many individuals and groups within NCOBD and within the anti-Bakke movement who wish to see future unified anti-Bakke actions. Today we stand ready to participate in principled joint actions. In particular we urge principled joint actions in major cities when the Bakke decision is handed down. These actions cannot be based on scheming and maneuvering, they cannot be planned by excluding the masses. We must build a unified front against the Bakke decision and against national oppression.★