

Report to NEC on SDS National Council Meeting - Doug Jenness

The SDS National Council met at Harvard University on April 5-6. Attendance at the meeting ranged from 50-75 during the two days. There were 59 elected delegates from local chapters with the largest delegations coming from Boston, New York, and Chicago. There were very few non-NCers or delegates from chapters away from major metropolitan areas. There were 12-15 PLers and one Independent Socialist Club (Draperite) member present. Most of the sessions were chaired by Lee Webb (now with the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.) and Steve Max (field secretary for L.I.D.), both of whom are considered part of the "old guard" of SDS.

The major points discussed at the Council meeting were:

1) Relationship of SDS to the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC)

Hope was expressed that SSOC would eventually merge with SDS and it was agreed that Greg Calvert should make a speaking trip through the South soon.

2) Spring Mobilization

Peter Orris, CP-oriented SDSer from Harvard reported on the Spring Mobilization, and presented a resolution that SDS support the Spring Mobilization. There was considerable discussion on this with the PLers arguing strongly against it and Steve Max and other right wing members arguing for it. The main PL argument against it was that the Spring Mobilization Committee is a "liberal coalition." PL made an amendment to the motion urging the Spring Mobilization Committee to adopt the position of immediate withdrawal. It was pointed out that the call is based on the principle of self-determination, and that SDS was hardly in a position to ask the Spring Mobilization Committee to do anything, due to their refusal to support it earlier. The amendment was defeated. The motion passed 32-10 thus reversing the decision made at the SDS National Council meeting in December.

Next, a motion was made urging the Spring Mobilization Committee to permit draft card burners from Cornell to burn their cards on the platform on April 15th. The motivation behind this was to put as much pressure on the Spring Mobilization Committee as possible to insure that the draft card burning would be part of the program. It passed 34-10.

A third motion was made that SDS accept the Mobilization Committee's invitation to have a speaker at the rally in New York. This was passed and it was left up to the officers and the National Administrative Committee to select the speaker.

3) Report by Nick Egelson, President of SDS

Egelson gave a report on a national organizational trip that he made to a large number of SDS chapters during the last couple of months. He indicated that there was a lack of national consciousness among most SDSers, especially in regard to reading New Left Notes and financing the national staff.

He indicated that SDS presently has 5900-6200 national dues paying members. In addition there are a large number of SDSers who belong to chapters but do not pay national dues. The national office estimates that this number is around 25,000. Eighty percent of the SDS membership is on campus. There are 216 chapters that the SDS N.O. knows about, including 12 high school chapters. In the past year a staff of 10 regional field secretaries has been established which is a big increase over previous years.

4) Radical Education Project

There has been a long standing debate in SDS over whether to orient the educational program to research, etc., or to the organizational needs of SDS chapters. It was decided that REP had become too detached from the needs of SDS and a resolution was passed to establish closer contact between REP and the SDS national office. REP will still remain formally independent of SDS for financial reasons.

The main part of the proposal was to establish a Summer Institute to train 30 teacher-organizers who would be sent out to campuses next fall to help initiate activities against military influence on campuses.

5) Convention

It was decided to have the next national convention of SDS at Antioch or Bowling Green during the middle of June. The exact dates will depend on which college they are able to get.

6) Fund Raising

Greg Calvert, national secretary, reported that the financial situation was very bad and that the staff was not being paid. It was agreed to raise the price of NLN to non-members from \$5.00 per year to \$10.00 per year, and to raise dues from \$4.00 per year to \$5.00 per year. There was strong feeling that the national staff should not have to live at a below subsistence level.

7) Antiwar/Antidraft

There were four proposals all of which were outside the context of the organized antiwar movement. The three proposals that were passed endorsed (a) a projected program of civil disobedience in the event of a land invasion of north Vietnam; (b) publicizing the New School for Social Research student strike on April 13 in order to spur strikes on other campuses; and (c) sending out a letter encouraging support to the draft card burning in New York on April 15th.

A fourth proposal made by PL was voted down 22-16. It called for a mobilization in Washington in mid-May to disrupt the Congressional hearings on the draft.

8) International

Resolutions in support of Puerto Rican independence and in defense of Hugo Blanco were passed.

General Observations

a) Only the most serious and committed part of SDS was present at the NC meeting and it consequently did not necessarily reflect the thinking of new SDSers we want to reach on campuses.

b) There appears to be a more serious attitude within SDS toward organizational questions and getting things accomplished at meetings than there was two years ago. The SDSers present at this gathering were not for the most part "hippies" or beatniks.

c) Much stronger national consciousness and common understanding seems to exist among NCers than was the case two years ago.

d) PLers, Draperites, staff members of the League for Industrial Democracy, etc., are all accepted as a legitimate part of SDS.

e) The National Council implicitly reaffirmed the position taken at their national convention last August of shifting their axis from community projects to campus work.

f) At this point there appears to be on the part of the vast majority of SDS leaders a strong sentiment against electoral activity, especially against support to Robert Kennedy.

g) The SDS leadership is trying to come to grips with such problems as what are the agencies of social change in our society, how to create revolutionary consciousness, and how to go about building a new adult radical movement.

PL, the CP and the YSA had literature tables at the meeting. We sold a few dollars worth of pamphlets, Militants, and YS's.

April 9, 1967