

Antiwar Report by Gus Horowitz, for the National Antiwar Steering Committee, January 28, 1970

There will be three important aspects to the forthcoming SMC conference.

1. The conference will be the key to organizing major antiwar demonstrations this spring. The fact that no general antiwar conference will be called by the New Mobilization Committee gives the SMC conference a more general character than that of a purely student conference. The SMC conference, because it will be the only large, representative national antiwar gathering, will be the scene at which an authoritative decision will be made setting the central dates and character for the antiwar demonstrations this spring. Many individuals and groups from the non-student antiwar movement have indicated interest in attending the SMC conference. This should be encouraged, for it will lend the greatest possible authority to the decisions made there.

2. The conference will be much more than a date-setting conference. The SMC is a major organization in its own right and its conference will lay out an entire series of antiwar campaigns on the colleges and high schools. The SMC conference will cap the past months of mushrooming SMC growth which brought large numbers of antiwar activists and groups into affiliation with the SMC. The SMC national office has reported that the regional scope and number of responses indicating attendance at the conference is far ahead of that for any previous conference. This indicates that there will be a very large turnout of SMC activists from all parts of the country, undoubtedly the largest ever.

3. The size of breadth of the SMC conference will also make it an important event in the radical youth movement. Among our organized political opponents, so far the International Socialists (Draperites) and the National Caucus of Labor Committees (Marcus group) have submitted proposals to the SMC conference, and RYM has indicated that it is mobilizing. We must prepare for the likelihood that other opponents will also be there in force. We can therefore anticipate that the SMC conference will be the place at which many of the most pressing issues under discussion among radicalizing youth will be debated.

This threefold nature of the SMC conference makes it imperative that we make an all out effort to build it and make our intervention as effective as possible. Regional SMC travellers sent out to build the conference should be the norm. Areas should prepare for much larger numbers on buses and car pools. These organizing efforts should be accompanied by an intensive educational campaign to convince antiwar activists of our line in the antiwar movement and prepare them for the political discussions that will take place.

The Next National Action

Recent public statements by the Vietnam Moratorium Committee

have been explicitly pointing towards involvement in the 1970 election campaigns on behalf of capitalist candidates. Some local Moratorium offices are already making these the central focus of their current activities. The national office of the Moratorium Committee has also projected monthly antiwar actions. The strategy of adding an additional day each month in a cumulative fashion has been dropped in favor of one central day each month. A press release that the VMC put out states the following: " The 15th of each month will be a 'Peace Action Day' around which local organizers will focus their organizing efforts for that month. This will culminate in rallies to be organized in 20-25 cities across the nation on April 15, the deadline for filing income tax returns. These 'taxpayer rallies' will center on the issue of high taxes due to 'disproportionate' military spending. Americans will be asked to 'give up business as usual' on this day to protest the use of their tax money in the Vietnam war."

It is not known at this time how much financing, staff, and general organizing effort will be used by the Moratorium for April 15, but it appears that far less is projected than there was for the October 15 Moratorium.

The decisions of the last two steering committee meetings of the New Mobilization Committee have been reported in the Militant. The "radical caucus" amalgam continues on its course of projecting a multi-issue hodge-podge of activities designed to circumvent a mass antiwar action this spring. On the organizational plane, moves are underway to set up a decision-making framework and construct a staff with this multi-issue perspective and thus effectively drive away many of the groups and individuals that have made up the national mass-action antiwar coalition.

It is not possible to reverse this process from within the New Mobilization steering committee so that a national antiwar conference could be called by the NMC. Our approach within the NMC has been to prevent it from taking a formally hostile approach to the SMC conference, to expose the direction in which the NMC is headed, and to win allies from the local antiwar coalitions to the understanding that an alternative means must be utilized to set the date and character of the spring antiwar actions.

The NMC has also set April 15 as a date for actions in major cities this spring, although it has not projected these as massive demonstrations based around immediate withdrawal like the Nov. 15 marches in Washington and San Francisco.

Despite the way in which April 15 has been projected by the VMC and the NMC, the fact that both organizations are formally on record for actions on that date makes it the indicated time in which the broadest possible support can be obtained to mount mass national antiwar demonstrations. The SMC conference will be of utmost importance in clearly spelling out the political line and

tactical approach of these demonstrations. We hope to convince the SMC conference to propose massive, immediate withdrawal demonstrations in all the major cities on April 15. It should be clearly decided that these demonstrations steer clear of "confrontationist" or civil disobedience tactics or of support to capitalist politicians.

In addition to student antiwar activists we want to encourage and extend personal invitations to many older representatives from local antiwar coalitions to attend the SMC conference in order to give authority to the decisions about April 15 which will affect the entire antiwar movement. We hope to convince CAPAC to take the initiative in setting up a meeting of these forces at the time of the SMC conference in order to obtain general national agreement on the date and character of the spring antiwar actions and to begin the process of reforming the national antiwar coalition.

One practical difficulty with the April 15 date is that it is a Wednesday, whereas we have normally found Saturday to be the best day for mass demonstrations. But in this case, proposing a Saturday date as the central focus for the spring would run the risk that many local antiwar forces would be unwilling to break openly with the dates proposed by the VMC and NMC, this consideration outweighs the advantages of the Saturday date. Unless there is a very strong agreement from a wide range of forces for a Saturday date, April 15 offers the best possibilities for united front mass demonstrations. A proposed week of antiwar activity, April 13-18, with April 15 as the central date, will leave open the possibility for some local variation in the cases where a local coalition wants to carry out its major action on Saturday, April 18.

With the April 15 date, we will favor the SMC projecting major antiwar actions during the day on the colleges and high schools, which would then feed into massive city-wide coordinated demonstrations.

Major Proposals at the SMC Conference

In addition to the proposed central action on April 15, the SMC conference will hear proposals covering a wide range of activities for the SMC. These will be printed in two coming issues of the Student Mobilizer and distributed at the conference. Following are some of the central points under discussion:

1. A clearcut affirmation of the basic principles upon which the SMC is based. These are: (a) mass action; (b) immediate withdrawal; (c) non-exclusion; and (d) democratic decision-making.

2. An SMC campaign against campus complicity with the war and projected actions against ROTC, war industry recruiters like GE, military agents spying on the activities of student antiwar groups, etc.

3. An SMC campaign on the high schools, projecting high school antiwar action around the focus of the High School Bill of Rights.

4. A re-emphasis of the SMC's campaign in support of antiwar GIs and increased utilization of the GI Press Service.

5. A "GE Off Campus" campaign aimed at GE recruiters, GE products, GE representatives on university boards of trustees, university investments in GE, etc. This anticomplicity campaign against a major Vietnam war contractor is the primary means by which the SMC as a campus-based antiwar group can aid the GE strikers, educate students on the importance of linking up with the labor movement, and create a more favorable opportunity for winning labor support to antiwar actions.

These topics will all be covered in workshops and written proposals are in the works by SMC national and local leaders. Additional workshops for which we will formulate proposals are: women's liberation and the fight against the war; Third World liberation and the fight against the war; legal and political defense of the movement; the draft; the international antiwar movement.

Written proposals on many of these general points have been submitted by some of our political opponents and more are to be expected. Our position on all of these will be discussed thoroughly at the conference first on meetings, but educational discussion should take place on the local level in advance so that our fraction will be well-prepared.

In addition to organized intervention by our opponents, we must anticipate the reflection of pressure on some SMC activists from the developments in the New Mobilization Committee and the upcoming elections. This pressure has so far been strongest in the Washington area where the national offices of the SMC, NMC, and the VMC are all located. Some of the SMCers active around the SMC national office have been influenced by the New Mobilization Committee's "radical caucus" or the Moratorium Committee, and a red-baiting factional atmosphere has been generated against the YSA. The key to handling this will be clearcut political discussions and decisions at the SMC conference.

The Opportunities for Revolutionary Socialist Propaganda

The SMC conference takes on an additional aspect because it will be the first major national multi-tendency gathering since the demise of SDS. Large numbers of radicalized youth from many part of the country will be present searching for answers to basic political questions. These will be discussed both informally and as part of the debates over general antiwar perspectives. This gives the YSA an opportunity to gain a hearing for its program and to recruit the best antiwar activists. The YSA will be able to meet its opponents head on in a political confrontation before hundreds of antiwar youth. This will be of great propaganda

value for us and an important step in building the YSA as the major socialist youth organization.

The SMC conference will be far from routine. It will reflect all the aspects of the organization's tremendous growth in the past period. It will be both a major challenge and opportunity for us, requiring an all-out campaign to build the conference, and an intensive educational campaign of preparation for it.

value for us and an important step in building the YSA as the major socialist youth organization.

The SMC conference will be far from routine. It will reflect all the aspects of the organization's tremendous growth in the past period. It will be both a major challenge and opportunity for us, requiring an all-out campaign to build the conference, and an intensive educational campaign of preparation for it.