

## REPORT ON THE STUDENT MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

by Larry Seigle, September 6, 1968

The Student Mobilization Committee conference held in Chicago September 1 marked a significant step forward for the Student Mobilization Committee. The conference was successful in drawing a large number of antiwar activists together to discuss perspectives for the fall, and, virtually unanimously, agreed to issue a call for a fall action that has the potential to become one of the largest and most significant actions of the antiwar movement ever.

More than 250 attended the conference. While this is smaller than recent conferences (but about the same size as the December 1966 conference which ratified the April 15, 1967 actions), two important factors must be kept in mind. First, this is the first time an SMC conference has been held while school was not in session. This made it difficult to contact many antiwar activists about the conference. Secondly, this figure includes only a handful of organized opponents. The only organized groups outside of the YSA who attended were about a dozen people from ROC (Radical Organizing Committee) and five or six from the Workers League. Antiwar activists from 19 states, 58 campuses and 19 high schools were present. These figures make it clear that the Student Mobilization Committee remains the authoritative national organization of the student antiwar movement, and has the potential to expand this influence and authority in the coming school year.

The conference agreed to issue a call for a "Week of International Solidarity Against the War and With American GIs" October 21-27, with mass actions in local areas on October 26. This call is in response to international calls that have already been issued from Japan and England for actions during that time period. It is the most opportune time for action in the U.S. because it comes before the elections, thus giving the antiwar movement the chance to confront all pro-war candidates, and it occurs late enough to allow from four to six weeks of organizing after school begins.

The only opposition to setting the date came from Linda Morse of ROC who proposed that SMC postpone any decision until the National Mobilization Committee could meet. It was pointed out that SMC had, in the past, called actions and then proposed them to the NMC conferences which could work out further arrangements and details. This approach was the one decided upon by the conference.

A major success of the conference, and the high point of the weekend, was the GI panel which was held on Saturday afternoon. This panel featured two active duty GIs and three veterans who discussed the depth of antiwar sentiment in the armed forces, and the most effective ways for the antiwar movement to reach these GIs. The panel made it perfectly clear that the Student Mobilization Committee can make work with GIs an integral part of its regular activity,

including such things as leafleting and distributing GI newspapers at bases, inviting active duty soldiers to join; antiwar demonstrations and rallies, and organizing legal defense committees for GIs who are persecuted for antiwar activity, such as Allen Myers. An important feature of the October 21-27 actions will be expressions of solidarity with GIs and attempts to involve GIs in the week of protest activities. These GI-oriented projects can be an important new area of work when added to campus actions of the SMC.

The conference also enthusiastically endorsed the idea of organizing protest demonstrations whenever either Humphrey or Nixon appear to campaign.

### OUR TASKS

The failure of the McCarthy campaign and the continued stalemate of the negotiations in Paris mean that this fall will see increased willingness on the part of broad sections of the American people to participate in antiwar protests. This will be true to a greater degree than ever before among the student population. The potential exists for the antiwar movement to mobilize larger numbers than ever before in independent actions against the war in Vietnam. The first step towards turning this potential into reality was taken by the successful SMC conference. The next stage will be to draw together the coalitions in local areas to begin the planning for October 21-27. In some areas the coalitions will have to be reconstructed from the ground up, but in many places the framework exists and can begin immediately to broaden out and draw in all those forces who are willing to participate in united actions. The key to success will be making concrete plans and beginning to organize as soon as school starts.

The Student Mobilization Committee office in Chicago will be publishing the call, posters, the STUDENT MOBILIZER, and other material for October 21-27. To make this possible, local antiwar groups will have to set a high priority on fund-raising activities for the Student Mobilization Committee.

In order for the National Antiwar Fraction to stay on top of developments, each local and at-large area should assign one person to write regular reports on the plans for action and the stage of developments in each area.