

THE MILITANT

Sept. 8, 1972

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE DIRECTORS:

Dear Comrades,

The following are excerpts from the subscription campaign panel held at the 1972 Socialist Activists and Educational Conference. There are basically three areas of the workshop discussion included: 1) The report on the subscription drive by the business office; 2) Hints on how to sell subscriptions by leading sales people; and 3) Reports from local areas on how to organize a subscription drive. Although many others took part in the discussion, space permits us to include only a few samples. Because of time, none of the individuals quoted were able to edit their remarks.

Comrades will be especially interested in the contribution by Debby Woodroffe (pages 4-5) who sold over 1000 subscriptions last fall, the highest number for an individual in the history of The Militant. Sub drive directors may want to make this one report available to all comrades in their branch or local.

Comradely,

Sharon Cabaniss
Sharon Cabaniss
Business Office

14 Charles Lane, New York City, N.Y. 10014

EXCERPTS FROM THE SUBSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN PANEL HELD AT THE
1972 SOCIALIST ACTIVISTS AND EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Sharon Cabaniss, Militant Business Office: This year our subscription goal is 33,000, which will be the largest subscription drive in the history of the paper. One reason the area quotas are higher this year is because we are fielding 18 subscription/YSJP teams this fall, as compared to the 4 national teams we had last year. There will be 3 national teams and their quotas will be listed separately on the scoreboard. The other 15 teams will be fielded from the regional centers, and those team quotas will be shared with the branches and locals. We are projecting that the teams will get about 700 subscriptions each since they will only spend half their time selling subscriptions during their 8 weeks on the road. Those areas sharing teams will also share the team quota.

The subscription campaign this year will last 9½ weeks, from Sept. 15, when most campuses are beginning to open, until Nov. 22, right before the YSA convention. One of the key elements in the campaign is, of course, to start early and get it off the ground right away. We should begin the organization of the drive as soon as we get back to our areas--making charts, finding out which comrades are going to be available and when, and thinking out where teams are going to go, so that we can launch into the campaign right around Sept. 15 or even before. Two areas that did well last year--Philadelphia and Twin Cities--have Party Builder contributions on how they organized their subscription drives which you should read. One of the main reasons they did so well is because they started early.

We want to get the bulk of the subscriptions on the campuses, and we will be able to do more and more on the commuter campuses where there are strong YSA fractions. But most of the subscriptions will still come from dorm blitzes, just because that's where most new students are and there's a better chance of finding them.

But we also want to go into other areas, when possible, like where we work and places where comrades are regularly selling The Militant. Also, a lot of our comrades are active in the movement offices, in women's liberation or the antiwar movement, where there is a good chance to talk to people and sell subscriptions.

One thing we think will help in the subscription drive this time is the 20-week offer for \$1. There are several reasons we're making such a good offer. Of course, it will make it easier to sell subs since it's an offer you can't refuse. But, more importantly, it will give new readers a chance to follow The Militant for a longer period of time. They'll read it for almost 5 months, instead of just 10 weeks, and during those 5 months we will have time to do some serious follow-up. If we plan ahead of time to concentrate sub-getting on a certain campus, then we can go back to set up literature tables and hold meetings, and a lot of people who have been reading The Militant will come around. The 20-week offer is only going to last until the YSA convention. After that, our standard introductory offer will be 3 months for \$1.

One important aspect of this campaign is the promotional effort we want to make. We have stickers, posters, and brochures. If someone is not home in a dorm, stick a subscription blank in a brochure and put it under the door. Then, when you go back to that room, you'll find they have read a little bit about The Militant. We have two posters--one is for the election campaign, which we want to get out before the end of October. And we want to distribute all of the other special offer posters before the YSA convention. We want to use these materials, put them up in the dorms, on literature tables, and around the campus so that people are thinking about The Militant and have seen something on it.

There are also four camera-ready ads available each in two sizes. These are black ink on white paper and you can put them right in a newspaper, which is cheaper than having the newspaper set the ad for you. Also, the subscription ads in The Militant can be cut out and used. And if you want to put an ad in a fairly large circulation radical paper in your area, you can contact the business office about arranging an exchange ad directly with The Militant.

We want to have a combination subscription campaign with the International Socialist Review--\$2 for 3 months of the ISR and 20 weeks of The Militant. We found last year that about 10% of the new Militant readers also subscribed to the ISR, and we think that this is probably a realistic proportion. We are proposing a 3,300 subscription drive for the ISR. We do not want to put off the ISR drive until the end, but think out now how to use the ISR offer from the beginning. We want to be sure to tell all potential Militant subscribers about the ISR offer--that there is a political magazine that has all kinds of different articles that may be of further interest. If you wait until the last couple of weeks of the drive to try and sell ISR subscriptions, you'll be forced to pressure the remaining Militant subscribers. Mike Arnall's contribution to the Party Builder has a good section on how you can approach people to buy the ISR.

Important organizational tips to keep in mind:

1. One of the problems we have run into is the question of our right to sell our press, especially in the dormitories, but also in other places. As campaign supporters, we can argue legitimately that we are canvassing for our candidates and that we have a right to do that. And if people want to buy the campaign newspaper, The Militant, they have that right. Also, find out what the regulations are and see if we can fit into them--i.e. some comrades have been able to get permits to sell on a campus because other periodicals did it. Try to mobilize people on the campus around our right to sell by contacting the student government and other campus organizations. If you do have problems, be sure to notify the business office.

2. The subscriptions should be sent into the business office as soon as possible. If we get them by Wednesday, we can send the new subscriber a Militant by the following Friday. It's important that they start getting it right away in order to follow all the fall activities, especially the YSA convention. Also, we want the

scoreboard to reflect as accurately as possible the drive's progress. The deadline for the scoreboard is Tuesday at noon, and the subscriptions must actually be received in the business office by then.

A lot of people come across a Militant and send in a \$1 subscription on their own. What we do is credit that subscription to the area it's from. If it's from the region, we credit it to the area selling subs in that region. Also, you can accept a check for a subscription--\$1 or more. Most people can write a check, which cuts across the no-money problem.

3. Make sure that people who buy subscriptions write legibly on the blank. We have a big problem with subscriptions coming back undeliverable because we cannot read the address and name. So, make sure its clear, even if you have to write out the name yourself. Also, we have to receive the entire subscription blank--not a copy of it--and the money together.

4. It's very helpful to the business office if the zip codes are filled out when mailed in. Processing 33,000 subscriptions is a gigantic task, but having to look up zip codes adds substantially to it. You can get a free local zip code directory from your post office.

5. On the question of giving people a free sample of The Militant when they buy a subscription: The business office can't subsidize 33,000 free Militants, especially because of the generous subscription offer we are making. However, many areas feel it is very important to leave a new reader a sample of what they just bought. So, with the lower bundle price, you might want to give new readers a back issue. Anyway, you can always leave them campaign literature and YSA convention materials.

6. Sometimes you run into people who say they bought a subscription but they never did get it. Any number of things could have happened to it. So, just apologize, take down their name and address, and we'll send them a free subscription if we cannot find out what happened to their original one.

7. The last thing I want to mention is that we want to report on the subscription drive every week in The Militant so that comrades around the country know how it is going and so that we can pass on experiences and draw our readers and campaign supporters into the drive. It's very helpful to receive information, stories, and anecdotes from the field--you can even send in quite lengthy articles if there is something interesting that has happened and we will see how it fits into the kind of coverage we want to have. Also, let us know who is selling a lot of subs, if a certain comrade sells a large number in a short time, etc., so that we can give them recognition.

Summary: One important last thing to remember is that the subscription campaign is a team effort on the part of all YSA and SWP members, and we want everybody to mobilize and to participate in the drive. However, it doesn't seem fruitful to set rigid individual quotas--i.e. everybody has to get 10--because not every-

body can necessarily sell ten no matter how hard they try and many comrades can sell more than 10. But most comrades can participate in the subscription selling teams, and if the team has a goal for the day, say of 25, everyone can pitch in to meet that goal and feel that they are helping even if they only get one subscription that time out.

Debby Woodroffe, Lower Manhattan: I want to go into a few things on technique. Although I don't think there are any gimmicks for selling a lot of subs, I think there are certain kinds of strategic considerations that can really boost the sales by individual comrades. The way I used to approach selling subs was to kind of see myself as a military strategist. I would try to get as much information about the situation I was selling in as possible. For example, the national sub team I was on spent a lot of time at the University of Buffalo, and, as comrades might know, that is where Youth Against War and Fascism is extremely strong. That's had a big effect on the political climate at that school. When we went into the dorms to sell subs, a lot of people were understandably hostile to the word socialism, toward any kind of radical paper at all. This campus's history had to be taken into consideration in the kind of sales pitch given.

So that was the first thing. As soon as you get to a school, sit down with people, talk about what groups exist, what kind of struggles have taken place in the last year, where are the areas that radicals are concentrated. It's important to know about the dorms--freshman dorms are usually much better than others in the fall. Also, there are often dorms where students who are politically active live together.

The second thing, after you have that kind of information, is the personal attitudes of the comrades selling. You know there is a basis for selling the paper; that doesn't have to be motivated. You have to imbue yourself with that attitude before you go out on a sub team. You have to convince yourself that it isn't a personal thing, that it's a political assignment. Above all, that it's not a commercial encounter, but that it's political. You have to really convince yourself that your selling a sub to someone is going to change their life. Put yourself in their situation--you're stuck on an isolated campus lacking any kind of leadership if the YSA is not there. Think of what The Militant is going to do toward their understanding in the weeks that follow of things that are going on in the world.

On technique--I think the tone of the sale is set right away. A key thing is not at all to be apologetic--to be very friendly and hospitable, but not apologetic. I've seen comrades knock on the door and say, "Excuse me, I know you're busy, but..." That sets the tone of apology as if you feel guilty for taking their time. If you really feel that you have a right to be there, that you have something to give them that's going to change their lives, it's going to set a positive tone. I would say, "Can I talk to you for a minute," and I would look them right in the eye. That's important

because they have this thing about salespeople, and there's kind of a hardening against any stranger that knocks at their doors. You have to break through that, and a way to do that is just to look at them and to be really friendly. You want to make them feel that this is going to be a special thing, and that they should listen to you.

Then I would get the paper into their hands. This is the place where you use the knowledge you have about what's going on at that school. You just start talking right away specifically about something that's in the paper. Last fall it was very easy to do that with Attica. Just go through and start talking about some of the things that are in the article that they might not have known at all from the bourgeois press. Another thing is to listen very closely to the things they say. Sometimes we give standard arguments. People say, "I'm not militant, I don't read," and we try to help comrades think of ways to answer that. It's important to arm yourself with those kinds of arguments, but on the other hand, you have to avoid getting into a reflexive sort of thing where you just come back with the same approach every time. You have to feel it out and think out why they're saying what they are. One thing I would do to help me survive because I was on the road for such a long time was to think--what is the best way that I can explain to someone why they are a militant and why they have the wrong idea of what a militant is. You may as well develop yourself at the same time as you're selling subscriptions. You can view it as a challenge--what is the way I can explain this the best in the shortest amount of time.

The people who go out and sell subscriptions are in a better position than anyone to give feedback to The Militant staff on the kinds of articles people are interested in. I think that's an important thing to integrate into the sub drive. Especially when you run into people who have already subscribed, spend a few minutes and ask them what they liked about the paper and relay that back to the local Militant correspondent and to The Militant staff.

Steve Bloom, Brooklyn: One thing you find on many campuses is that people, even if they consider themselves radicals, feel isolated. A lot of times, although they will be friendly, they're cynical. It's very easy to cut across this kind of cynicism. Just tell people how many subs you've sold in just a few hours. It will make them more receptive to The Militant.

One line that you'll get is, "Well, I don't have the money." You know that most of them have the money. This is also easy to cut across. You can say, "Well, I don't believe you, why don't you dig in your pocket and see what you can come up with." Nine times out of 10, if they actually go into their pockets, they'll come up with a dollar. You can tell them you'll take a check, a money order, anything they have.

Chris Hildebrande, San Francisco: I was the sub drive director for the Boston branch last fall. The first important thing is to have a sub drive committee that functions as a team. We had two comrades assigned to the committee from the branch. It was important that the tasks of these comrades be well divided--one to take care of the actual political organization of the sub drive and the other to take care of the tremendous amount of paper work that was involved. One comrade couldn't possibly have handled both of these tasks. The rest of the committee was rounded out by a member of each of the YSA locals and one member of each major fraction--anti-war, women's liberation and campaign committee. The sub committee met every week on Sunday, which was right before the YSA meetings, to plan out the activities for the entire week and also for the next few upcoming weeks. It is also important that The Militant sales director be on this committee because it's obvious that there is a tremendous amount of coordination that has to be done. For example, you have to make sure that every week there are enough Militants for all of the subscription efforts that are going to be carried out, so that you don't run out of Militants on Wednesday. Also, we sold quite a few single copies during the door-to-door sub getting.

The person from every fraction that is assigned to the committee is in charge of making sure that there is not a single activity of that fraction that is not also coordinated with sub getting. There shouldn't be a campus women's liberation meeting or an antiwar meeting at which someone isn't assigned to going around individually to people selling subs. This fraction representative should also make sure that the progress of the sub drive is reported to the fraction and that all the comrades in the fraction are motivated to be actively working in the sub drive, even if they are not participating in the day-to-day mobilizations. We had a competition set up between the branch and the three YSA locals, and also a competition between the three major fractions. We had charts and weekly reports in the city letter and at the branch and local meetings on these competitions.

The campaign representative on the committee has to make sure that on every campaign intervention there is someone in charge of selling Militant subs. We had street corner campaign rallies where we would sell 10 - 20 subs a week just by having our candidates speaking over the loudspeaker, including a push for The Militant. People on the street would stop and listen and often buy a sub.

Tom Scharret, Oakland/Berkeley: It's helpful to have wall maps so as not to duplicate efforts. It's very demoralizing to have a team go out to a place where another team has just been a few days ago. Also, one thing that is very useful is result sheets which we sent out with every person. They would mark on the sheet if the person was there and if they were, what the response was.

In constructing the sub teams, we found a number of methods that were very helpful. The best thing is to use all these methods--

phone calls, city letter, sign-up sheets in the branch and local meetings, and fraction sign-up sheets. Often people will not sign up in the branch and local meetings because they don't know how their sub selling time will fit into their fraction assignments. If you have fraction sheets distributed to every fraction and have a point on every fraction agenda, then it can be arranged to minimize conflict with the work of the fraction.

John Naubert, Oakland/Berkeley: During the renewal drive last spring we were able to develop a few new techniques that I think may be applicable to the sub drive. One is the idea of using packets, in which you include all the campaign material, sub blanks, weekly forum lists and leaflets, and recent press releases from the local candidates.

One technique we developed is mapping out areas where subscribers are concentrated. We put all the names and addresses of subscribers on file cards for easy processing. Then we would take any card and mark it off on a city map with a number and put its number on the card. At the end you can find a pattern where subscribers are concentrated. This would be useful in the fall for our mass work, for example, in determining the best areas for leafletting and paste-ups.

Jay Ressler, Brooklyn: In addition to the promotional materials prepared by The Militant business office, we want to try advertising The Militant subscription offer in the campus newspapers this fall. We want not only to have headlines about the 20-week offer, but to try to include in these ads, testimonials, you might say, from notable campus leaders in the area.

We also developed a technique last fall of going through role playing [a demonstration on how to sell]. The reason we did it in the first place was for the Nov. 6 antiwar demonstration. All three branches in New York had equal size sub teams, and because Brooklyn had gone through this role playing session the night before, we were psyched up and sold more than the other two branches put together.

Louie Cobet, Twin Cities: I want to emphasize one particular point--that's planning. The first thing we have to take into account is the political scheduling like the national demonstrations, the local demonstrations, and very specific things that will only happen in your local area. Whenever a big antiwar action happens, the attention of the branch and local tends to center around that, and to a certain extent participation in mobilizations for the sub drive decline. We can also make a conscious decision as to how many comrades to involve in antiwar activity and how many comrades to send out on sub drive activities. And then, of course, you have to consider the dates that the schools open. We want to plan how to carry out the sub drive in a different way than just figuring out the average number of subscriptions we have to get per week.
