

OCT 30 1972

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Los Angeles, Calif.

Oct. 26, 1972

Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

Enclosed please find some proposals I want to put before the committee entitled "Memorandum on Post-Election Activity."

I hope you are able to give this your consideration soon.

Comradely,

Milt

Milton Alvin

MEMORANDUM ON POST-ELECTION ACTIVITY

For some time now, approximately two to two and a half years, the radicalization of the 1960s that the present decade inherited has been skidding downhill. With only few exceptions actions on the campuses, among Black liberationists and other minorities, women and gays have been getting noticeably smaller. Anti-war demonstrations, with the exception of the April 24, 1971, marches in Washington and San Francisco, have been smaller, harder to organize, to raise money for and achieve working unity of the two main factions in this field.

This process has been surmounted by our party to some extent mainly because of the 15-month presidential campaign which is now drawing to a close. With a long campaign, many local and state candidates and all the other activities that go with such efforts, our movement kept busy despite declining opportunities in the specific areas mentioned above.

Also, the subscription drives of the last few years, carried on in close relation to the electoral campaign were successful but the very successes themselves served in part to hide the fact that the radicalization was in a period of decline.

With the end of the election campaign only days away we will be confronted with the problem of how to best dispose of our resources in the next period. It makes little or no difference, from this standpoint, whether Nixon or McGovern wins the election. If the period ahead of us, in the immediate sense, is similar to what we have experienced in the last year or two, we will have to face the fact that there will be fewer opportunities for us to take part in actions than there were prior to two years ago.

In attempting to assess the problem I am omitting speculation on whether the present diminished opportunities mean the radicalization is ended for a whole period or if this is only a temporary dowsing to be followed by a new upsurge. I believe that trying to determine which way things will go and when a turn can be expected is only speculative and unnecessary besides.

Looking ahead for only a short period, about six months or so, it seems fairly certain that the downward direction of the radicalization will not be substantially reversed in that period. If it is and a new upswing occurs, so much to the good. We can and will adjust our activities very quickly.

But if the next period brings a certain stagnation and little action in the movements where we have been working, and I think this is the more likely development, we should adjust our activities in accordance with such conditions.

I propose that the party re-direct its main attention in the next period to propaganda work. What I have in mind is not a routine reaction to lessened opportunities for action, which would be forced upon us in any event, but a carefully planned and energetically carried out campaign of propaganda and education.

This would be organized under different headings. First, the sale of THE MILITANT should be increased to a great extent by making many more comrades available to sell as their main assignment. Using the Los Angeles branch as an example, if we assigned 20 to 25 members, each to sell two or three times a week, we should dispose of 1,000 to 1,500 papers. This would be a substantial, a dramatic increase in our average over the past two years or so. Yet it would involve only 20 to 25% of the branch.

If such an increase in sales is planned, it would require going to new areas to probe the possibilities in addition to those already established spots such as campuses, air terminals, bus stations, markets, etc.

Articles of special interest to various elements should be written with the aim of concentrating sales in certain areas. For example, I think the paper should carry more material of interest to factory workers and unionists for the purpose of helping sales at factory gates and union meetings. There is a good basis for this as the rebellion against Meany over electoral policy has shaken things up a bit in the unions. Also, some large unions will have to negotiate new contracts in 1973 and we should write on this.

Similar things can be done to interest potential readers in the Black Community, among Chicanos, women, etc. Sales of the paper should be supplemented by sales of small pamphlets such as Pathfinder has published from time to time. We should take advantage of special events like the new (and atrocious) film about Trotsky. Joe Hansen's review, carried in Intercontinental Press, can be put out as a small pamphlet and sold at theatres showing the picture. Trotsky's writings can be sold at such theatres at the same time as well as the paper and ISR.

I propose that the kind of sales campaign briefly described above aim at bringing the circulation of THE MILITANT up into the 75,000 to 100,000 range. I don't believe that this is in contradiction to what I said earlier, that is, that the radicalization has been skidding downhill. While actions of most kinds have diminished this does not mean at all that the people of America have become satisfied with things and that the present situation is acceptable to them.

I think that what is going on in the minds of many people is a reluctance and hesitancy to jump into any and all proposals to act. But at the same time these people are looking for explanations for the failure to change anything much in the last 10 to 15 years. They are thinking things through (I am speaking of potential vanguard elements) and looking for answers that have not yet been brought to their attention or that they do not yet understand.

If this is so, and I believe it is, then the situation lends itself to propaganda and education work under favorable conditions. I don't think the sectors of American people who are looking for substantial changes have been defeated or are demoralized. I think, rather, that they are open to new ideas and that we must reach them with ours. The best way to do this now is to organize a broad propaganda and education campaign to last about six months or whatever period is indicated by future developments.

I also propose that all branches increase their educational work, forums, classes, etc. These should be aimed at new readers of our press but that does not mean that material should be scaled down to the least experienced and sophisticated. Branches should have

classes for beginners as well as advanced classes to whatever extent is indicated by local circumstances. Special attention should be paid to forums, to pertinent subject matter, to outside speakers, debates, symposiums and new and dramatic forms of presentation.

We should increase our polemics with rival tendencies who compete with us for the advanced radicals. In the kind of campaign I visualize the ISR can be a valuable tool. That doesn't mean the magazine should carry nothing but polemics but that the amount of such material, especially against the Communist Party and the bureaucracies of the Soviet Union and China, should be sharply increased. Also, sales of the ISR and sub drives should be organized in ways other than those we use now. The present method, while it does yield some increases in subs, puts the ISR into a needlessly subordinate position to THE MILITANT. I think we can do better, if each branch assigned people, on the proper scale, to sell the magazine as their main activity.

Another area to which increased attention should be paid is the branch book store. All branches should have well-stocked stores and their books and pamphlets should be advertised. The stores, of course, should be kept open for as many hours a day as possible. Opportunities to sell outside the store itself should be sought.

If the kind of perspective I have outlined is adopted, it should be launched formally by the Political Committee. Leading comrades from the center should visit the branches to explain the campaign, its purposes and goals. The important points, stated generally, are: (1) The relation between propaganda and education, on the one hand, and agitation and action, on the other; (2) The party's flexibility in shifting emphasis from one to another; (3) The importance of reacting quickly and effectively to changes in objective conditions; (4) The temporary nature of changing emphasis from propaganda to action and from action to propaganda.

Milton Alvin

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