

Chicago
Nov. 11, 1971

NOV 17 1971

To the national antiwar steering committee,
From Fred Halstead
Some thoughts on Nov. 6 and the present period:

First on the demonstration here in Chicago: Personally I was quite pleased by the turnout on the march, which stretched seven blocks taking up half of State Street with fairly solidly packed marchers. I estimated 10,000 on the march. However the crowd at the rally looked smaller, perhaps 5,000 or a little more at the height. Perhaps because of the cold day. The police gave us 5,000. The newspapers from 2,000 to 6,000. (The reporters are all convinced the war is practically over and the anti-war movement is dead, and it really colors their reporting.) I estimate the crowd was only about one third college students, about one third high school, and about one third workers in their twenties. But this latter is just a guess. There was almost no trade union presence as such. None of the trade unions who endorsed brought anything, not even one sign, from their unions. *official*

The crowd was very different from crowds at previous demonstrations. It was very enthusiastic and very serious. It was in striking contrast to the Oct. 31, ~~1970~~ 1970 crowd, which was smaller, of course, but also had a lot of ultra lefts in it and which had a generally much less serious demeanor. We had very little trouble. Only one small attempt at the stage by some ultra lefts which was very easily handled by a group of black ~~xxx~~ marshals an SLP contact brought down. The crowd responded well to stuff on the wage freeze and the war.

It is my opinion that the organization of this demonstration was probably the best we've ever had in Chicago, and I would bet that's true in other places as well. There was a very solid core of serious SMCers and independents as well as our own people who worked quite well. We could have handled a crowd of many times the size.

The PCPJ-Chicago Peace Council did very little, and it was obviously an NPAC show. The CP was hardly in evidence except in the form of the old Peace Council ~~xxxx~~ stalwarts. Not even very many Daily World salesmen. PL-SDS was there and since this is their national headquarters and since they put out leaflets to build their contingent we expected something from them, but they didn't have much, and they behaved themselves.

It is interesting to compare the current situation with that in the fall of 1967, ~~xxxx~~ which was the same distance away from the presidential election. That's the main similarity. The differences are instructive. At that time it was universally expected that Johnson would be the Democratic Party nominee in 1968. But Johnson was synonymous with the escalation of the war, and there was great bitterness against him. The liberal left, the ultra lefts, and the CP were all frantically casting about for some electoral alternative to Johnson, even to the point of playing with third party movements. This fact gave the antiwar movement more unity on the surface at least than is possible now, with the same forces universally expecting the Democrats to nominate some sort of a "peace candidate." Under these conditions, the pull of liberal Democratic Party electoral politics is much stronger and the antiwar movement is already feeling it much earlier than four years ago. In my opinion it is incorrect to ascribe the modest turnouts Nov. 6 simply to Nixon's attempts to look like he is getting out of Vietnam. A major factor is the pull of the ~~1972~~ 1972 elections and all that means regarding the liberals, CP, and the ultra lefts, as well as the trade union bureaucrats.

Another big difference between the situation four years ago and ~~xxx~~ at this time is that the antiwar sentiment is much more widespread now than it was then. In the fall of 1967 the antiwar sentiment was large, but it was still a minority sentiment. I recall the terrible difficulty we had getting buses, for example, for the march on Washington (the Pentagon affair). We were told the drivers unions had forced cancellation. Whether that was exactly true or not, it was possible at that time. We were ~~x~~ operating in a sea of hostility. Now the situation is the opposite. We operate in a sea of friendliness, however apathetic *it appears*.

And yet, the turnouts on the Pentagon march and Oakland draft demonstrations in the fall of 1967 were considered very large, while the turnouts for this Nov. 6 are considered very modest with an occasional exception such as Denver. Actually, the total numbers involved in Oct., 1967 were somewhat smaller than the total numbers this Nov. 6, but the ~~x~~ immediate national impact was much greater four years ago.

~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ In any case, the turnout for Nov. 6 was relatively very much smaller than the turnout for ~~Nov~~ Oct. 1967, relative to the overall antiwar sentiment. What does this indicate? In my opinion it indicates a very widespread set of ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ illusions: 1) A belief on the part of many people that Nixon actually is getting out. 2) A belief that the Democrats are sure to nominate a "peace" candidate who will get us out very soon if Nixon doesn't before the election. One or the other, or a combination of both, of these beliefs being extremely widespread, is, in my opinion, the real explanation for the modest size of Nov. 6.

But these beliefs hold tenuous sway in a population overwhelmingly against the war and any shattering of these illusions, either before the election or ~~after~~ after, ~~then~~, could result in an explosive situation. As of now, as a result of Nov. 6, NPAC is in a good position to take advantage of such a situation when it occurs. The ~~when~~ "when" is, of course, a big question mark. It depends on things outside of our control not the least of which is the actual military situation in IndoChina.

Now some thoughts on the friends of peace in the labor bureaucracy: This is a very contradictory scene. On the one hand NPAC got more labor endorsement and lip service for Nov. 6 than ever before, and on the ~~the~~ other hand (it ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ is my impression) it got less actual help than before. This I think is due to the prevalence of the above illusions in the union bureaucracy as well as the fact that they are almost exclusively concerned with solving their problems by the election of ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Democrats. But here the contradiction becomes even more sharp. The labor leaders for peace can be reasonably assured that the Democrats will nominate someone who will make noises like a peace candidate. But even the peaceiest peace candidates for president are not against the wage freeze. And this is the real bread and butter question for the bureaucrats. This contradiction, however crucial, will probably develop slowly. For the time~~x~~ being, I have almost no confidence that we'll get anything at all from the labor bureaucrats because everything they do will be from the point of view of trying to corall support for the Democrats. The rank and file, however, is very friendly to the "freeze the war, not wages" theme. This whole question deserves considerable thought and careful attention to tactics. I would caution against letting it slide or develop in a routine way. I don't know what has happened with the idea to have a labor meeting initiated by NPAC. The only thing I heard was from Hilton Hanna, who told me he had called several people, including Murray Finley of ACW, and that they told him they didn't think such a meeting would be useful before spring. To me this indicated they were thinking of it only as a ploy for the elections, like they did the Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace which launched McCarthy's campaign~~x~~. Hanna said he would call Gordon about this. But Rachael told me Gordon hasn't heard from Hanna. Where does this project stand? Are you clear what we want to do about it?

Objectively the situation would seem to provide an opening. That is, the labor movement sorely needs an answer to the administration's assertion that it is wages that cause inflation. The peace movement provides such an answer: military spending is a major cause of inflation, freeze the war not wages. Anyone interested in really making a fight on this question ought to be interested in seeing a ~~xxx~~ formation develop which would make this argument consistently and in the name of a section of labor. Indeed we have indications that such obvious thoughts have penetrated even the fat heads of some bureaucrats. Gibbons, whose head is less fat than most, but whose present position is as an official of an International that formally supports the freeze, encouraged us to pass out the wage freeze antiwar letter at the midwest IFT convention, where it was well received. But nobody is sticking their neck out, and the Finleys, etc. are so hell bent for the Democrats they can't see anything else.

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Should NPAC move without them? Then with whom? I don't have the answer. I hope a decision like this will not be left to an off-hand remark in a staff meeting.

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Dellinger was the PCPJ speaker Nov. 6 in Chicago. He arrived late. I had already spoken. His speech was not bad, but pessimistic as usual. He told me he really wanted to talk to me and would I be in N.Y. in the near future. I told him I didn't know. If you think there is any point in my going to talk to him, let me know.

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Aud

P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, New York 10003

November 16, 1971

Jack Barnes
New York

Dear Jack,

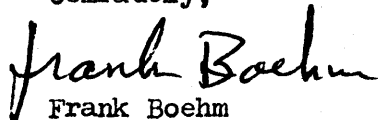
On Monday, November 15, we received in the National Office a counter political resolution submitted for publication in the YSA pre-convention discussion bulletin entitled "Toward A Mass Working Class Youth Movement: A Resolution on Perspectives."

It is signed by six YSA comrades from five different YSA locals. Two of the signers, Carol Merrill and Dick Merrill from the Boston local, are members of the Boston branch of the SWP as well.

The resolution clearly attacks positions adopted by the party at its most recent convention. To our knowledge, the two party members in question are fully aware of the positions taken by the SWP as they participated in the Boston pre-convention discussion and attended the SWP convention.

Since this document was submitted for the YSA's written pre-convention discussion, we are proceeding with its publication.

Comradely,



Frank Boehm
YSA National Chairman