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The New Left in America

THE NEW LEFT
IN AMERICA
Reform to Revolution
1956 to 1970

Edward J. Bacciocco, Jr.

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To Danica

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Foreword

Slightly more than a decade has passed since the New Left first became visible to the American public. Looking back, it is evident enough that neither the public nor its accustomed spokesmen and interpreters in the media were prepared intellectually for what was to become within a very short time a matter of profoundest interest, and then of gathering apprehension and fear. Why should they have been? World War II and its aftermath of unprecedented affluence at home, a cold war that focused attention on Berlin, Hungary, China, and Southeast Asia, national concentration on problems of defense in the atomic age—all of these were sufficient to persuade the American public by 1960 that wherever else revolutionary turmoil was likely to erupt in the world, America itself need not be greatly concerned in this respect. That the same conditions of extraordinary economic prosperity which had fostered the almost total assimilation of American labor into the middle class and made possible a steadily expanding public budget in areas of social welfare, might also generate a kind of bizarre revolutionary potential in the attitudes and sentiments of certain parts of the population, this, it has to be admitted, would have been an unlikely speculation at the end of the tranquil fifties.

Yet as we know, few things have been of more preoccupying concern to large numbers of people in American history than the New Left once it became a visible reality, once it had acquired momentum, and once its assaults on the university and other traditional institutions of society were matters of daily front-page news coverage. I have not forgotten the events and causes of the 1930s, the Communist and Socialist movements of that age, the near-revolutionary impact of industrial unionism and its forays into areas of American labor that had never known union organization, the effects at home of intensifying struggle abroad between communism and fascism, and the many other contending social forces of that unique period in American his-

tory. Even so, I am obliged to say that nothing then so riveted the attention of Americans upon revolutionary or near-revolutionary behavior as did the depredations of the New Left in the 1960s. It is quite possible that as a direct result of actions of the New Left in that decade, more civil rights and public protection laws were passed by legislatures, more enlargements of police power and technology effected, and more punitive actions taken than in any other even approximately comparable period in our history.

By now a vast amount has been written on the subject of the New Left and its sharp differentiation from the Old Left in America—the Old Left that made capitalism and the rights of labor its central concerns. Much of what has been written is valuable, whether produced by those sympathetic to the New Left or those hostile to it. Without doubt some of the most brilliant polemical writing in American social history came forth during the decade, especially in the closing years, and a good many of the insights and perspectives that were cast up from revolutionary waters then have, as one today looks back on them, astonishing validity. Few indeed were the elements and aspects of the revolutionary 1960s and of the New Left that were not analyzed, often brilliantly, sometimes profoundly—and a very large part of the best of this analysis, it is interesting to be reminded, was contributed by those like Professor Sidney Hook who were themselves major figures in the Left of the 1920s and 1930s, persons who were able to combine special insights drawn from experience with scholarly probity and devotion to liberal and democratic values.

What still remained to be done, however, was a carefully constructed *history* of the New Left, one that would, as dispassionately as is ever possible in these matters, provide beginning, middle, and end for those wishing to know where it all began, how it began, and what were the central personages, events, and acts of the whole drama. This Edward J. Bacciocco has done, and done extraordinarily well, it seems to me, in his *The New Left in America: Reform to Revolution, 1956–1970*. I respect the book on a number of counts: the author's obvious devotion to task, the judicious selection of events and changes which avoids the tedium of mere annals or chronicle, the sense of structure that all good history must have behind it, and, far from least, the manifest honesty of approach. Differences of interpretation there will inevitably and always be on such a matter as the revolution of the 1960s (think only of the unending succession of differences

concerning the American, the French, the Russian revolutions); indeed, few informed readers of this book will not occasionally question this or that selection of event, this or that interpretation. But I would be surprised if any reader were to question the meticulous care put forth by the author in compiling this work, or his effort at high objectivity and his desire to write as exact and faithful an account as is possible of his subject.

Finally, it should be said that Dr. Bacciocco's volume comes at a very good time. We are perhaps sufficiently removed from the decade of the sixties by now, and from the passions then unspent, to be capable of that tranquil consideration of convulsive events which every serious historical work deserves. But we are not yet so far from the decade as to have in any degree plunged it into the haze of personages and events only dimly remembered. I believe that this book, quite apart from its own intrinsic interest, will for a long time be of excellent help to other historians of the subject.

Robert Nisbet

Preface and Acknowledgments

The first seven chapters of this book trace the history of the American New Left from its sporadic beginnings in the late fifties to the dissolution of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1969. The eighth and final chapter attempts to assess the inherent importance of the New Left and to weigh its social and political significance. Finally, reasons are given for the apparent decline of the movement since the fall of SDS, and the activities and composition of the New Left since 1969 are briefly summarized.

Aided by a coincidence of events, the New Left began as a reaction against middle-class democracy and the accompanying prosperity and upward mobility that left glaring social and political problems unresolved. The New Left was originally a collection of radical student reformers, principally in SDS and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In the South, SNCC labored for equal rights, economic advantage, political power, and a new order for disenfranchised rural black people. In the North, SDS vowed to dispel materialism, complacency, and “unreasoning” anticommunism, hoping to substitute universal respect for the human spirit in place of prevailing social values based on individualism and competition.

SDS goals included altering American political and educational institutions, controlling corporations, and ending defense spending. With the proceeds of the latter, it pledged to erase poverty, terminate bigotry, industrialize emerging nations, and found a powerful New Left movement in the United States. How and why the New Left transformed itself after 1964 from a movement promoting radical reform and participatory democracy into one that accepted elitism and sought to further revolutionary change in the United States will be examined in the pages that follow.

This book hopefully will be the first to present the American New Left as a comprehensive whole. It seeks to place at the disposal of the

scholar and general reader more information about the New Left—its origins, evolution, transformation, and retrogression—than has heretofore appeared in print. It is neither an apologia nor a critique; drawing voluminously and almost exclusively on primary source material, I have tried faithfully to reflect the documentary evidence as I found it, reserving my own comments, for the most part, until the final chapter.

Since this material was originally a doctoral dissertation, I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of professors in the political science department at the University of Colorado (Boulder). If Dr. Edward Rozek had not persuaded me to investigate the topic, this book would not have materialized. Dr. Walter Skurnik gave me intellectual and fraternal encouragement for which I shall always be grateful. As my second reader, Dr. Horst Mewis offered much scholarly advice and welcome assistance. My most important mentor, however, was Dr. Curtis Martin, who, as chairman of my dissertation committee, was a constant source of strength and constructive criticism.

At The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University, my wife and I built a library collection on the New Left, and I transformed my dissertation into this book. My thanks to Mr. Alan Belmont for his faith in me and to Dr. Milorad Drachkovitch for his intellect and guidance. Dr. Drachkovitch, especially, viewed and reviewed the thesis, and his guidelines provided a map by which I was able to reconstruct the dissertation into a book. Many thanks are also due my editor, Mrs. Barbara Pronin, who has a keen eye for polishing rough edges. I owe gratitude, above all, to my wife Danica, an extraordinary individual who more than anyone else is responsible for this book's completion.

Abbreviations

ADA	Americans for Democratic Action
BPP	Black Panther Party
BSU	Black Student Union
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
COFO	Council of Federated Organizations
CORE	Congress on Racial Equality
CUBS	Congress for the Unity of Black Students
ERAP	Economic Research and Action Project (SDS)
FSM	Free Speech Movement
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
IDA	Institute of Defense Analysis
JOIN	Jobs or Income Now
LCFO	Lowndes County Freedom Organization
LID	League for Industrial Democracy
M2M	May Second Movement
MDS	Movement for a Democratic Society (SDS)
MFDP	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
MSU	Mississippi Student Union
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NC	National Council (SDS)
NCCTEWN	National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam
NCUP	Newark Community Union Project
NEC	National Executive Committee (SDS)
NEGRO	National Economic Growth and Reconstruc- tion Organization
NIC	National Interim Committee (SDS)
NO	National Office (SDS)
NSA	National Student Association

NSCF	National Student Christian Federation
NSM	Northern Student Movement
NUC	New University Conference
OAAU	Organization of Afro-American Unity
PEP	Political Education Program (SDS)
PL	Progressive Labor faction (SDS)
PLP	Progressive Labor Party
PREP	Peace Research and Education Project (SDS)
REP	Radical Education Project (SDS)
RYM I	Revolutionary Youth Movement I
RYM II	Revolutionary Youth Movement II
SAC	Student Activities Committee
SANE	National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SLAP	Student Labor Action Project
SLATE	Radical student political party, University of California at Berkeley
SNCC	Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee
SPU	Student Peace Union
UAW	United Auto Workers
USNSA	United States National Student Association
VDC	Vietnam Day Committee
Yippies	Youth International Party
YPSL	Young People's Socialist League
YSA	Young Socialist Alliance

Factors Contributing to the Evolution of the New Left in the United States

Middle America in the Fifties

If the enormous popularity of Dwight D. Eisenhower and his policies is any indication, the 1950s belonged to middle America. Under Eisenhower's leadership the majority of Americans seemed content in a period of comparative political tranquility and private prosperity. Alpheus Mason, a scholar, responding in part to David Riesman's claim that individualism had declined in America, reaffirmed respect for "human worth" and the existence of "more equal opportunity" than ever before.¹

The United States had historically prided itself on the economic opportunities it provided its citizens, whether as members of the old middle class toiling to buy their own farms or small businesses or as salaried employees of the new business expecting a promotion as industrious members of a corporate team. The continued existence of economic opportunity was important in the 1950s. Many blue-collar families were eager to obtain white-collar positions. Corporation and government employees sought higher pay, greater responsibility, or more glamorous titles. Scholars, aware of the important implications of "upward mobility," wrote voluminously on the subject,² agreeing with few exceptions that existing trends demonstrated greater opportunity than ever before for the educated sons of both manual laborers and businessmen to advance in the white-collar world. There was, however, one qualification. Studies clearly showed little hope that any but the sons of businessmen could reach the highest echelons of the corporate hierarchy. Of equal importance, a rising standard of living benefited worker and manager alike, as Americans, freed from the restraints of wartime rationing and the memory of depression food lines, indulged themselves in a buying spree.

Even on the job there was little dissatisfaction. A University of Michigan project that interviewed hundreds of laborers, farmers, professionals, managers, and sales personnel concluded that most were content and had successfully adapted to their occupation.³ Workingmen in the least stimulating positions expressed a desire to enter business for themselves, although with rather bleak prospects for success if they did. Confronted with routine and monotonous labor, the worker more often compensated by finding an engrossing avocation, hobby, or craft. The majority of farmers and male middle-class white-collar jobholders found their work so rewarding that they chose to remain in their positions even when they could afford to retire.

Politically, the typical American displayed little active interest in the electoral process. Explanations for this attitude ran the gamut from social inhibitions and economic opportunism to the distance between the voter and the public forum. A college education made little difference, as the overwhelming majority's participation in politics ended at the voting booth.

Seeking a better life, thousands of families migrated from crowded cities to outlying suburbs. Within commuting distance of places of business, the new housing tracts combined the convenience of city life with the rural atmosphere of the country. Studies of suburbanites during the decade stressed the preponderance of middle-class families, especially youthful couples with young children.

What of the Left—that vocal segment of society that was often critical of things as they were and usually acted as a harbinger of reform and change. Where were they during the 1950s?

Critics of Middle America

The disaffection of social critics from the values and ambitions held by most blue- and white-collar middle-class Americans stems from the European tradition of social dissent that flourished at the turn of the century. Writers and artists deplored the economic and political consequences of the capitalist-managed Industrial Revolution. Intellectuals here and abroad, then as now, recoiled from the preeminence of a business ethic which placed a commercial value on art and literature and failed to acknowledge (to the extent they wished) their

own political sagacity or esthetic contribution.* Many social critics were inimical to any or all of the following characteristics of the capitalistic society in the United States: corporate and individual ownership of the means of production and exchange, public and religious disapproval of moral laxity and sexual deviance, individualism forged by competitive endeavor, social recognition based on professional achievement or material success, authoritarianism in the home centered around the father, and comparatively little concern for the poor and the black.

The eclipse of the American Socialist party deprived the American Left of a competitive political base and an effective tool to challenge the views of the majority. The party had been vitalized in the 1930s by the crisis of a depression-bound corporate system at home; but World War II diverted the nation's attention from internal crisis, energized the economy, and the great expectation of a socialist solution to the depression vanished.

Many reasons are given for the political ineffectiveness of the intellectual Left during the 1950s. It is said to have lost a powerful ally when the labor movement, its economic demands largely met, supported the status quo and joined untroubled America. Senator Joseph McCarthy's probing of activities suggestive of communist subversion caused some intellectuals to pause instead of railing against existing social abuses. Of major importance was Stalin's perversion of the Soviet socialist experiment and the widespread disillusionment with applied Marxism-Leninism as an infallible social doctrine. There was a loss of faith in the capacity of socialism to produce a "new man" and a better society. Moreover, the specter of an armed totalitarian Russia astride Eastern Europe and gazing westward proved compelling in uniting the country. Tension between the United States and the Soviet Union was so great that many potential critics chose not to denounce government policy lest their attack erode the public confidence deemed essential in confronting the Soviets. Distinguished spokesmen from the American Left suggested a moratorium on government criticism in a symposium published by the *Partisan Review*, and many journals followed this suggestion.⁴

* For example, college professors in the United States during the fifties by and large believed that they enjoyed less prestige and lower income and power than other well-educated members of society (Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*, pp. 322-23).

The American Left was itself partly responsible for its failure to make a significant political impact during the fifties. Complacent socialists and liberals trusted that their influence in government, in the universities, and in social professions would eventually bring about economic and social reform. Compounding the problem, there were no dominant men of letters during this period behind whom the Left could rally. In addition, that intellectuals were included in the wave of prosperity and professional opportunity cooled the ardor of many an erstwhile critic. Finally, the fact that the United States had accepted and institutionalized parts of important socialist programs, including welfarism, labor reforms, and mass education, sapped the vigor of many potential critics.

Under these circumstances, some detractors of the American way of life abandoned political objectives and issues to zero in on American culture—on the personal habits and mores of private citizens.* Some intellectuals working in government, business, and the arts became public arbiters of good taste. Others attacked every aspect of the manners and customs they observed. Dwight Macdonald censured physical ugliness and rampant greed; Erich Fromm decried the submergence of individuality in group anonymity. From within the establishment William Whyte purported to expose the life of the “organization man” as one of either total dedication to his job, where the family becomes almost a burden, or as a kept member of a paternalistic collective. For these critics, the epitome of conformism and tastelessness in American life was to be found in the suburbs. They maintained that the central motive for moving from the city was not its crowded impersonality or physical dangers but because the suburb represented a mark of materialistic accomplishment for white- and blue-collar workers. Supposedly, previous ways of living had to be discarded, and adherence to rigid neighborhood mores was a requisite for social acceptance.

Before long, intellectuals turned on each other for a variety of reasons. Now that their primary interest appeared to be in position, influence, and material abundance, the credentials of intellectuals serving in commercial or governmental capacities were questioned. Writers

* This development, viewed by many members of the New Left with dismay and disgust, convinced them that the Old Left had outworn its usefulness and that a New Left was necessary.

who had concentrated on vilifying popular culture came under fire later in the decade. Irving Howe, himself a distinguished social critic, had warned from the beginning that the adoption of a superior attitude was indefensible. He denounced the "arrogant" connoisseur of culture as one who secretly scorned the citizen he had hoped to dominate politically but could now only ridicule socially.

Meanwhile, intellectuals who called attention to political or social issues were widely read by students who would subsequently form the New Left. Three of the most prominent were C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, and Erich Fromm. David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* was published in 1950; *The White Collar* by C. Wright Mills followed in 1951, and Erich Fromm's *The Sane Society* was published in 1955. These books reexamined generally accepted concepts about the individual and the social and economic milieu in which he lived and worked.

Riesman described how the American citizen had changed from self-reliance to a reliance on others, defined the new social character as "other-directed," and explained how the nation's children, from mother's knee to maturity, were conditioned to make decisions about the direction and content of their lives, not from a set of revered moral precepts but entirely on the basis of the approval of selected contemporaries. Too often, parents merely made their children adept at social maneuverability and sensitive to group stimulus.

Erich Fromm contended that although the thrust of Western civilization was to liberate men from economic and political servitude, the majority had never known the ultimate recognition of the self as "I". Rather, self-awareness came from membership in larger bodies of voluntary, religious, and professional organizations. This in no way diminished the drive for identity, however; Fromm asserted that this need is as strong, and sometimes stronger, than the urge for self-preservation. The social phenomena of conformity, consumption, and manipulation are interrelated with the lack of true self-awareness—that is, we cling to others in order to locate and identify ourselves.

If conformity is an inadequate way of experiencing selfhood, so is indiscriminate consumption. One of the older traits of middle-class society was to purchase a thing because man saw something of himself in the desired object and derived pleasure from possession for this reason. In modern times objects are often purchased not because they represent transcending value to us but simply because they are new.

Our relations with others tend to be equally shallow and empty of real attachment. Too often we look upon other persons and they upon us not as ends but as calculated means to self-serving ends. Fromm cited the disappointment awaiting those who wished to reaffirm their own existence by rebelling against the authority responsible for conformism. He could find no embodiment of transcending moral authority.

In *The White Collar*, C. Wright Mills explained why the nature of big business and big government made it almost impossible to be anything but "other-directed" and "conformist." Fixing his attention on the new salaried middle class at work, he examined the kinds of jobs available in a sophisticated industrial economy and probed the nature of these positions, seeking clues to job satisfaction and opportunities for advancement and success. In terms of how we earned our living, the country had come full circle since the nineteenth century. There had been a transformation from propertied independence for the majority as small farmers and self-supporting businessmen to permanent salaried employees in the ranks of corporate and state administrations. One or two percent of the employed act as managers, representing and running the corporations for their legal owners, and these managers are men of prestige and power. For the vast multitude beneath, however, there is little hope of financial independence. Their income is undistinguished. Salesclerks and office personnel must content themselves with personal pride derived from association with a fashionable store or distinguished firm or by a sense of status superiority to the manual worker.

Mills saw society in general as a "Great Salesroom" presenting an array of wares to be sold before the next shipment arrived. How to induce consumption of its products is industry's biggest problem. Morally, in place of staunch character and honest dealing, a sophisticated version of the "buyer beware" attitude prevails, infecting everyone from the salesgirl with the frozen smile to the new entrepreneur, the latter an indispensable and agile agent of a hierarchy of employers. At home in the upper echelons of business and government, the new entrepreneur skips from corporation to department and back again with answers to seemingly insoluble problems and keys to seemingly impassible roadblocks of bureaucratic inertia. The prerequisites of the new faith are personality, charm, and salesmanship. A man is appraised by what he appears to be rather than by who he really is. Mills deprecated the fatalism and impotence that gripped society, from the politi-

cally indifferent man in the street to the abdication of the intellectual for a salary-status. The rationale, apart from personal failings, was that authority was wielded and decisions made by unseen forces that manipulated the nation without offering suitable identification for retribution. The search for someone or something to blame for this apparent human engineering and social obedience, as well as the powerlessness of intellectuals, was not confined to C. Wright Mills and Erich Fromm.

David Riesman's contention that power in the United States was effectively subdivided among familiar interest groups was questioned early in the 1950s by Norman Mailer and others. But it was not until Mills published *The Power Elite* in 1956 that a telling countertheory was developed. Denying the existence of an aristocracy or conspiracy, Mills claimed that a vague interrelationship operated within the highest levels of the military, the corporate world, and the political executive that enabled the influence of a "political-military-industrial complex" to be felt before decisions were made on national policy. Those who qualified for this interrelationship generally had common schooling, common social acquaintanceships and affiliations, and enjoyed common financial advantages. Congress, labor, and other traditional interest groups occupied only "middle levels" of power. The ramifications for the individual citizen, isolated from the levers of power, were immense.

Mills observed that people by and large received their impressions of themselves and others from the mass media. He argued that educational institutions no longer trained the student to reason and develop a capacity for independent judgment but only to adjust socially and pretrain occupationally. Of crucial importance was Mills' conclusion that the "power elite" that had emerged was a political aberration, unanticipated by the Constitution. He contended that enormous power was being exercised without the wielders being held responsible for the consequences. This lack of accountability to the people or their representatives contributed to his subsequent call for young intellectuals to lead the resistance against what he considered irresponsible uses of economic and political power.

Both Riesman and Mills offered their readers a perspective of how the American society differed from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How significant was their influence on the emergence of an American New Left? Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* was hailed as

"most influential" in enlightening the readers' understanding of the nature and direction of change in America.⁵ But Mills offered a hypothesis to explain what was wrong with America: in other words, he "put a name on it."⁶ More than any other single individual, C. Wright Mills contributed to the rise of a New Left.* He urged students to combine thought and action, to become a new intellectual force for change, and to supplant the working class as the primary agency for radical social reform.

England: Birthplace of the New Left

The New Left began to evolve in England in 1956 when a generation of young intellectuals formulated a concept of socialism based on neither the cautious, compromising practical politics of the English Labor party nor the bureaucratic tyranny of Soviet communism. Instead, they hoped to shape a socialist ideology based on a society of equals bound by human compassion and concern. A unique combination of internal and external factors contributed to the advent of this phenomenon. Externally, there were Khrushchev's stunning charges against Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, the abortive attempt by the British and French to seize Suez, and the spontaneous revolt of Hungarian workers, students, and intellectuals against communist despotism. Young socialists were repelled both by the pragmatism of politicians in general and by the conduct of the Old Left in particular. The older Marxists' uncritical support of Stalinism and their endorsement of institutional terror as an acceptable price for power had betrayed the humanist vision of socialist equality.

Domestically, the Labour party, the familiar political center for British socialists, was preoccupied with how best to cope with an electorate to a large extent attuned not to community services and the abolition of private property but devoted to individual opportunity, ma-

* Jack Newfield, a former member of Students for a Democratic Society, extolled Mills as one of the authors who "nourished" the growth of the New Left (Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority* [New York: New American Library, 1966], p. 15). C. Clark Kissinger, a national secretary of SDS, averred that more than "two hundred young activists" were attracted to the June 1963 convention of SDS by Mills' writings (Clark Kissinger, "Starting in '60," *New Left Notes*, 10 June 1968, p. 20).

terial consumption, and lower taxes. The concessions to political reality that ensued seemed unworthy to earnest young reformers concerned primarily with visions of radical social change and only secondarily with the difficulty of getting elected.

In 1957, John Osborne published a play that succeeded so well in capturing the mood of youthful dissidents in England that it made a considerable stir in the United States as well. *Look Back in Anger* presents an intelligent and passionate young man who, despite plentiful opportunities for advancement, fails to find either professional satisfaction or personal happiness. An anachronism, a rebel without a cause, he needs desperately to find what a sophisticated industrial society has difficulty in providing—a reason to live and a reason to die. Plagued by the complacency that paralyzes his contemporaries, he struggles and suffers without the sense of purpose that must ultimately justify the human condition.⁷

Support of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) appeared initially to fulfill this need. CND was the cement that bound the disparate segments of the English New Left together. Fearing a nuclear catastrophe and distrusting the efficacy of normal party processes, the CND campaign seemed to reaffirm the role and power of politically aroused citizens and to vouch for the plausibility of a new, morally conscious community. Created in February 1958 and sustained by the Aldermaston marches against nuclear armament, the CND campaign greatly succeeded in capturing the interest of young reformers. In the spring of 1960 the *National Guardian* in the United States celebrated the third Aldermaston march and its one hundred thousand participants as the largest crowd to walk in unison during the last one hundred years of English history.⁸

In addition, alerted by David Riesman's and William Whyte's accounts of the effects of consumption-orientation and status-seeking in America, members of the British New Left addressed themselves to the state of "community" in their own country. Intellectual judgments were sometimes as patronizing as they were in the United States. The lower classes were reminded that "taste," not mere accumulation of television sets, washing machines, and new homes, gave meaning to life. Concern was expressed that preoccupation with economic opportunity and the private ambition that it fosters would rupture the camaraderie of laboring communities. There was also anxiety that mere improvements in living standards would deprive the worker of his

proletarian class-consciousness and in turn deprive the intellectual of a powerful historic vehicle for political impact. In rebuttal, it was insisted that material goods perform only the function for which they were designed—to ease the lot of the user—and that how a man spends his money should not determine his cultural classification.

An even graver threat was C. Wright Mills' specter of a powerless community overshadowed by an omnipotent elite. Reactions varied from statements that Mills' claims were inflated to endorsements explicitly condemning the political leaders, corporate executives, and military chiefs of the "power elite." One theme was reiterated in Britain's *New Left Review* *—demands must be made for people to have direct control over their own lives, diminishing the distance between citizens and the decisions which affect them. The same theme would reverberate through the early years of the New Left in America.

Inevitably the question of instrumentality had to be reconsidered. Assuming that an appreciation for, and commitment to, community could be generated, who would bring about the change? In 1960 Mills addressed a letter to the New Left in England suggesting that in an advanced industrial society the intelligentsia is a more suitable force for radical change than the working class.⁹ The prevailing view in England, however, was to retain the old proletarian approach. A suggested innovation was to declare an all-out intellectual assault on the capitalistic system, rejecting an issue-by-issue strategy. Both Mills and the editorial staff of *The New Reasoner*,** another journal espousing British New Left views, agreed that an undogmatic appraisal of society, industry, and government was indispensable to the composition of effective theories for change.¹⁰

In the meantime, young intellectuals were encouraged by the early mentors of the New Left to fraternize with workers on the job and in the pub to learn the system's vulnerabilities through practical experience. While intellectual promoters of the English New Left pondered about elites, consciousness, and agents for change, students experimented with drugs, sex, and flamboyant fashion and generally conducted themselves as if life ended with the onset of adulthood.

If one were to accept the essentially negative view projected by the

* The *New Left Review*, which began publication with the January/February 1960 issue, was formed by the union of *The New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* in England.

** *The New Reasoner*, which began publication with the summer 1957 issue, was one of the first journals of the English New Left to emphasize socialist humanism.

ideologists of the New Left of the anonymity of institutionalized power, the vulgarity of mass media, the unresponsiveness of entrenched bureaucracy, and the consequential atomization of the individual, one might ask how the adolescent could feel useful or needed. Where does the vitality and cultivated idealism of youth fit into this version of society?

To this, it was widely averred that since for the young the politics of community was an extension of life itself, every effort should be made by the mature man of letters, the practicing politician, and the interested citizen to ennoble the development of the community by personal sacrifice, example, or just plain "guts". To forestall the stultification of the New Left, moreover, an independent socialist youth movement should be established, free of all entanglements and control by the elder Labour party. These proposals were discussed but failed, as it turned out, to prosper.

By 1961, the New Left movement in England was foundering. Lack of enthusiasm for local socialist clubs, shortages of funds, differing opinions on literary and theoretical matters—all were blamed for the decline. The most formidable barrier to a community of equals, however, remained an admixture of resignation and prosperity. Resignation stemmed from a pervasive feeling of impotence; prosperity awakened private dreams which led in turn to a spiritual and physical emigration from a working-class community forged by adversity. A preoccupation with self and a disinclination to accept the higher taxes accompanying expanded welfare programs and blueprints for even more radical reform sapped the initial strength of the movement.

In the United States in the late 1950s, two principal issues—racial discrimination and disarmament—stirred the interest of students. The English Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament helped supply the example and the momentum for the second issue, but the impact of England's young intellectuals on America was even more pronounced on an ideological level. The English New Left journals *New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* separately, and later combined in the *New Left Review*, were cited by members of the American New Left as inspiring their American counterparts *Studies on the New Left* and *New University Thought* at the universities of Wisconsin and Chicago respectively.*

* *Studies on the Left* began publication in Madison, Wisconsin, with the fall 1959 issue. *New University Thought* started publication in Chicago with the spring 1960 issue.

The Beat Generation: Groundbreakers for the New Left

Unlike the political New Left in England, a countercommunity germinated quietly and without fanfare in the United States. In 1953 the poet Allen Ginsberg and other artists converged on San Francisco in the wake of Jack Kerouac, who had preceded them. By 1955 Kenneth Rexroth, also a poet, was presiding over poetry readings attended by established or aspiring writers and appreciative listeners. The "Beats" did not become a center of public attention until 1956 when the press discovered them.* Jack Kerouac, author of *On the Road*, was their celebrity and the originator of the term "Beat Generation," a term designating individuals who knew "where it was at" by graduating from the school of "hard knocks".

Most of the original Beats, a small diverse group of artists, writers, and knockabouts, were self-aware as well as intense, creative, and eccentric, and the thousands who joined the Beat world tried to emulate them. Herb Caen, the San Francisco columnist, called them "Beatniks," a term that masked a diversity of personalities and backgrounds of would-be Beats who flocked to the new communities springing up in every part of the country but centered on the West Coast.

The newcomers were young and old, rich and poor, white and black, weekend dilettantes, and college adventurers, the aware and the psychotic. Plunging into the Beat world, they hoped that the primitive percussion of jazz would cleanse them, that the self-expression of the creative arts would satisfy them, and that the euphoric effects of marijuana would unite them. There was, of course, no single reason for their coming together; whatever the motives, they were not all personal. An unhappiness with society figured prominently in the migration of many, to whom Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* was the theme song of Beat social protest. In a legal action to determine whether *Howl* should be classified as obscene, Dr. Mark Schorer, testifying for the defense, and the trial judge, Clayton Horn, concurred that the poem indicted society for its "materialism, conformity, and mechanization leading toward war."¹¹ Ginsberg's poetic indictment of society

* To take a not unrepresentative example of the artistic self-knowledge of the original Beatniks, Jack Kerouac wrote *On the Road* in three weeks using "spontaneous prose" and subsequently refused to rewrite a word of it (see Bruce Cook, *The Beat Generation* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971], pp. 73-75).

was not an isolated act. Some of the Beatniks chose to be politically unobtrusive because the times militated against clamorous dissent. A sizable number of artists were politically indifferent, however, and Jack Kerouac was apparently quite moderate in his political outlook.

On a domestic level, the Beats viewed a stable, routine manner of living with disdain or disinterest. They especially disliked the toothy affability and status concern of some members of the "square" community. Philosophically, they rejected the machine age and scorned concern about dollars and promotions, a pastime which in their view absorbed too much of man's existence, depriving him of the serenity and happiness that comes from a less hectic and more natural form of life.

Some of this criticism echoed themes of liberal and intellectual critics who were not Beat, yet the Beat Generation was accused of being antiintellectual. This is only partly true. The Beats were not inimical to reason *per se* but to the primacy of economic achievement as the supreme manifestation of reason. Some seemed equally opposed to self-control, which was then viewed from the perspective of a hip-style, in any case. In the quest for a reaffirmation of self, the emphasis was on "hip," on being "cool" and indifferent, an experiment in living based on emotion and instinctual knowledge antithetical to reason and inhibition. The visceral intensity of the therapy needed depended on the degree of personal alienation of the individual. Jazz, sex, marijuana, art, and Zen figured prominently in the cure—these were also supposed to stir creative ability—but there was much more. Not even detractors doubted Kerouac's sincerity, and Kerouac thrived on the beauty he saw in life, in people, animals, and things in their innocence. For him, innocence was spontaneous, and spontaneity and honesty revealed beauty.

Some critics, of course, saw the Beatniks lionized by the sensationalist media, imitated by weekend dilettantes, deplored by puritans, and derided by political activists as diversionary, and were not impressed. Although Kerouac and his followers disclaimed the probability, the glorification of the ego, the liberation of the senses and of instinctual drives evoked images of a wild beast about to set upon society at large. Amidst such controversy, the Beat Generation was indisputably an actual, though shifting, community.

Rejecting established modes of behavior, the Beats also renounced participation in the political process, but this was not engendered by

unconcern or lethargy. They abandoned the citizen's role as they abandoned reason, claiming that they disagreed not with rationality or democracy as such but with what both produced. The Beats were the first group after World War II to exemplify their repudiation of social and political practices by embracing a way of life that flouted the customs, values, and myths by which others lived. That this could be done, that a life completely out of step with the rest of America could be lived, was of enormous import to the New Left and to anyone else whose manner of living differed from that of the majority of Americans.

Another Look at the "Ungeneration"

The students who graduated from American colleges and universities in the 1950s are usually dismissed as an "Ungeneration," a generation that failed to leave an imprint on the annals of our history. This is an oversimplification. Although few students of the fifties engaged in politics of dissent, they nevertheless paved the way for the New Left of the 1960s. The blame for the reluctance of more students to participate in political activism is generally laid to the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee hearings of 1950–52 involving Senator Joseph McCarthy's charges of communist infiltration of the State Department and the fear of being labeled a Communist if one expressed unpopular or unconventional views. Studies revealed, however, that students and teachers, although "apprehensive," were not silenced as a result of these hearings chaired by senators Millard Tydings and Patrick McCarran successively.¹²

It is more likely that the nation, content with Eisenhower's leadership, longed for normalcy, a time to catch its breath after the hectic 1930s and 1940s, a time to enjoy the fruits of its labor. Too, as in England, radicals had destroyed their credibility and condemned themselves by supporting Stalin despite his perfidy in the past. Though most college students in the 1950s anticipated a career in law, business, medicine, or education, they expected to enjoy the fruits of their labor without overexacting sacrifices. Unlike their fathers, who were motivated by the Great Depression and the legacy of private enterprise and who strived to climb as high as they could in their chosen

careers, graduates of the fifties felt assured of success, status, and comfort without making such efforts.

The college graduate of the mid-fifties differed from his predecessor of the 1930s in many ways. The earlier generation had been exposed to, and matured by, adult responsibilities and hardships at an early age. Their sons' experiences differed considerably from this. The first generation to profit fully from a burgeoning postwar economy, they were the recipients of a child-centered home life attuned to psychological innovation. Consequently self-centered, these students were also socially sensitive to the prevailing views of the time, which generally espoused the values, reflected the needs, and anticipated the material benefits of the business world.

Many students viewed a college education as preparatory to a life within a corporate or governmental atmosphere and seemed not to fear that this kind of employment would jeopardize their personal identity; their fathers and older brothers, however, had approached corporate careers with some trepidation. By and large, the college graduate in the fifties wished for little more than a respectable position in a large firm, sufficiently lucrative to finance a home in a tailored suburb, a comely wife, children, and attendant luxuries. Bereft of their fathers' driving force, realizing twenty years later that the age of visible individual impact had nearly passed, for the most part they entered corporate or government service with composure if without enthusiasm.

Yet beneath the surface contentment with the lifestyle of the "organization man," dissatisfaction bubbled among a number of students. The most obvious sign was the fascination the Beat community held for many college students. The enormous appeal of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* to Beatniks and college students alike was also of great significance.

The Salinger novel is a moving sketch of a boy hungering to be of use to someone or something, and in this respect it resembles Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, which crystallized the frustration and despair conspicuous in England at about the same time. But Salinger's young man is not angry, only baffled and hurt. Requiring companionship, affection, and direction, he is isolated from other human beings, young and old, by each man's absorption in his own cares, career, and possessions. In dealing with people, the hero encounters either

rude rejection or an affected concern that disguises manipulative motives. Many college students identified with Holden because they had presumably shared similar trials and a like loneliness. They lacked the strong offsetting guidelines of community tradition, a compelling national purpose, and the religious and civilizing strictures of the past.

Increasingly free from fear and authority in the home, and influenced by the political involvement and social concern of liberal parents, some members of the "Ungeneration" began to question and criticize basic attitudes and assumptions in an effort to distinguish themselves from a predominantly middle-class way of life. To the accusation that they were impassive, they replied that they were the handiwork of the system itself, trained to respond to standards gleaned from television, obsequious behavior, and an education stressing social adjustment rather than intellectual excellence or independent judgment. The same students, reacting to charges of being preoccupied with conformity, mediocrity, and suburban living, asked how they could profit from the experience of their elders in choosing another lifestyle. Some of these students felt that predominant social tenets having a commercial or materialistic flavor should be jettisoned. They wanted to assail the complacent self-satisfaction that immobilized the bulk of society in order to begin attacking social ills, and they naively believed that dishonesty and duplicity were to be found only in the business world.

Racial prejudice, one of the most prominent problems facing society in the fifties, was sufficiently widespread to arouse the moral concern of students and to activate the academic interest of scholars. Three major events called the nation's attention to its dimensions, of which the first was the Supreme Court's decision on 17 May 1954 proscribing the segregation of races in public schools. This case triggered massive resistance in the South, ranging from threats of violence to economic pressure against teachers who favored mixing whites and blacks in the classroom. Racial animosity culminated at Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957 when President Eisenhower had to call federal troops to enforce the Court's decision.

The year before, Negroes in Montgomery, Alabama, behind the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had organized a spontaneous and decisive boycott against the city's bus line for bringing charges against a Negro woman who had refused to relinquish her seat to a white person. Although the intensity of such confrontation

increased as one traveled South, the northern states had similar problems. People who paid lip service to integration would oppose it when their own church, job, neighborhood, or school was involved. Bias existed in all classes, but the middle class exhibited less virulent prejudice than the upper and lower classes. Though the motives generating prejudice were more complex than a mere physical reaction against another's skin pigmentation, many college students were disturbed by, and overwhelmingly against, the phenomenon.

Within the universities, a number of students complained about undemanding curricula and professorial disinterest. Some professors agreed, deploring the precedence given research over teaching and course proliferation over reflection. To be sufficiently troubled or doctrinaire to want to act against real or imagined wrongs was one thing, but students were bewildered as to how to go about it. For those seeking a pathway leading to a future modification of society, C. Wright Mills denounced as unworkable and impractical both the liberal tool of voluntary associations operating within the democratic process and the Marxist mystique of a laboring class imbued with revolutionary consciousness. Mills sought an innovative analysis that would reject the classification of people in preordained and unchanging categories, asked for an assessment that would redefine and reemphasize the creative human element in society, called for a reexamination of the old assumptions about agencies for change, and urged a new style of radical political activism. But he died before he could assist members of the New Left in devising an original social analysis and workable program for change.

During the 1930s, critics on the Left identified the oppressor and the victim with relative ease. The oppressor, the capitalist, was the subjugator of nations or the depriver of work, food, and shelter. The workingman was a victim of universal depredation. Twenty years later, the Left was on the defensive. The worker, no longer a source of revolutionary inspiration, had benefited from postwar prosperity and was for all practical purposes a member of the middle class. Evidence of mistreatment and inequity was not as abundant or as stark; even the wielders of real power were hard to locate and discredit. The derangement and cultural reorientation caused by these developments and the restructuring of society along lines of mammoth industrial and governmental units caused anger among the young Left in England and perplexity here—perplexity because its size and cultural di-

versity enabled this country to weather social transformations more easily than England. This uncertainty contributed to the general political inactivity of university students in the fifties.

What deceived observers about the apparent political apathy of the student of the fifties was the equation of disinterest in politics—as organized, controlled, and managed by adults—with political interest *per se*. Many students *were* indifferent, even disdainful of the political process as then constituted; but the minority that always makes the reputation of a generation as politically active or passive would realize before the decade was over that its political interests were outside the scope of both the Old Left and the Republican and Democratic parties.

For a while, lacking a new ideology or a compelling moral theme, potential student activists remained within Old Left (social democratic or liberal) organizations such as the Student League for Industrial Democracy and Students for Democratic Action, whose paltry memberships reflected the moribund condition of the Left as a whole in the fifties. The National Student Association (NSA) numbered its members in the hundreds of thousands, but it remained politically amorphous. Marxists were acutely aware of the importance of infusing young blood into their organizations and spoke hopefully of campus-based organizations of students. But Old Left organizations were not willing to grant young activists the autonomy to act independently of senior control. Illustrative of this practice was the 1953–54 decision by the Americans for Democratic Action, a Left-liberal parent organization, prohibiting the Students for Democratic Action from publishing a resolution which advocated that Communists should be allowed to hold teaching positions if they were professionally competent. Independent student political activity surfaced after 1954 when a concerted effort was made to support the plight of Negro citizens.

By 1958, student concern had mounted sufficiently to marshal ten thousand white and black students in Washington, D.C. to participate in a "Youth March for Integrated Schools." Committees on many eastern campuses joined forces with university student body officers and national student organizations to assure the success of the march. Those possessing a socialistic perspective were familiar with, and excited by, the New Left developments in England. Similarly, New Left journals in England were aware of student advances in the United

States and happily announced the first issue of the University of Wisconsin Socialist Club's *Studies on the Left* later in 1959.

In addition to student concern about racial injustice, apprehension over the production and explosion of nuclear devices began to mobilize students in the late 1950s. The event that activated a peace movement in the United States occurred on 15 November 1957, when a group of prominent Americans including Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr. Paul J. Tillich, and Norman Cousins placed a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* calling upon the nation to suspend nuclear explosions at once and to join the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy. The wave of support that greeted this ad made SANE the foremost adult peace group in the country. Invigorated by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in England, the crusade for an end to nuclear weapons helped fill an emotional and idealistic void for students who joined the Student Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (Student SANE) and the Student Peace Union (SPU).

Student SANE started at Cornell University in January 1958 and flourished in the eastern part of the nation. SPU began at the University of Chicago in the spring of 1959. As opposed to Student SANE, which operated as part of SANE proper, students organized SPU as an independent peace organization with chapters from Maine to California.* Not long after its founding, SPU came under the dominance of the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), the youth affiliate of the Socialist party, and developed a "third camp" position advocating nuclear disarmament without ostensibly favoring the foreign policy objectives of either the United States or the Soviet Union. The SPU and the peace movement in general introduced many critical but politically inexperienced students to the direct action techniques of picketing, marches, and mass demonstrations. Moreover, subsequent leaders of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), such as Paul Booth and Todd Gitlin, were involved in SPU.**

* In early 1961, SPU's membership was estimated at around 200. A year later, after the dissolution of Student SANE, SPU could boast of 3,000–5,000 members and 12,000 subscribers to its *Bulletin*.

** The following factors contributed to the dissolution of SPU in 1964: a change in the rationale of criticism of defense policies from moral to political, a widening of the scope of criticism from the production and explosion of nuclear weapons to the goals of American foreign policy, the tactical limitations of a single-issue movement, an unwillingness to go beyond appeals to Democratic party leaders to an "attack on the power structure," and finally, the sign-

Students who started organizing around issues that concerned them at the close of the 1950s ranged in political beliefs from liberal-to-pacifist-to-social democrat, with the liberals usually in the ranks and the more militant students in positions of leadership. Regardless of their degree of radicalism, a preoccupation with morality and social values was pervasive among early activists of the New Left. The minority deviated from the business- and professional-oriented majority. For the most part, these students graduated in the social sciences; most of their parents had instilled in them an intense interest in social affairs. When they looked at the social reality and compared it with what they were led to believe in, they were baffled and angry.* In early issues of the *Activist*, a New Left journal started by activists at Oberlin College, Ohio, in league with SDS, students asked in 1961 where was the place of values in society? Unable to locate an institutional embodiment of ethics, they concluded that the individual is bound to be lost and to feel a sense of personal futility.

But it was more than an absence of values; the first members of the New Left were unable to construct new values. Student explanations for this apparent dearth of values in society were varied. One view asserted that all absolutes, from the existence of God to the existence of freedom, had been extirpated by scientific inquiry and skepticism. According to another view, some students felt empty because the vision of a new world had been demolished by the radical activists of the thirties, who, by their betrayal of humanitarian ideals, had allowed liberalism and idealism to die.¹³ Irving Howe speculated that society's values either had not been conveyed to the young or that the young, observing their violation in practice, had concluded that these values really did not exist.¹⁴ Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau gave the following explication of these attitudes in *The New Radicals*.

The students felt American society supported racism, oppressive institutions, capital punishment, and wars against popular movements

ing of a test ban treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States in 1963.

* Two interesting sociological and psychological explanations for the values and attitudes of early activists are to be found in: Richard Flacks, "Who Protests: The Social Basis of the Student Movement," in *Protest: Student Activism in America*, ed. Julian Foster and Durward Long (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970), pp. 134-57, and Kenneth Keniston, *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1968).

in underdeveloped countries. "Alienation" was used to describe the society's effects on its citizens, and American society was seen as the source of injustice and suffering everywhere. While opposed to the injustice and suppression of liberty in general, the activists did not feel the same outrage against Castro or Mao or Khrushchev that they could against their own rulers. It was "our" fault. Brought up and nurtured on the United Nations and liberal political values, hearing them articulated so well by President Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson, they demanded purity at home first, and when it was not forthcoming, quickly became convinced that it was impossible, that there was something rotten at the core of American society.¹⁵

The New Left therefore originated as an individualistic reaction to both personal and social problems. Each student went into the movement that he believed best suited his interests and needs. Some joined radical organizations confined to a single campus, whose members participated in demonstrations around a variety of issues. On a more theoretical level, students conceived, planned, and carried on symposiums, although faculty inertia had often to be overcome for this to be done. To campuses in every part of the country they brought leading cultural and political figures, whom they often asked unexpectedly candid questions. In early 1959, while students at Yale University inaugurated a new program called "Challenge" to persuade their peers to take an interest in world problems, in Cuba a youthful revolutionary named Fidel Castro and a small band of devoted followers toppled the regime of aging Fulgencio Batista to presage the New Left in the 1960s.

1960: Birth of the American New Left

Five principal events occurred in the United States between January 1959 and November 1960 to spark a student reaction and launch the New Left movement: the election of John F. Kennedy as president, the seizure of power by Castro in Cuba, the sit-ins against segregated facilities in the South, the execution of Caryl Chessman at San Quentin, and the furor aroused by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings in San Francisco.

With the exception of Castro's rise to power and Kennedy's victory, these events occurred within a four month period. Though

Kennedy neither said nor did anything specifically to cause these events, his ascendancy to the White House helped create an atmosphere conducive to student political expression. To many students Kennedy exemplified a kind of public virtue they wanted to believe existed. His language and demeanor seemed to assure them that vigor would replace complacency and that social wrongs would be righted.

Cuba. The overthrow of Fulgencio Batista and the establishment of a revolutionary regime by Fidel Castro in Cuba had a prolonged dramatic effect on some students (Castro came to power in January 1959, but the consolidation of the new regime and the growing US opposition kept him in the news in the early 1960s). Since most potential members of the movement were unable to visit Cuba personally, they relied on descriptions in books and journals generally sympathetic to the Revolution.* These told a story of poverty and degradation for the Cuban peasant under Batista and of unconscionable profit-taking by financiers, chiefly from the United States, who dominated the Cuban economy.

Although peasants and workers from the cities filled the ranks of the revolutionary army, Castro and the other commanders and leaders emanated from the middle classes and the University of Havana. In *Listen, Yankee*, C. Wright Mills stated his conviction that Castro and the echelon of leaders were not Communists but a new breed of radicals, indeed the first victorious New Left in the world. They seemed to fulfill Mills' hope, expressed in his "Letter to the New Left,"** for a new revolutionary force of students and intellectuals superseding the working-class fetish of Marxism.

How did the Cuban Revolution impress the budding members of the New Left in the United States? Many student supporters were sure that the revolutionaries represented the only hope of decent, mistreated Cubans. For more doctrinaire observers, however, the Revolution as such was much more important: Castro and his followers had

* The two books considered indispensable in describing conditions under Batista and the new life under Castro were Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1960), and C. Wright Mills, *Listen, Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

** This important statement concerning Mills' vision of a New Left was published originally in the English *New Left Review*, no. 5 (September–October 1960): 18–23, and subsequently in *Studies on the Left* 1, no. 4 (1961): 63, in this country.

also demonstrated that a socialist force, apparently free of a communist vanguard, could "expropriate the capitalist class." Much was made of the fact that Castro's Revolution rendered anachronistic the "devil theory of communism" and the ideology of the cold war. According to this view, the Revolution in Cuba symbolized a noncommunist revolution within an underdeveloped country and not, as the United States government seemed to think, a communist plot within the Western Hemisphere.

Not everyone supported the Cuban Revolution for the same reasons. To a few people, Castro was simply an underdog, persecuted by an all-powerful United States government. To blacks, Fidel made a favorable impression when, visiting New York City in 1959 to address the United Nations, he stayed at the St. Theresa Hotel in Harlem rather than at a luxurious uptown hotel.* To some students, especially those living in comfortable, secure, and comparatively unchallenging circumstances, the Cuban Revolution conjured romantic visions. Castro and his band were under, or just over, thirty years of age, outnumbered by their enemies, resplendent in their olive green and beards, successfully revolting against a tyrant whom some students almost certainly identified with their own fathers. Castro himself seemed to combine the characteristics of the intellectual and the man of action. His chief companion, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, also an intellectual and man of action, described the lifestyle of a guerrilla fighter in a manner certain to appeal to some students' idealistic and romantic preconceptions of guerrilla warfare.

The more uncomfortable the guerrilla fighter is, and the more he is initiated into the rigors of nature, the more he feels himself at home; his morale is higher, his sense of security is greater. At the same time, he has learned to risk his life in every circumstance that might

* About 1962 and afterwards, some militant Negroes began to compare the condition of the Cuban peasant before the Revolution with that of the rural southern Negro in the Black Belt of the United States. Still later, when some blacks began to regard themselves as an exploited colony within this country, comparisons were again made with prerevolutionary Cuba. Paradoxically, by 1970, when some militant black Americans visited Castro's Cuba, they bitterly criticized what seemed to them still a white-dominated country in which the nonwhite population lived as second-class citizens (see Robert Williams' letter to Fidel Castro from Peking, dated 28 August 1966; Lee Lockwood, *Conversation with Eldridge Cleaver* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970], p. 19; and Eldridge Cleaver, in *Black Panther*, 17 January 1970, p. 6).

arise, to trust to luck like a tossed coin; and in general, as a final result of this kind of combat, it matters little to the individual guerrilla whether or not he survives.¹⁶

Criticism of Castro began to mount, however, by 1961 when he refused to hold national elections, curtailed civil liberties, and revealed himself to be a Marxist-Leninist. Still, articles written in student movement journals maintained their solidarity with the Cuban Revolution even after the Missile Crisis in October 1962. Arguments emphasizing the USSR time advantage of missiles located in Cuba, the loss of American missile numerical superiority, and the ensuing political disadvantages were discounted by these writers, who insisted that reports of a missile threat to the United States were exaggerated to justify the aggressive policies of this country.

The significance of Cuba to the development of the New Left went beyond the cold war. Many politicalized students in pursuit of revolution, ideals, or heroes found these elements in Castro and his companions; Cuba (and later Vietnam) was to younger people what the Soviet Union had once been to older radicals. As the years wore on, members of the New Left were willing to downgrade the autocratic characteristics of the Cuban regime for the political, personal, or ideological satisfaction they found there; and to some, the Cuban experience proved that revolutionary action leading to institutional change was also possible in the United States.

The Campaign to Save Caryl Chessman. The execution of Caryl Chessman on 2 May 1960 was an event of consequence in the evolution of the New Left movement. Chessman was tried and sentenced to death twelve years before his actual execution for seventeen felonies committed during a twenty-day January 1948 crime spree: eight counts of robbery, four counts of kidnapping, two counts of sex perversion, one attempted robbery, one attempted rape, and one auto theft. Since he had spent twelve years in jail and there was no murder victim, Chessman's case lent itself to the campaign, organized and carried on by adults, to bar capital punishment in California. But this in itself would not have fired the imagination and indignation of his student supporters.

Like Fidel Castro, Chessman was a young man and even more of an underdog. He had come from a home marred by ill-health and penury, and he had presumably begun a life of crime stealing food so

that his parents would not have to accept relief packages. Lacking the advantages of his future sympathizers, once in prison he immersed himself in a study of the law and a general process of self-education, the result being an "intellectual" who produced an autobiography, a spate of articles, and the impetus behind eight successful appeals for a stay of execution. Chessman's intelligence and literary prowess won the admiration of students who regarded themselves as intellectuals and social critics. His defiant refusal to accept the judge's verdict impressed courtroom bystanders and appealed to some students as well. In February 1960, before the last appeal was granted, a few pickets from San Francisco State College began to march in his defense.

The condemned man insisted on his innocence, although none of his appeals were founded on new facts that might dispute the evidence against him. His statements substantiated student opinion that he had changed and thus deserved a reprieve from the gas chamber: "I was anti-social and rebellious, perhaps I was even psychopathic, but all that is over now," he said.¹⁷ To students and others who commiserated with him, newspaper reports presented a vivid contrast between the self-assured Chessman and the vacillating government officials who had the power to condemn or exonerate him.

Thus the lines of confrontation were drawn: on the one hand, Chessman, born on the wrong side of the tracks, protesting his innocence, and scrapping every minute for twelve years in a cramped cell, suffering severe mental anguish when execution after execution was postponed minutes before being finalized; on the other hand, a presumably aloof judiciary and Pat Brown, a governor who had long advocated repeal of the death penalty, who had granted Chessman a reprieve two months before, but who refused to do so again. On the surface it appeared that the law helped only the wealthy and was indifferent to the life of this particular man.

On the eve of his execution, students from surrounding Bay Area campuses converged on San Quentin to keep a vigil overnight and through the hour of his death. The day after the execution, Chessman's final words, written in a letter, were disclosed:

When you read this, he [the executioner] will have killed me. I will have exchanged oblivion for an unprecedented 12 year nightmare. And you will have witnessed the final, lethal, ritualistic act. It is my hope and my belief that you will be able to report that I died

with dignity, without animal fear, and without bravado. I owe that much to myself.¹⁸

Perceived emotionally or politically, Chessman's execution helped to radicalize many students and provoked others to question the validity of all laws.

The House Un-American Activities Committee Disruption in San Francisco. Within two weeks after the death of Caryl Chessman, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) met in San Francisco to question witnesses about alleged Communist party activities in the Bay Area. Faculty members from the University of California, San Francisco State College, San Jose State College, and Stanford University signed petitions and published newspaper advertisements objecting to the committee's appearance. Traditional adult opponents of HUAC emphasized the personal and professional damage the witnesses had suffered as a consequence of their being subpoenaed.

On 12 May 1960 a group of students gathered at San Francisco City Hall to voice their disapproval of the committee. A reporter divided them into two groups:

[Some were] the children of old radicals, unionists, leftists, Wallaceites, etc . . . the other half were new . . . mostly from Democratic rather than Republican families. They were startlingly like the British *Universities* and *Left Review* public. The "affluent society" is their real enemy.¹⁹

Participants were told by protest organizers to show goodwill and to be polite to everyone; those who arrived early passed instructions to those who joined the picket line later in the day. Approximately one thousand students congregated at City Hall the first two days of the hearings.

On 13 May, however, the demonstrators shifted to disruptive direct action tactics. The HUAC meeting was interrupted by people who entered City Hall, assembled outside the hearing room door and chanted "open the door, open the door." When the same disruption occurred the following day, the police swept the protestors down the stairs with fire hoses and trundled them away in paddy wagons. There were thirteen injured and sixty-two jailed. Students triggered the riot when they climbed over the barricades and stormed the door leading to the

Board of Supervisors chamber where the hearing was being conducted. Just before the rush to the door, a San Francisco patrolman informed the crowd that all the seats were taken. An eyewitness, a member of SLATE and a protestor who managed to slip into the hearing room with some of his cohorts before the door was closed, gave this account of how they stopped the meeting: "A few of us were able to get past the bouncers and prevent the hearings from proceeding by several renditions of the 'Star Spangled Banner' and other Committee favorites." ²⁰

HUAC subsequently produced a film entitled *Operation Abolition* that showed portions of the action at City Hall, purportedly to prove that the students' conduct was guided by the Communist party. The committee was accused of "distortion" in making the film, an accusation allegedly supported by two of its former agents. When the film was exhibited on college campuses throughout the country, its detractors launched an effective counterattack consisting of television and radio appearances, nationwide speaking tours, debates, and the distribution of hundreds of thousands of pieces of literature. As a result, students who ordinarily would never have given the HUAC episode a second thought became either sympathetic or converted:

"We are indebted to the Committee for that film," said Clark Kissinger of the Students for a Democratic Society. "It showed those big cops clubbing students. . . ." Groups of every variety began to spring up in protest all over the country.²¹

The protests against the HUAC and the other events indicative of a student political awakening were all single-issue campaigns which could not be enlarged upon. Also, in each case, the protest was first planned by adults, with students taking a somewhat belated though important and dramatic part. With the advent of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the South and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the North, these early characteristics all but disappeared. SNCC and SDS, the two organizations that formed the New Left, strove to become multiissue movements instigated and operated by students to achieve radical social objectives that were initiated by SNCC but clarified by SDS.

SNCC from 1960 to 1964: The Spirit of the New Left

Introduction

More than Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution, Caryl Chessman, the HUAC furor, or the peace movement, the civil rights movement captured the sympathy and allegiance of student activists in the United States. The integrity of the other four causes was at least questionable; the probity of the civil rights movement was not. Castro's cause was tainted to the degree that he condoned autocratic methods to rule his people; Chessman's cause was suspect to the degree that the charges against him were true; the cause of witnesses subpoenaed by the HUAC was compromised to the degree that these witnesses did support the Communist party and the Soviet Union; the peace movement's cause was weakened by the reality of power politics and to the degree that atomic armaments were manufactured to forestall a nuclear threat by another country. The struggle against segregation, however, was undertaken by black people themselves and not by merely concerned bystanders. The news that seemingly powerless and mistreated blacks were helping one another because there appeared to be no other alternative shook the nation and launched a New Left movement.

The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), pronounced "Snick") was the moving spirit of the early New Left in the United States. Always small in numbers and composed chiefly of southern black students, SNCC grew out of the welter of civil rights activity in 1960. SNCC experienced four stages of radicalization, all in the South: the sit-ins against institutional discrimination; the Freedom Rides to desegregate public facilities in interstate transportation; voter registration in the Deep South; and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party's appeal for equal rights at the national level of the

Democratic party. In the course of these activities it proved that a student organization could strive militantly to uproot ingrained social habits and still be independent from the social democratic or communist Old Left. It demonstrated that a dedicated group of men and women could act as a catalyst in stirring the nation to consider solutions to racial problems. But it would also learn that the social fabric of a nation cannot be rewoven in a few short years.

The spark responsible for enkindling a mass movement among previously quiescent black college students was a sit-in. On 1 February 1960 four freshmen at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College staged a sit-in in the "white only" section of the Woolworth Department Store lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Izell Blair, one of the four, explained that the idea had originated with his roommate Joseph McNeil, who, having been refused service, said simply: "Well, we ought to have a boycott. . . . we should go in and sit down . . . and ask for service. . . . if they refuse us we can continue to sit there . . . and we'll go to jail and then we'll ask people not to buy at the place." ¹ Refused service, they were joined by thirty fellow students the next day and by hundreds more during the ensuing weeks as sit-ins spread to towns and cities throughout the South.

Established civil rights organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), were caught by surprise. Preoccupied with their own respective organizational specialties and convinced of the importance of their own contributions, they had underestimated the generation that stood behind them.

The NAACP was the oldest of these organizations. Founded in 1909 by Negro and white liberals living primarily in the North, the NAACP relied almost exclusively on legal tactics to assail the barriers of discrimination. It reached the zenith of its influence in the late forties and fifties when its legal efforts resulted in increased salaries and improved working conditions for black teachers and students, as well as in the celebrated *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954 decreeing that public schools must integrate. By 1960, however, public schools in the Deep South had not even begun to integrate, and the NAACP was reluctant to take direct action to force a breakthrough.

CORE, on the other hand, had used sit-ins and picketing against

segregation from its inception. Formed in 1942 by James Farmer, a Negro minister, and James R. Robinson, a white pacifist, CORE applied techniques of non-violence to the problem of discrimination in such cities as Chicago, St. Louis, and Baltimore, but its inability to mobilize large numbers of people in the struggle against racial prejudice limited it essentially to local undertakings.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s formation of SCLC (a group of Negro and white clergy) in 1957 climaxed a successful application of militant tactics by Negroes in Montgomery, Alabama. In late 1955 Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man on a public bus in Montgomery and was arrested for violating one of Alabama's segregation laws. At the request of aroused laymen who started the protest, King took over and directed a massive Negro boycott of the city's public transportation system that lasted a year, hurt downtown white merchants' businesses, and coerced the city into desegregating its buses. Relying mainly on King's eloquence and charisma, SCLC was unsuccessful in repeating the Montgomery experience, though King crisscrossed the South urging widespread civil disobedience to break down segregation.

The Greensboro Sit-In

Black students in Negro colleges responded quickly and efficiently to the Greensboro sit-in because of pent-up frustration derived in part from the feeling that their parents and existing civil rights organizations had not put enough pressure on the white community to give blacks equal rights. This judgment was aimed especially at the NAACP, but students had reservations about CORE and SCLC as well. Most of the demonstrating students had expected rapid implementation of the Brown decision and more of the kind of resistance displayed during the Montgomery bus boycott. Many of their primary and secondary school teachers had told them that they would enter superior integrated high schools and colleges and then move on to jobs previously reserved for white people. These expectations were not fulfilled, while, at the same time, black people in Africa seemed to be throwing off the shackles of colonialism and making visible progress toward independence. Starting with Greensboro, CORE and SCLC began to redeem themselves in the eyes of the younger generation by the assistance they gave demonstrating students.

From the outset, some students found themselves in a quandary. How could they sit meekly at a lunch counter and not react forcibly to taunts and harassment? Hearing of this dilemma, Dr. George Simpkins, president of the local NAACP in Greensboro, called the New York office of CORE for aid (CORE was the most experienced of the civil rights groups in the training and use of non-violent techniques). Arriving in Greensboro within hours of Simpkin's call, CORE's representatives began a workshop. CORE volunteers taught interested students the principles behind non-violence (an intermingling of the Gandhian and Quaker philosophies) and then subjected them to various levels of assault and battery—a dress rehearsal for tough encounters with violent segregationists. A few days after the demonstrations began, Dr. King arrived in Greensboro to bolster the students' spirits and give them confidence in non-violent tactics.

Shortly after the sit-ins began in February, the Reverend James Lawson, Jr., a pacifist who in 1959 had organized a non-violent workshop in Nashville, Tennessee, of which he was a resident, received a phone call from Greensboro requesting a sympathy demonstration. Lawson and Diane Nash, a former member of the workshop then enrolled in the Baptist Theological Seminary, thereupon marshaled students from Tennessee State, Fisk, and Vanderbilt universities to join the protest in Nashville, the first sit-in within a metropolitan southern city. During the last week of February, Nashville police began mass arrests of demonstrating students. In the first two weeks of March, 144 blacks and 5 white students chose jail rather than release on bond.* At this point, the Nashville sit-ins changed from sympathy demonstrations for Greensboro into a movement for equal rights in their own city and the momentum necessary to build a movement gathered force. In Nashville and other southern cities, well-dressed black students were told to abide by the following rules despite whatever physical provocation they might encounter:

Don't strike back or curse if abused.

Don't laugh out.

Don't hold conversations with floor workers.

Don't leave your seats until your leader has given you instructions to do so.

* The National Student Association showed its solidarity with those arrested at Nashville by asking its membership for letters and wires of support. Hundreds of wires flooded the Nashville jail the day after the arrests began.

Don't block entrances to the stores and the aisles.
Show yourself courteous and friendly at all times.
Sit straight and always face the counter.
Report all serious incidents to your leader.
Refer all information to your leader in a polite manner.
Remember love and nonviolence.
May God bless each of you.²

Within two weeks after Greensboro, concerned students flocked to sit in at national stores like the F. W. Woolworth Company, the Walgreen Drug Company, and the S. H. Kress Company in fifteen cities in five southern states. Sometimes they just marched on the nearest chain store in the vicinity; at other times they created ad hoc committees or utilized campus chapters of such established national organizations as Campus NAACP, CORE, ADA (Americans for Democratic Action), and SANE.

In the North, hundreds of predominantly white middle-class students supported the southern sit-ins by picketing the same national chain stores, the National Student Association (NSA) making a singular contribution as the major coordinator of northern support.* Soon after the Greensboro sit-in, Curt Gans, national affairs vice-president left NSA headquarters in Philadelphia to investigate the protests in the South. Impressed, he returned to Philadelphia to spur a campaign to reinforce the southern effort from the North. NSA sent messages to its 500 member schools exhorting students to picket city halls to call attention to discrimination in southern states.** At the end of February 1960, ad hoc youth committees against segregation sprang up in New York City and Philadelphia. These committees and others like them were composed of students from surrounding universities willing to picket Woolworth, Walgreen, Kress, the W. T. Grant Company, H. L. Green, the S. S. Kresge Company, and Liggett Drugs—all nationwide

* The NSA was established in 1947 by World War II veterans determined to keep standards of student leadership on a par with foreign countries. Fortunately, the NSA started a Human Relations Seminar in the South designed to educate students about the problems and complexities of race relations a few weeks before the sit-ins began in Greensboro.

** By the middle of March, the NSA had developed a more efficient system—a newsletter documenting and explaining current events in the South that regularly reached approximately one thousand recipients (individuals, college living groups, etc.).

companies practicing segregation in outlets below the Mason-Dixon line.

As in the South, no consistent pattern of operation developed. Harvard University and Boston College, among other schools, formed independent committees. But as the campaign grew, both ad hoc and independent committees became self-sufficient enough to decline to align with organizations like CORE that sought to bring them into their orbit. At the beginning of March, student picket lines formed in front of Woolworth's and other, similar stores in Madison, Boston, Denver, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Chicago. Outside the South, the NSA concentrated on compelling national chain stores to abandon policies of segregation, and this was its most valuable contribution. If powerful commercial institutions could be coerced through militant pressure, smaller enterprises fearful of even greater financial loss would follow suit. Hence, the NSA followed the evolving southern practice of enlisting the aid of adult Negroes willing to boycott the stores under attack. By the end of March, the volume of sales for these national stores had diminished from 8.9 to 18 percent in southern states.

In April, lunch counters in Galveston, Texas, integrated without fanfare. In May, small groups of blacks were allowed to eat in previously white-only sections of lunch counters at Woolworth, Kresge, and Grant stores in Nashville,* St. Joseph and Jefferson City, Missouri, as well as San Antonio, Texas. By now, the outline of something larger could dimly be seen: a new generation of southern blacks had emerged from the passivity and resignation of the past. In the North, the first young white activists found fulfillment in identifying with, and struggling for, improvement in the lives of human beings less fortunate than themselves—even if the scene of battle was miles away.

What had happened from February to the middle of April proved, first, that the moral appeal of the sit-ins against segregation was national in scope, and second, that the sit-ins and their northern support were a distinct student phenomenon. Together, these two factors produced the cohesion and sustained militancy necessary for the transition from civil rights to the New Left movement, a transition made visible with the creation of SNCC in April and May 1960.

* Perhaps the best example of an effective economic boycott; 98 percent of the city's Negroes stopped buying at the stores in question, and they integrated.

The Founding of SNCC

The student civil rights movement changed with the coming of spring. Approximately sixty centers of sit-in activity had sprung up, with the difference that as time went on planning became routine, and in Nashville and Atlanta the protestors were becoming increasingly localized. The need for communication and overall coordination among the separate elements had become obvious. The Highlander Research and Education Center * in Knoxville, Tennessee, moved in this direction when between the first and third of April eighty sit-in leaders from all over the South attended its workshop to discuss concepts of non-violence and relations with the white community.

Miss Ella Baker, the executive secretary of SCLC, arranged the next meeting at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, from 15 to 17 April, understanding, as she did, the urgency in getting together activists who had never met in order to deepen their commitment, coordinate their efforts, ward off the possibility of a violent black reaction, and prevent a deceleration of the movement. Of the over 200 men and women who attended the conference, about 126 were student delegates from over forty southern communities: campuses, workshops, cities, and towns; adults and visitors from organizations like the NSA and the National Student Christian Federation, which energetically supported the sit-ins in the North, comprised the remainder. About a dozen white students from the North and the South attended the conference.

The sponsors described the conference as an ad hoc committee to further the goals of the sit-ins and related activity. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Reverend James Lawson, Jr. made the keynote addresses. King stressed the urgency for establishing a full-time organization to oversee the venture and emphasized the importance of selective buying and the acceptance of jail without bail as effective tactics for the future. Once the students had exchanged experiences and viewpoints, they realized that the struggle had gone beyond the sit-in stage. Ten workshops convened to explore every phase of the last three months, from the philosophy of non-violence to decorum in a jail cell.

The decision of these students to form a temporary coordinating

* The Highlander School, also known as the Highlander Folk School, has emphasized adult education to find solutions to social, racial, and labor problems since its opening in 1932.

committee that would meet once each month and operate independently of any other organization came as a surprise to every civil rights organization, but especially to King and SCLC, which would have preferred SNCC to merge with them. Not only had SCLC financed the conference, but King was the acknowledged spokesman for, and personification of, non-violent resistance—the approach the students adopted. Although the students respected King, there were substantial differences between them. The dividing line was in some respects a generational one, and King belonged to the preceding generation. Thus, since the students and not the traditional standard-bearers of civil rights had directed the most recent offensive for Negro rights, the students refused to subordinate their success, resolve, or strategic initiative to civil rights groups that in their opinion had failed to do as well.

Moreover, many of these students did not share with King and other veterans of the movement the vision of a “beloved community” or a harmonious integrated society and had not taken part in the demonstrations for the purpose of achieving integration with white people; they had other political and personal goals in mind. Politically, if the revolt against segregation succeeded in gaining small concessions, the adult Negro community might gain the confidence to demand more—the right to register to vote or the right to keep their children in school (in the past, sons and daughters of sharecroppers had to forego their education to pick cotton at harvest time). With regard to personal attitudes, the gulf between the two generations widened. To many students, the sit-ins represented a show of force to an autocratic white community. Despite their self-discipline and non-violent demeanor, the young blacks sitting in seats reserved for white customers conveyed the message, “Open the facilities or we will close them.”

Legal rights did not concern these students nearly as much as human rights. Unlike some of their parents, consorting with white people did not interest them. Equal rights meant having a choice. It meant possessing the same freedom of action and judgment as any other human being, regardless of color. In the context of the sit-ins, it meant the right of blacks to decide for themselves whether to sit at the same counter or go to the same school as a white person instead of having the choice made for them. Equal human rights had to come before equal opportunity. The conferees were deciding that they must have the right to choose between alternatives before they could take

advantage of the opportunity to do either. They knew that they would not be given the opportunity until they had *won* the right. Most of the students gathered at Raleigh were convinced that the existing civil rights organizations would not make the necessary sacrifices, jeopardize their security, or offend distinguished white allies—unavoidable steps, students felt, if racial equality was to be achieved.

As militant as they were, and considering the discomfort so often endured at the hands of the southern white community, how did the students remain non-violent? Some of them believed in Christian non-violence, but for others it was only natural to strike back when struck. One answer is that as a minuscule band of resistors in the stronghold of institutional segregation, rebelling black students would be hopelessly outnumbered and legally outmaneuvered, their revolt doomed from the outset, if they elected even to advocate armed self-defense, let alone practice it.

The civil rights movement relied on Dr. King for the articulation of its non-violent ideology, and since February 1960 the students had endeavored to put his ideas into practice. For King and his followers, non-violence transcended the tactical requirements of the civil rights movement. Many students disagreed: for them, it was nothing more than a means to an end, in this case equal rights.* An unwritten compromise was made at the Raleigh conference. The students accepted the principle of non-violence, but insisted on remaining independent and established a temporary committee until the next meeting in May.

A few weeks later, the temporary committee held a policy meeting at Atlanta University, where King, Lawson, and Ella Baker again appeared as featured speakers. Representatives from the southern states who attended described themselves as the Temporary Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. The committee had the authority only to communicate between, and coordinate action among, autonomous units in the field. Protest centers varied from campuses to cities, but each center, regardless of size, guarded its independence; the activists viewed few threats with more alarm than bureaucratic encroachment or elitism.

* In addition, the acceptance of a non-violent approach would keep SNCC in the good graces of the Negro church, a very important but conservative institution in the South.

In any case, SNCC's beginnings were modest. It occupied a corner of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference office in Atlanta, with Marion Barry, a student at Fisk University, as its first chairman and Jane Stenbridge, from the Union Theological Seminary in New York, as office secretary. SNCC remained small because no one belonged who did not share its objectives and work actively in its behalf. Chapters or their equivalent simply did not exist, and until the advent of Black Power anyone who wished could attend SNCC's summer conventions. In addition to interested students, SNCC representatives from the southern and border states and delegates from groups friendly to SNCC—like the National Student Association, National Student Christian Federation, and Students for a Democratic Society—were invited to the yearly conventions.

From the outset financial problems beset SNCC. When money was needed, leaders of local projects canvassed potential donors in the immediate vicinity. During the summer SNCC planned institutes on non-violence, pleaded for funds, published the first issue of its newsletter, *The Student Voice*, and attempted to coordinate student activities in the South. But students immersed in the day-to-day trials of directing or participating in sit-ins did not have time to keep SNCC abreast of developments. To compound the problem, the organization lacked men in the field to report back to Atlanta as events occurred. The best it could do was spread the word that it was operating and trust that its role would enlarge as time went on.

In July 1960 Marion Barry represented SNCC before the Platform Committee of the Democratic National Convention to lobby for federal legislation that would assure Negroes equal rights—school integration and voting rights without fear of reprisal being just two of the subjects covered. Barry also denied that there were Communists in SNCC, a charge first made by ex-President Harry Truman during the sit-ins and a suspicion that Phillip Abbott Luce, who became a relentless critic of the New Left, thought completely unfounded in SNCC's formative years.³

A conference at Morehouse College in Atlanta in early October, 1960 celebrated SNCC's inauguration as a permanent organization, ending its ad hoc status. An executive committee of twenty-one members, including two older advisers, would be elected at annual SNCC conferences and act as the policy-making body. Arguments at the conference about the advisability of tightening liaison with local centers and imposing a preplanned schedule of demonstrations

on the activists were decisively defeated as unworkable, undesirable, or both.

Before the conference, Robert Moses, a SNCC volunteer, met Ainzie Moore in Cleveland, Mississippi, where Moore was president of the local NAACP chapter. Thinking ahead, the two men made tentative plans for a campaign to register Negroes to vote on the Mississippi Delta. If feasible, such a campaign would carry the student movement to the Deep South, as yet untouched by the sit-ins, and begin to instruct rural Negroes of their political rights. Moses and Moore anticipated that volunteers from universities would be required to live in the communities with the Negroes they would encourage to register.*

Meanwhile, Woolworth officials, feeling the financial pinch caused by sit-ins and boycotts and apprehensive about the long-term effects of these tactics, contacted the NSA in October 1960, requesting that a meeting be arranged later in the month with NSA and SNCC delegates to discuss the situation. This was the first time since the sit-ins began that Woolworth officials had been willing to sit down and negotiate with college students. Timothy Jenkins, NSA vice-president, wrote his counterpart at SNCC headquarters asking that two of their best people be present in New York City on 12 October for a preliminary briefing. The principal meeting was held on the fourteenth with officers from Woolworth and other companies present along with representatives from SNCC and NSA. Speakers for the chain stores claimed that approximately 150 stores in 112 cities in ten southern and border states had been integrated. The NSA asked the companies for a progress report in 1961 to substantiate its promise to continue desegregating its stores as quickly as possible.

Student activists continued through the winter of 1960–61 to sit-in and be arrested, and in February 1961 SNCC formally adopted the jail-no-bail policy originally advocated by King in April 1960. Four members were sent to Rock Hill, South Carolina, where they were

* If it could be said that the reputation of any member of SNCC reached almost legendary proportions, it could be said of Robert Moses. Moses rose from Harlem to Harvard where in 1957 he received an M.A. degree in philosophy. He taught at Horace Mann High School in New York City until he migrated South in 1960 and performed menial tasks in SNCC's Atlanta office. From 1961 through 1964, Moses initiated, organized, and led SNCC's voter registration drive in Mississippi. He dedicated himself to the task of creating a politically and psychologically self-sufficient rural southern Negro and was noted for his reticence to take credit for his achievements.

subsequently arrested for civil rights activity and jailed with ten local students. All fourteen demonstrators elected to forfeit bail, a tactic intended to dramatize the Negro quest for equal rights to the rest of the nation and also to reduce the rising cost of legal expenses. SNCC altered its tactics in another way at Rock Hill. Previously, student demonstrators had been restricted generally to their own locale. Upon receiving word of the sit-ins at Rock Hill, SNCC—instead of sending the customary verbal expression of solidarity—dispatched four representatives from outside the area to reinforce the local activists. By the beginning of March, more than one hundred students in the South had chosen jail rather than bail. The sit-ins at Rock Hill marked the first anniversary of the Greensboro episode. During these twelve months, over three thousand people had served time in jail, the vast majority being young men and women arrested for acts of civil disobedience.

Freedom Rides and Changes in Strategy

The idea of Freedom Rides originated with CORE personnel early in 1961. James Farmer, CORE's new national director, organized and guided the first Freedom Rides to test the 1958 Supreme Court decision in the Boynton case which prohibited segregation in interstate transportation terminals. "Freedom Rides" designated busloads of black and white volunteers who traveled to depots in the Deep South to sit-in at restaurants and rest areas reserved for white travelers. In addition to extending the action southward, the Freedom Rides were calculated to revive the sit-in movement, enthusiasm for which had subsided, in part because of the expulsion of some participating students and the firing of a few sympathetic faculty the previous year.

CORE notified President John Kennedy on 28 April that the initial ride was scheduled to leave Washington, D.C., for New Orleans on 4 May and requested federal protection (which was not forthcoming). The seven blacks and six white riders included Farmer and John Lewis, a future SNCC chairman.* Passengers on the bus were beaten in Rock Hill, but the most aggressive assault occurred in and around Birmingham, South Carolina. The tires of the Greyhound bus carry-

* A divinity student and the only one of ten children in his Troy, Alabama, family to finish high school, Lewis joined the movement in Nashville in 1960.

ing the Freedom Riders had been slashed but not punctured in Anniston, a town close to Birmingham, by a mob that followed the bus out of town. Forced to halt because of the flat tires, the passengers nevertheless managed to escape before their pursuers ignited the bus. Another vehicle transported the riders into the Birmingham terminal where they were again attacked (the Reverend James Peck required over fifty stitches to bind a badly lacerated head wound). The Birmingham police made no arrests and gave the riders no protection, though alerted in advance by the Department of Justice of impending violence.

On 17 May a second group of volunteers from CORE, SNCC, and the Nashville "resistance center" continued the trip from Birmingham to New Orleans via Jackson, Mississippi. A large crowd awaited this second group at the Montgomery, Alabama, terminal, beating the occupants as they disembarked. James Zweig (white) and William Barbee (black) were seriously injured and hospitalized for some time. President Kennedy expressed his concern, and the group finally reached New Orleans under National Guard escort.

On 27 May, CORE, SNCC, SCLC, and the Nashville activists established a Freedom Riders' Coordinating Committee to arrange the details of subsequent rides. Most of the blacks who later applied for duty on these rides came from the South; the white college students, usually from the North. Bus incursions into the Deep South continued during the summer and early fall of 1961, with more than three hundred riders arrested in Jackson, Mississippi. Many of these were sent to Parchman State Penitentiary, and some regarded themselves as political prisoners in the Gandhian tradition.

All together, at least a dozen Freedom Rides took place involving more than a thousand persons. The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund * spent more than \$300,000 to defend students incarcerated for taking part in the rides, but the publicity did get results. In September the Interstate Commerce Commission introduced regulations preventing segregation on interstate buses and prohibiting those buses from using terminals that refused to desegregate. In October, three major railroads operating through the South desegregated their trains and terminals.

* This organization was separate from the NAACP, which had its own legal staff. The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund enjoys a tax-free status. At the time of the Freedom Rides it was headed by Jack Greenberg.

The Freedom Rides also affected CORE, SNCC, and other civil rights groups. CORE's reputation was enhanced, its budget tripled to \$750,000, and its membership increased (its revenues came from donations and especially from increased membership). For SNCC, the Freedom Rides symbolized a juncture presenting two choices for the future: direct action (sit-ins, economic boycotts, Freedom Rides) or community organizing (voter registration, etc.). Among the SNCC staff and the Freedom Riders released from jail in June and July, opinions were divided about which way to go. Marion Barry and Diane Nash led the faction favoring direct action tactics. Charles Jones, who had distinguished himself at the Rock Hill sit-ins, and Robert Moses supported community organizing. Both sides had convincing arguments.

Direct action brought the movement national press coverage, mobilized northern support, enabled large numbers of activists to participate, and placed maximum and protracted pressure on segregationists. Advocates of direct action could point to tangible victories, not the least of which was testified to by a letter dated 27 July, from Thomas J. Mullen, Woolworth's assistant secretary, and addressed to Richard Rettig, president of NSA, explaining that since their October 1960 meeting with NSA and SNCC representatives, Woolworth had desegregated its food counters throughout the country at the rate of one store per week. Opponents asked what more direct action could achieve. Would activists not be better advised to aid Negro voters in registering to vote, thereby acquiring the power to advance their own interests?

The reaction of violent segregationists to the Freedom Rides in the Deep South seemed to support the community organizing position. Moreover, voter registration and community organizing was the first step to political power for black people disenfranchised and barred from the Mississippi Democratic party, though they constituted a majority in several southern counties. Armed with the vote, the rural Negro in the Deep South could begin to build the self-confidence to manage his own affairs and control his own life, the very essence of participatory democracy.

For these aims to be accomplished, the mainstay of SNCC could no longer be weekend civil rights workers, students who maintained their university relationship while demonstrating for equal rights. A part-time commitment was insufficient; a full-time cadre was necessary, to consist of volunteers willing to leave school or their jobs and

live on a bare minimum with those whom they would assist in the Deep South.

Timothy Jenkins, black, and a vice-president of NSA, brought another factor to bear on the controversy within SNCC. At a June SNCC meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, Jenkins argued for voter registration. He did not speak for the NSA but for several philanthropic foundations, including the Taconic Foundation and the Field Foundation, both of New York, and he had the ear of the Kennedy administration as well. President Kennedy's interest in voter registration was not new. Administration officials had met previously with leaders of the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, SCLC, and other civil rights organizations, urging them to undertake a voter registration campaign. Many of the black activists, however, were suspicious of wealthy white liberals and the Kennedy administration. The fact that Attorney General Robert Kennedy sought a cooling-off period during the Freedom Rides aroused the suspicion that the welfare of southern Negroes was not the primary motive behind administration support for voter registration. Before talking with SNCC personnel, Jenkins had conversed at length with Burke Marshall, then assistant attorney general in charge of the civil rights division of the Justice Department, and with Harris Wofford, special assistant to President Kennedy on civil rights. Jenkins helped persuade SNCC skeptics that they should take advantage of the assistance offered by the national government * and the foundations.**

The tension generated by the division of opinion over direct action or voter registration erupted in a SNCC meeting at the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee in August 1961. Ella Baker, a SNCC advisor since the first meeting at Raleigh, mediated the differences; schism was avoided and a compromise agreed upon. Coincidentally, SNCC began to receive money raised by black entertainer Harry Belafonte, permitting key personnel to dedicate all their time to the tasks at hand.†

* Attorneys for the Justice Department were willing to plead for injunctions against state and local governments in civil rights matters pertaining to voter registration activity.

** In the fall of 1961, civil rights organizations (SNCC included) obtained \$250,000 from the Taconic Foundation of New York.

† In 1961, SNCC's budget was about \$14,000, the bulk of which came from the Northern Student Movement. The NSM was composed of a group of predominantly white college students at approximately thirty eastern campuses, or-

As the 1961–62 school year opened in September, direct action enthusiasts could review the past year and a half with satisfaction. The sit-ins had rallied more people to the standard of civil rights than at any other time in United States history. Over sixty thousand men and women, black and white, had engaged in more than seven hundred demonstrations in at least one hundred cities throughout the country. Arrests exceeded four thousand, and most of those jailed were black. The direct action element of SNCC did not rest upon past laurels, however, but expanded its scope to include parks, swimming pools, theaters, restaurants, libraries, churches, museums, art galleries, laundromats, beaches, courtrooms, and employment.

During the same period, Albany, Georgia, exemplified the effectiveness of combining direct action with community organizing. In Albany and the surrounding countryside, voter registration proceeded slowly with organizers working in tandem with team members employing direct action tactics to jolt the opposition and unite the Negro community. In November, trained by Cordell Reagan and Charles Sherrod of SNCC, students at Albany State College tested the ICC ruling barring segregation at the Albany terminals. The arrests that followed the sit-in prompted many members of adult Negro organizations to join SNCC and the NAACP Youth Council to form the Albany movement under the direction of Dr. William Anderson. The coalition pledged to assail all manifestations of segregation and discrimination in the city. In December, Tom Hayden of SDS and his wife Sandra rode with SNCC volunteers on a train from Atlanta to Albany, increasing the pressure on city officials to halt the separation of the races at Albany's transportation terminals. Martin Luther King, Jr. also arrived in December (SCLC had contributed funds to sponsor SNCC in Albany), and the struggle continued through Christmas and into the New Year with mass arrests and the expulsion of some participants from Albany State College.*

ganized to support SNCC and provide educational and leadership opportunities for black youth in northern ghettos.

* From the fall of 1961 to the summer of 1962 about five hundred Negroes registered to vote in Albany. The movement for equal rights in Albany persisted until 1964 before signs of integration could be seen.

SNCC, Voter Registration, and Community Organizing

Although SNCC toiled in parts of southern Georgia, Alabama, and Arkansas, no region was more important than Mississippi in influencing the nature of that organization. Robert Moses, SNCC's project director for voter registration in Mississippi, reconnoitered the area to alert the Negro communities and arrange for lodging and food for those field workers who would soon become part of these communities. In August 1961, Moses left for the town of McComb, in Pike County, with fifteen SNCC volunteers.* Earlier in the month, a SNCC voter registration school had been established in Pike County, whose purpose was to instruct adult Negroes in the intricacies of the Mississippi constitution (over 250 paragraphs) and to familiarize them with the prerogatives of the county registrar.

Those associated with SNCC believed that only by immersing themselves in the Mississippian's way of life could the community organizer gain his confidence. Only when this confidence was gained and the organizer became familiar with the district could he begin to function. The SNCC organizer or field worker would begin by talking to Negro sharecroppers and tenant farmers about the necessity for registering to vote and of the possibilities that lay beyond. The specific goal, it was explained, was to gain a measure of control over one's own life and the life of the community by wresting local political offices from incumbent segregationists and by obtaining higher wages, more job opportunities, and credit ratings comparable to those enjoyed by white residents of the same community. Meanwhile, the organizer would remain in the background, acting as a catalyst.

The odds were overwhelmingly against SNCC. To organize rural Negroes in the delta country of Mississippi, untouched by the sit-ins or prior civil rights efforts, was like trying to capture a division with a platoon. Unlike the sit-ins or Freedom Rides that SNCC had joined, voter registration in the least accessible regions of Mississippi was entirely controlled, directed, and manned by SNCC personnel. The demoralized and impoverished rural Mississippi Negro whom SNCC had come to "liberate" was understandably dubious and greeted the

* By 1964 the total number of SNCC field workers had grown to about two hundred. Field workers went about their tasks under the overall guidance of a project leader or field secretary who preceded the field workers into an area to accomplish the initial familiarization work.

SNCC field workers with quiet skepticism and distinct unease. It was hard for them to believe that these former students would stay with them for three or four years and not simply give a speech or two, arouse the community, and then leave. Months would go by before the Negroes in rural Mississippi realized that SNCC would stay and help absorb some of the white retaliation for their daring to register to vote.

Marion Barry joined the SNCC forces in Mississippi in August and opened workshops stressing non-violent resistance in McComb. Within a few days of her arrival, two eighteen-year-old graduates of the workshops conducted the first sit-ins at the all-white section of the Woolworth lunch counter in McComb. Simultaneously, Robert Moses and his men fanned out into the Mississippi countryside, and soon small groups of Negroes began to appear at the county seats for registration.

Though the sit-ins deeply offended southern sensibilities, the threat was still superficial, limited at present to store fronts and lunch counters. Voter registration was another matter, however. To the white Mississippi segregationist, this was a blow aimed at the vitals of white southern control, threatening the very foundations of the southern domain. If successful, such a campaign would give the southern Negro the means to restructure the life of the South.

It was therefore not surprising that when violent white segregationists made an example of two SNCC field workers, Travis Britt and John Hardy, by systematically pummeling them, registration ceased. On 25 September, E. H. Hurst, a Mississippi state representative, shot and killed Herbert Lee, a Negro farmer (Billy Jack Caston, Hurst's son-in-law, had beaten Robert Moses the month before). The coroner's jury and a federal grand jury acquitted Hurst on a plea of self-defense, but Louis Allen, a central defense witness, later told Moses and the Justice Department that he had lied about the shooting being in self-defense to save his own life. When Moses and other members of the SNCC contingent protested Lee's murder by marching through McComb, they were arrested and jailed. The probing actions of SNCC allies were similarly received. In October, segregationists thrashed Paul Potter and Tom Hayden of SDS, who had visited McComb on behalf of SNCC. In November, four members of CORE who had attempted to sit and eat at the McComb bus terminal were routed by some of the town's citizens. Upon their release from jail in

December 1961, Moses and his cohorts knew that their Mississippi campaign was floundering.

Just when the tide of misfortune appeared overwhelming, the new year brought SNCC encouraging news. Early in 1962, the major civil rights organizations agreed to concentrate much of their energy on registering Negroes to vote. Under the title Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), SNCC, CORE, NAACP, SCLC, and the National Urban League agreed to cooperate in a Southwide program.* Charles McDew, the SNCC chairman, simultaneously announced the expansion of SNCC's voter registration drive in the Deep South. SNCC shifted the emphasis of its community organization and registration efforts from McComb to Jackson, Mississippi, and also prepared for an intensive drive in seven other towns in the same state that summer. The Taconic and Field foundations contributed the funds for the summer project.

In another endeavor to raise money as well as to publicize SNCC's mission, the Freedom Singers were formed in January 1962. Composed entirely of SNCC staff members, the group traveled throughout the country singing "We Shall Overcome" and other songs that had originated on picket lines or in jail cells. The group barely earned enough to pay its room and board the first six months. After that, however, its members became increasingly popular, performing before large audiences around the country and earning about \$50,000, which they turned over to SNCC.

Despite the promising beginning, SNCC's problems mounted as 1962 wore on. The civil rights organizations working on voter registration rarely established effective liaison with one another, and when they did disagreement was not uncommon, as the SNCC-SCLC rivalry in Albany, Georgia, illustrated. King's relationship with SNCC was ambivalent. As early as April 1960, he had supported the sit-ins and by so doing had incurred the resentment of some established civil rights organizations. There were important differences between SNCC and SCLC, however. SNCC favored creating local movements and encouraging the development of indigenous leadership to ensure the

* COFO was originally formed in the spring of 1961 to facilitate meeting Governor Ross Barnett of Mississippi to secure the release of Freedom Riders. Robert Moses resurrected COFO in January 1962 to unify the forces facing Mississippi segregationists.

steady continuance of the struggle for equal rights. The tactics of King and SCLC were sometimes more dramatic.

In December 1961, for example, the arrests and expulsions of Alabama State College students involved in the Albany sit-ins had fully aroused the Negro community when King arrived and was arrested for participating in a desegregation march. King announced that he would spend Christmas in jail, and large numbers of the Albany Negro community rallied behind him and the desegregation movement as the confrontation attracted national and international attention. This seemed to SNCC the perfect time to demand of the city an omnibus desegregation agreement that would erase discrimination in employment practices as well as public facilities. But King, who was arrested on the sixteenth was released on bail on the eighteenth, forfeiting, in SNCC's opinion, a singular bargaining opportunity. From January to the summer of 1962, SNCC persevered in attempting to register new Negro voters, though its forces were depleted as members of the movement in Albany were arrested for civil rights activity. By July and the return of King and his assistant the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, SCLC had surpassed SNCC as the largest civil rights organization in Albany. King, constantly criticized by SNCC for his cautiousness, requested a reduction in the number and size of the demonstrations in Albany.

While the protracted contest for Negro rights in southwest Georgia continued, SNCC encountered stiff opposition in Mississippi. The summer program was under way but failed to yield any breakthrough in voter registration or community organizing. Numbering only a few more than when they started, SNCC field workers were harassed, detained, and often subjected to physical abuse. Bound by a self-imposed code of non-violence, SNCC volunteers existed at a subsistence level alongside the rural Negroes with whom they lived. Married SNCC workers were reported to receive between \$50 and \$60 per week; the wage for single men was about \$10 per week. But the resignation of the Mississippi Negro was harder for them to accept than either the poverty or the danger.

Decades of submission had shaped the attitudes and personalities of these Negroes, many of whom were tenant farmers. Usually without recourse to an impartial judge, jury, or sheriff, earning only a subsistence wage, unable to get commercial credit for themselves or a decent education for their children, yet reluctant to leave the South,

these rural Negroes had become dependent on their white landlords. Since they lacked funds to rely on if evicted, many were apprehensive about incurring the disfavor of their landlords or employers. Fear of retaliation by violent members of the white community also preyed upon them. SNCC found it even more difficult to cope with the belief of many Negroes in their own inferiority—a conviction fostered for generations by segregationists. These Negroes believed that political rights belonged to white people and that they failed to qualify because of their race.

Even when SNCC surmounted these obstacles—when adult Negroes attended the voter registration schools and trooped to the county courthouse by the tens and later by the hundreds—the efforts were often in vain. Sometimes the applicants were not permitted to fill out the forms. In other cases, the person registering would be asked to interpret one of the more than 250 sections of the Mississippi state constitution. If he passed this question, he had then to state the duties and obligations of citizenship under a constitutional form of government. The registrar had the sole discretion to decide whether the applicant answered correctly, and in most cases he decided that the applicant had not.

That SNCC personnel were angry and frustrated by their own powerlessness and appalled by the obvious injustice of the Negroes' plight led to two consequences: by summer's end the movement had ground almost to a halt, and SNCC gradually became more radical. A SNCC conference held in Nashville on 23–24 November 1962 reflected both the impasse and the radicalization.

The Nashville conference was well attended by militants from all over the South as well as by some from the North. A recurring theme was the question of to what extent black people should rely on self-help for their progress. The sustained and often violent opposition of the southern white community provided one obvious reason for thinking in terms of Negro self-reliance. In addition, many at the conference felt that the Kennedy administration had not asserted itself through the Justice Department with sufficient force to bolster the southern voter registration campaign. With the state and local government in the camp of the segregationists, who would help the disenfranchised Negro if the national government procrastinated?

The conference's workshops considered the advisability of all-black unions and cooperatives, the workshop on political action engender-

ing the most interest, chiefly because its discussion centered on the pros and cons of a third party in the South composed primarily of Negroes. If feasible, such a party would offer the disenfranchised a genuine second party alternative. Despite lively debate, however, the conference did not produce a workable program. In the closing address, Charles McDew compared the American Negro to colonialized people in other countries: "The struggle for Negro rights in the United States is not an isolated struggle: it takes place in the context of the advancing colonial revolution throughout the rest of the world." ⁴

At the same time as the Nashville conference, a misfortune that befell many Negroes in Leflore County, Mississippi, resulted in an unexpected SNCC triumph. In October 1962 approximately sixteen thousand Negroes, plantation hands and sharecroppers who normally relied on surplus food and clothing from the federal government to see them through the winter, received news that the county board of supervisors refused to distribute the supplies. Evidently the board was retaliating against these Negroes for accepting into their midst a few SNCC field workers led by Sam Black, a young Mississippian whose courage had aroused the interest of the Negro community. As winter progressed the situation worsened, and SNCC's Atlanta headquarters requested food and clothing from friends in the North. Students on northern campuses sent the requested items to SNCC in cars, trucks, and by mail.

Thus, a near disaster turned into a boon for SNCC. Thousands of Negroes credited SNCC for their relief. Hundreds of Leflore County residents met SNCC personnel for the first time when they volunteered to distribute the supplies; at this time, their preconceived notions of SNCC as a band of troublemakers changed, and some of them even attempted to register. Furthermore, the success revitalized SNCC spirits and introduced additional northern college students to the nature of the southern Negro predicament.

*1963: The March on Washington
and Mock Elections in Mississippi*

The gratification felt by SNCC field workers following the food and clothing drive was dispelled when Jimmy Travis, a SNCC volun-

teer, was shot and nearly killed while driving with Robert Moses in the town of Greenwood, Leflore County, on 25 February 1963. Shortly thereafter, the hierarchy of the Council of Federated Organizations met to plan the next stage in the voter registration campaign. In Mississippi, the operation of COFO and SNCC were practically alike. The staff there and in other southern states concluded that their undermanned forces, combined with the opposition of state and city governments and the aloofness of the federal government, made large-scale Negro registration virtually impossible in Alabama, Mississippi, and southwest Georgia.

So, in accord with the tentative plans made by Moses and Ainzie Moore in August 1960, the SNCC staff agreed that it needed northern college recruits to swell its ranks but that a dress rehearsal was necessary to test the practicality of the idea. SNCC would welcome northern students to come South and organize Negroes to register in "Freedom registration books" (since they could not register normally) in order to vote in a mock November election timed to coincide with the regular Mississippi gubernatorial election. SNCC anticipated no difficulty in attracting northern volunteers since the peace movement had begun to fade * and more students were turning their attention to civil rights.

Something had to be done. A few dozen field workers acted as the mainstay of SNCC; thinly spread, they spent an inordinate amount of time cajoling and pleading with uneducated southern blacks to march in small numbers to county courthouses. Even this trickle of potential Negro voters would dry up when local sheriffs arrested and jailed key field workers. Mississippi laws such as the poll tax compounded what sometimes seemed like insurmountable obstacles in SNCC's path. After a successful registration, the potential voter had to pay a poll tax for two consecutive years before he was permitted to cast a ballot in a state election.

In spite of the setbacks and in need of a breakthrough, SNCC planned two projects for the summer of 1963: in the North, it would join a march on Washington, D.C., scheduled for August, and in the South, SNCC field workers would introduce white college students

* The test ban treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States was signed in August 1963.

from above the Mason-Dixon line to their duties registering southern Negroes for the mock November elections.*

In Mississippi, a Yale law student gave SNCC strategy an added dimension when he stumbled across a forgotten Mississippi statute providing Mississippi residents illegally deprived of the right to vote permission to cast a ballot along with an affidavit stating that the voter is an elector in the state. SNCC arranged emergency meetings with pivotal local leaders to capitalize on this discovery and induce Negroes to use this method to vote in the state primary elections at the close of the summer. As the statute enabled Mississippi Negroes to avoid the registrar, thousands went to the polls for the first time. State officials concerned about adverse national publicity treated black voters civilly; participating Negroes gained confidence, and SNCC experienced a much needed sense of accomplishment. Unfortunately for SNCC and the movement, disappointments also marred the summer. On 12 June, unknown assailants shot and killed Medgar Evers, a hard-working and popular NAACP field worker, on the porch of his home in Jackson, Mississippi.

The march on Washington also disappointed SNCC. On 28 August, John Lewis, the new SNCC chairman, and nine other civil rights leaders addressed a crowd of 200,000 people gathered around the Washington Monument in an attempt to carry the battle for equal rights to the nation's political nerve center. Preparations for the march had begun six months earlier. In November 1962 A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the only Negro vice-president of the AFL-CIO, had proposed to major civil rights organizations a march on Washington to dramatize Negro political and economic demands. Randolph contended that Negroes had been better off in the 1950s than the 1960s with regard to enrollment in integrated schools, employment, and median income. The fact that President Kennedy's civil rights bill faced opposition in Congress influenced the civil rights leaders to stage the march and rally in Washington, D.C.

The group sponsoring the march comprised an array of prestigious

* In a separate but similar project, a group of forty Cornell University students worked in Tennessee helping Negroes to register so that they could vote in the Democratic primary elections at the end of the summer. The Cornell students raised \$10,000 for the election and lived in the homes of resident Negro families during their stay.

religious, social, and labor organizations: the National Catholic Conference for International Justice, the National Council of Churches, CORE, SNCC, NAACP, SCLC, the National Urban League, the American Jewish Congress, the United Presbyterian Church, the Negro American Labor Council, and the United Automobile Workers. Negro leaders who convened in New York City on 2 July for a leadership conference warned against acts of civil disobedience at the march and confirmed that the highest officials of the sponsoring organizations would be the major speakers. The goals of the march, enumerated below, substantially exceeded the contents of the civil rights legislation under consideration in Congress:

A comprehensive civil rights bill from the present Congress, including provisions guaranteeing access to public accommodations, adequate and integrated education, protection of the right to vote, better housing, and authority for the Attorney General to seek injunctive relief when individuals' constitutional rights are violated.

Withholding of Federal funds from all programs in which discrimination exists.

Desegregation of all public schools in 1963.

A reduction in Congressional seats in states where citizens are disenfranchised.

A stronger Executive order prohibiting discrimination in all housing programs supported by Federal funds.

A massive Federal program to train and place unemployed workers.

An increase in the minimum wage to \$2 an hour. The Federal minimum, covering workers in interstate industry, is now \$1.15 an hour and will rise to \$1.25 next Tuesday.

Extension of the Fair Labor Standards Act to include exempted fields of employment.

A Federal Fair Employment Practices Act barring discrimination in all employment.⁵

The various leaders who sponsored the march and appeared on the rostrum to address the huge crowd in the sweltering heat on 28 August concurred on the goals but differed emphatically with SNCC on how to accomplish them. Compared to other civil rights organizations, SNCC was willing to adopt radical methods to advance the rights of the American Negro. But dignitaries sharing the platform

with John Lewis * reacted negatively to the prepared speech epitomizing SNCC's attitude that he released the evening before the demonstration, as it apparently violated a tacit agreement among the speakers to avoid embarrassing the president and to omit ultimatums or revolutionary rhetoric. Archbishop Patrick J. O'Boyle of Washington, D.C., Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the other speakers persuaded him to rewrite parts of his manuscript. Although they defended the march goals and criticized the reluctance of Congress to pass the civil rights bill, these liberal leaders believed it unnecessary and perhaps self-defeating to rail against a Democratic administration that was supporting pending civil rights legislation in Congress.

In the original version of his speech, Lewis contended that although SNCC supported the administration civil rights bill, the bill would not protect women and children in the South from police dogs and police repression. Lewis threatened not to wait for the executive, the judiciary, or the legislature to grant relief to the southern Negro. Instead, speaking for SNCC and the disenfranchised, he asserted they would create an independent source of power to operate outside any existing political structure to assure victory. Rather than march to Washington the next time, Lewis threatened to march through the South the way General Sherman had during the Civil War to achieve equal rights. In the rewritten version of the speech, Lewis warned against a "cooling-off" period and charged that President Kennedy was trying to transfer the revolution from the streets into the courts of law. Immediately after the march, SNCC criticized the other civil rights leaders for compelling Lewis to change his speech and regarded the incident as an indication of the pitfalls accompanying cooperation with liberals.**

Two weeks after the march, on 15 September four black children attending Sunday school were killed when the Negro church in Birmingham, Alabama, was bombed. Shortly thereafter, Diane Nash

* Lewis, who replaced Charles McDew as the third chairman of SNCC in the spring of 1963, was arrested twenty-four times in direct action engagements.

** Senator Hubert Humphrey accurately predicted that the march would accomplish little in the way of changing legislators' minds about the civil rights bill. Congress defeated the administration's bill in 1963. During the same year President Kennedy proposed civil rights legislation in two special messages to Congress, but the year ended with the administration's bill pigeonholed in the House Rules Committee.

submitted a plan to SNCC for demonstrations in southern state capitols. She envisioned a non-violent army of 25,000 to rivet national attention on the movement by closing highways, airports, and railways. Her fellow workers in SNCC voted against her plan, however, and decided to concentrate instead on the November gubernatorial election in Mississippi.

Active Negro participation in the summer primary elections proved to SNCC the feasibility of a "Freedom vote" in November 1963. Ostracized by the Mississippi Democratic party from registering and voting, Negroes would hold their own election in November paralleling the regular state election. On 6 October 1963 the members of COFO met and nominated Aaron Henry and the Reverend Edward A. King as Freedom candidates for governor and lieutenant governor. COFO printed imitation registration forms to register the voters and imitation ballots with the names of the Freedom candidates together with the regular Democratic and Republican party candidates. The registration books and ballots became known as "Freedom registration books" and "Freedom ballots". If voteless Negroes turned out in large numbers for the election, it would refute the constant assertion that Negroes did not vote because of apathy and not because the white segregationist community denied them the right. Moreover, going to the polls would give these Negroes a valuable political education and contribute to their self-confidence.

SNCC hoped that the presence of white students at the November election in Mississippi would arrest the attention of the communications media on the southern Negro. SNCC also wanted the election to test the adaptability of northern white college students to an entirely different world. The majority of volunteers, some thirty or forty students, had traveled from Stanford and Yale universities to help circulate Freedom registration forms and collect and tabulate the ballots, and it was quite a revelation for the young northerners who contended that they encountered fear everywhere they went.⁶ Students themselves suffered light casualties: one shot at, another beaten, two jailed. The frightened citizens they met impressed them most. The students discovered that an all-white board of education had influenced some Negro administrators of black Mississippi colleges to forbid their students to campaign for Aaron Henry on threat of expulsion. To their surprise, northern students found some Negro merchants unwilling to permit balloting on their property lest they be subjected to economic

reprisals. The inhabitants reminded the students that they did not live in Mississippi and could return to the safety of the North at any time. In spite of the climate of fear, 83,000 Negroes voted in November for Henry and Reverend King.

Later in the month, SNCC workers operating in Mississippi met in Greenville to map the next stage in their campaign. Representatives from CORE and SCLC attended but SNCC mustered forty of the forty-five people present (six or seven of whom were white). Most participants wanted to bring a thousand or more students from around the country to Mississippi in the summer of 1964 to work in community centers, Freedom Schools, and at voter registration programs. Since these students would come from the North, East, and West, SNCC's reaction to the newcomers who had helped during the November election was of crucial importance. Generally, the organizers criticized the tendency of the northerners to seek positions of authority, enjoy the publicity, and then depart as suddenly as they had arrived. A handful of field workers argued limiting the role of white students in the future because their behavior reinforced uneducated Negroes' belief in their own inferiority and hindered their leadership training. After considerable soul-searching and in response to Robert Moses' observation that they, above all, should be above the race issue, the conference decided to support the original idea of bringing a thousand or more white students from the North next summer.

Though the race question apparently complicated SNCC's problems, in December 1963 the organization had cause for optimism. At the end of 1963, SNCC's ranks grew to 120 or 130 field workers spread throughout the South, with roughly fifteen men and women engaged in administrative tasks in and out of SNCC's Atlanta headquarters. Financially, its position had improved immensely. Soliciting money from individuals, foundations, colleges, churches, selected communities, and entertainers, SNCC had obtained from \$250,000 to \$700,000 for 1963-64.* The salaries of field workers and staff con-

* The controversy concerning SNCC's finances is reflected in the disparity in reports on its 1963-64 budget. E. Joseph Shoben, Jr., Philip Werdell, and Durward Long suggest \$250,000 as the top SNCC budget (see "Racial Student Organizations," in *Protest: Student Activism in America*, ed. Julian Foster and Durward Long [New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970], pp. 220-21). Gene Roberts gives a conflicting figure of \$700,000 (see "The Story of Snick," in *Black Protest in the Sixties*, ed. August Meier and Elliot Rudwick [Chicago: Quadrangle Books-New York Times, 1970], p. 148. "A statement of SNCC's

sumed an estimated quarter of this sum; another quarter went for publication expenses, communication costs, and supplies; the remainder was allocated for voter registration and community organizing programs in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

From 1963 on, SNCC's reputation and symbolic status eluded quantitative analysis. No longer regarded as simply a civil rights organization, over the past three-and-a-half years it had evolved into the organizational forerunner of the American New Left. At the SNCC Leadership Training Conference in Washington, D.C., from 29 November to 1 December 1963, Robert Moses outlined SNCC's overriding goal by stating that SNCC intended radically to overhaul the southern system. The two-party system in the South did not work, he contended; the political process did not even exist for voteless Negroes who were denied permission to discharge their rights as American citizens.

On this basis, SNCC's actions might be interpreted as moral, but SNCC regarded itself as a political organization grappling for tangible power in the form of office, authority, and patronage.* Apart from the economic and political benefits accruing from officeholding that would improve the lives of southern Negroes, SNCC wanted to remake the social order by fostering new leadership and new democratic institutions along more egalitarian and proletarian lines. It had become progressively impatient with what it regarded as middle-class complacency and values centered in material rather than human considerations.

The system which SNCC followed within its own organization best represents its view of participatory democracy: if it is to be real, it must begin at the bottom—with the lowliest SNCC field worker, with the lowliest black Mississippi tenant farmer. This concept allowed all members of the group, whether of SNCC or a Mississippi township, to participate fully in discussions and decisions concerning themselves.

receipts and expenditures for the period January 1 to September 30, 1964 lists total receipts of \$527,784.45 as opposed to \$419,339.80 in expenditures. Salaries totaling \$126,835.37 was by far the largest outlay of funds in this period. Of the income received, \$150,000 came from 'personal contributions,' \$138,000 from 'schools and related organizations' and \$206,000 from 'other organizations.' " (*SNCC Financial Statement* in four parts: "Cash Position, Unadjusted Assets, Total Receipts, and Expenses," 30 September 1964).

* This ambition took more concrete form with the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party in 1964.

All views would be expressed, and every coworker or fellow citizen would feel comfortable with the outcome.

In the final analysis, however, SNCC wanted to create a new Negro man—or, at least, men and women in backwater southern communities who could help themselves. This is why it insisted that the development of local leadership be the first priority in every project. Without a definitive sense of self and the ability to transmit this quality to others, the larger social cohesiveness required for Negro advancement in the South would not gel.

At the Washington, D.C. conference in late 1963, John Lewis warned that unless SNCC adopted a program radical enough to inspire the most oppressed, the non-violent discipline so steadfastly observed in the South might disintegrate. Lewis recommended the creation of independent pockets, or centers, of power to enable the masses to achieve their political and economic objectives. From these power centers, “alternative structures” or “parallel institutions” would be built to run alongside the rival existing social and political organizations. The 1963 summer balloting and the November “Freedom vote” in Mississippi initially tested the feasibility of such alternative structures. By voter registration and community organizing, SNCC sought to awaken the rural southern Negro to the possibility of improving his life by organizing a parallel institution outside the regular Democratic party, if efforts to join the regular political process continued to be thwarted by Mississippi Democrats.

Thus, SNCC can be defined as radical in terms of the degree of political change it sought and the methods it sanctioned to achieve a new social order—independent centers of power and parallel institutions. It did not exhort southern Negroes to overthrow the United States government or the government of Mississippi. Rather, it urged southern Negroes to develop the determination and organizational potential to defeat the segregationist opposition at its own game of power politics. To accomplish these goals, SNCC maneuvered on two fronts.

Although skeptical of liberal forces in the United States, SNCC, by appealing to the mass media to focus its cameras on the plight of the Mississippi Negro, pressured white liberal and congressional leaders for aid in establishing conditions conducive to an interracial democracy. But SNCC hedged its bet by simultaneously operating at another level for an interracial movement of the poor to achieve a new

social and political order in the South and perhaps in the rest of the country as well. If the national government failed to ameliorate the condition of rural southern Negroes, SNCC visualized an independent black political force to contend with the existing political institutions. Eventually, a politically cohesive bloc of southern black communities would unite with corresponding centers of power organized in the North by the Students for a Democratic Society. Together, they would form an interracial movement of the poor.

Older Negroes like Bayard Rustin, for years an eloquent leader of the civil rights movement and deputy director of the march on Washington, disagreed with SNCC's antagonism toward liberal forces, believing that SNCC needed powerful allies to obtain equal rights and to end poverty for black people. Rustin urged SNCC to cultivate ties with trade unionists, liberal organizations, and religious groups—potential allies woven into the fabric of the American system—rather than with unproven movements like Students for a Democratic Society. Likewise, Jack Conway, executive director of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO who attended the SNCC Leadership Training Conference as a featured speaker, reminded his audience that it should follow the example of labor leaders who had kept their organizations within the present social framework. Warning his listeners that they depended upon the generosity of others, he encouraged them to support Lyndon Johnson and the Democrats in the coming election.* The conference adjourned with SNCC looking forward to the summer of 1964 in Mississippi as the opportunity it had been awaiting to achieve a major breakthrough in the South.

Mississippi Summer of 1964

The summer of 1964 marked the maximum community organizing effort of the New Left. SNCC's ambitious venture in Mississippi accompanied a similar, though smaller, summer project sponsored by

* In SNCC'S view, the Kennedy administration had failed to act decisively, either through Congress or the Justice Department, on behalf of civil rights or to protect those who defied the southern establishment to further civil rights. News of Kennedy's assassination was therefore regarded as a personal tragedy rather than as a political disaster by SNCC (see Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1965], pp. 195–215, for an account of the federal government's procrastination on the civil rights issue).

Students for a Democratic Society in urban ghettos in the North. This coexistence of projects bespoke a mutual desire to launch a national interracial movement of the poor to press for extensive domestic social change.*

The primary purpose of the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project was to break the opposition of white segregationists in the South. If in the process visiting northern college students could be politicalized and perhaps converted to the New Left movement, so much the better. In Mississippi, SNCC envisioned a mammoth project enlisting the aid of thousands of collegians from the North to register potential Negro voters, teach in Freedom Schools and adult community centers, and help create a Mississippi Freedom Democratic party, all parallel structures offering the Mississippi Negro opportunities for advancement not otherwise available.

Although COFO was ostensibly in charge of the Mississippi Summer Project, SNCC was the prime mover. SNCC contributed 95 percent of the staff for the Jackson, Mississippi, headquarters and 90 to 95 percent of the money. CORE had staff responsibility for one congressional district; SNCC, for the remaining four. Dr. Aaron Henry, a Clarksdale, Mississippi, druggist and president of the state NAACP, was president of COFO. Robert Moses became COFO's program director; Dave Dennis, CORE field secretary, was elected assistant program director.

There are many reasons why SNCC made the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project its maximum endeavor. At the beginning of 1964, SNCC had some 150 field workers operating in the South. The slow increase of full-time SNCC field workers—from 16 to 150 or so since the summer of 1961—suggested that no large number of volunteers was likely to swell SNCC's ranks; it was dangerous work with no fanfare or publicity. In Mississippi, the area of most intense concentration, after two-and-a-half years of travail, only 6 percent, or about 25,000 out of 400,000, eligible Negro adults were registered. The rate of registration made futile the continuance of small projects in select communities; another summer project on the scale of the past three was equally futile. The 100 to 150 additional organizers of the previous summer had concentrated on voter registration, with com-

* The *Port Huron Statement* and *America and the New Era*, SDS position papers published in 1962–63, outlined the program for extensive social change.

munity education programs left in the planning stage due to the shortage of personnel.

SNCC required a project of much larger dimensions. With far greater manpower at its disposal, arrests would not deplete its forces as in the past but would work to the organization's advantage by increasing publicity. Sufficiently reinforced, SNCC hoped to force the state and local governments in Mississippi either to alter their social and legal structure in favor of Negro citizens or to compel the federal government to intervene to protect white collegians from the North.

Many people in SNCC felt that Negroes would be denied the vote until the national government sent federal marshals and soldiers to enforce Negro rights. On 6 December 1963, John Lewis articulated SNCC's summer expectations at a "Freedom Rally" in San Francisco where he was the principal speaker. According to Lewis, SNCC anticipated a crisis so serious that the federal government would take control of the state. SNCC planned to saturate Mississippi with northern volunteers to accompany hundreds of thousands of Negroes to register. State and local police would arrest scores of men and women, causing such notoriety and racial tension that Lyndon Johnson's federal administration would have to act.

Admitting the likelihood of violence, Lewis was nevertheless confident that something positive would come out of the summer (such as a federal court order allowing Negroes to vote in the 1964 election). SNCC perceived that the nation would react with more alacrity to violence against white students than it had to black victims of segregationists. The gamble was well thought out in advance. Northern volunteers would be fully apprised of the dangers they faced before coming South, but SNCC would not ask them to undertake risks that it had not itself taken time and time again. Martin Luther King, Jr. understood the political advantage of jailing thousands of sympathetic white students but also thought that their presence in the Mississippi undertaking might impede future alliances for the betterment of Negro people being made along strictly racial lines.

Within SNCC, an air of urgency transcended mental and physical fatigue. Mike Miller, a respected white field worker, contended that SNCC's timetable depended on both economic and political factors: "The economic timetable was the conscious plan of the White Citizens' Council to mechanize out of the Mississippi Delta the tens of thou-

sands of Negroes who could elect county, state and national politicians if they were able to gain the vote.”⁷

The resolve to enter electoral politics and invade the August 1964 Democratic National Convention spurred SNCC forward politically. Prompted by Robert Moses, Mississippi project director, Jack Minnis, a member of the SNCC research department and a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Tulane University, convened a meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, on 1 February 1964, where conference participants agreed to challenge the credentials of the regular Mississippi Democratic party with a parallel party at the national convention.

While the new organization was still in the drawing-board stage, George Ballis, the editor of a labor newspaper in Fresno, California, bestowed on it the name Mississippi Freedom Democratic party (MFDP). On 26 April in Jackson, Mississippi, two hundred state delegates officially established the MFDP, pledging to comply in every way with the rules and regulations of the Mississippi state constitution. The founding convention chose Lawrence Guyot, a native Mississippian and SNCC field secretary, as chairman and elected a Temporary State Executive Committee composed of twelve representatives from the state's five congressional districts. This committee would supervise the precinct, county, district, and state meetings to determine the MFDP delegates to the August Democratic convention. The MFDP based its claim against the regular Mississippi Democrats on: (1) the historical exclusion of Negroes from the political process, (2) the disloyalty of the state Democratic party in refusing to support the Democratic presidential ticket and platform in 1960 and presumably in 1964,* and (3) the Party's disinclination to mend its ways in the future.

SNCC, the prime mover behind the organization of MFDP, was ambivalent about the concept of a parallel party. On the one hand, it knew the long odds against ejecting the regular Mississippi delegates to the convention in favor of the newly formed MFDP. On the other hand, it trusted that the nationwide commotion caused by its Summer Project would culminate at the Democratic convention—intensifying media attention on Mississippi inequities, embarrassing the Democrats into remedial action, and eventually converting nationwide sympathy into solid political support for southern Negroes.

* The Mississippi Democratic party supported Senator Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election as anticipated.

SNCC saw itself, in short, as a political catalyst for drastic social change. Its workers wanted power, and as time passed they deluded themselves into thinking that what could not be achieved in the byways of the Mississippi Delta could be attained in one blow at the summit of Democratic party politics. To SNCC and many black Mississippians, the MFDP represented the parallel structure best suited to wrest political control from the regular Mississippi Democratic party, to which all forty-nine senators and all but one of the 122 state representatives owed allegiance. In the event that the convention seated the MFDP's delegates, the first and most important step would have been taken to give SNCC and the MFDP partial access to state control and federal funds—the keys to better schools, housing, jobs, and welfare for the state's Negroes. Stokely Carmichael, SNCC field worker and project director for the second Mississippi congressional district, expressed that ambition.

We've always seen ourselves [SNCC] as a political force. . . . That parallel structure [MFDP] was grasping for power. Had they gotten the power they would have received all the political patronage inside the state of Mississippi. They would have been the governing force.⁸

In the spring of 1964, however, SNCC had much to do before setting forth to Atlantic City, New Jersey, for the Democratic convention. With insufficient funds to subsidize the convention challenge, a staff had yet to be stationed in Washington, D.C., and state delegations contacted and influenced to ally with the MFDP. Robert Moses and SDS representatives met with Walter Reuther, head of the United Auto Workers (UAW), to elicit funds, but to no avail. SNCC claimed that Bayard Rustin had agreed to help gather supporters to stand by the MFDP at the convention (tens of thousands were needed outside the convention hall), but first he wanted to contact the other civil rights groups and the UAW to assure their political and financial aid. By the end of April there was no sign of a wellspring of financial or organizational backing for the MFDP. Then Ella Baker from CORE and a small staff managed to open an office in Washington, D.C., on borrowed money and started visiting Democratic conventions in important states.

At the same time, the judiciary made a significant contribution to

the Summer Project. The 1960 Civil Rights Act empowered the Department of Justice to file complaints against individual registrars or entire states when lawyers discovered "a pattern or practice" of voter discrimination. Justice Department lawyers had discovered violations in more than sixty of Mississippi's eighty-two counties and had initiated an action against Mississippi, challenging the validity of the constitutional-interpretation section of the application form for voter registration. Then, in a separate suit, a federal circuit court ordered the registrar of Panola County to dispense with the constitutional-interpretation test and the duties-of-a-citizen test when assessing a potential voter's qualifications. These were promising cracks in the wall of segregation, but many in SNCC believed that before the cracks would widen enough to permit Mississippi Negroes the rights of full citizenship, federal officials would have to be present to oversee and guarantee the execution of the court's orders.

Meanwhile, the MFDP continued to present candidates and prepare for the Democratic National Convention. In May, four MFDP candidates qualified for the Democratic party primary election to select congressional candidates to run in the regular November election. These candidates stressed the importance of antipoverty programs, rural development, medicare, aid to education, and the guarantee of constitutional rights for black and white citizens. The Freedom party's candidates lost in the 2 June primary elections by wide margins, but they intended to run again in a mock congressional election in November, repeating the 1963 "Freedom vote" in the Mississippi gubernatorial elections.

On 16 and 23 June, registered Mississippi Negroes tried to attend precinct meetings of the Mississippi Democratic party convened throughout the state, the first in a succession of meetings that eventually produced Mississippi's delegates to the 24 August Democratic National Convention. The Negroes who tried to join other Democrats in selecting delegates on the sixteenth did so for at least three reasons: (1) they wished to be included as citizens and to exercise their responsibilities as registered Democrats; (2) they wanted to do their part to elect delegates loyal to the presidential candidate chosen in August; and (3) if excluded from participation (as most were), they wanted to be certain that enough of them had made the attempt to join precinct activities so that they could document their experiences

by sworn affidavits to be used by the MFDP as evidence against the regular Democratic delegates in the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Convention.⁹

In July the MFDP held its own precinct meetings, the first stage on the way to the state convention where the MFDP delegates to the national convention would be chosen. In contrast to the practice of the Mississippi Democratic party, these meetings were open to anyone who wished to attend. Unregistered Negroes had only to sign a "Freedom registration form" to be eligible for participation. To so register, the applicant had to be over twenty-one and answer nine questions to certify occupation and Mississippi residency. The Freedom registration campaign—an extension of the campaign waged to register black Mississippians to vote in the simulated 1963 gubernatorial election—was designed to prove that Mississippi's 400,000 Negroes would vote if given the chance (this campaign should be distinguished from the campaign to register disenfranchised Negroes at county courthouses to vote in official, as opposed to mock, elections).

While the MFDP prepared for the national convention, SNCC made a last-minute appeal to northern students coming South for the summer to help in the registration campaigns and to establish Freedom Schools and community centers. SNCC and its allies had made every effort to notify northern students about the Summer Project and to interest them in it. In February and again in April 1964, Robert Moses, Dr. King, and others visited various universities to impress upon students the importance of the project.

Meanwhile, SNCC staff members methodically separated desirable from undesirable northern applicants. The number finally chosen might have tripled or quadrupled if the selection had been less discriminating, but large numbers and poor quality were in SNCC's opinion counterproductive. Although more students were accepted from Stanford than from any other institution, 150 students applied and only 40 were accepted. Project representatives visiting northern universities to recruit students frankly disabused their youthful listeners of any romantic notions they might entertain about the coming Mississippi Summer, emphasizing instead the poverty, the danger, and the commitment to non-violence. Bruce Gordon, field secretary for SNCC, told interested students at Stanford what his associates told similar students at other campuses:

Don't come South with all your theories, your foggy notions or your fuzzy political labels—liberal, conservative, Democrat, Republican. Stay home, we don't need you . . . if you're a bee-bop baby, a real hip chick; if you think you're going to hop in your Volkswagen with a guitar and take a vacation South to help the Negro, don't come. You'll cause more trouble than you're worth. . . . I want you to become totally committed to non-violence. What about self-defense? There is no place for it. It just fans the fires of hatred. We become no better than the people we're trying to change.¹⁰

Northern students learned that the rural southern Negro required mature, levelheaded young adults as allies, not self-centered adolescents. Warnings about the possibility of physical violence were relentlessly reiterated. Leaders of the major civil rights organizations tried without success to see President Johnson for several weeks prior to the opening day of the project. Finally, Robert Moses included a plea in a letter to parents of participating college students a week before Mississippi Summer began, warning them of impending danger and urging them to exert pressure on President Johnson and Attorney General Kennedy to compel them to make a commitment to protect the collegians before violence occurred. Specifically, Moses supplicated the parents to ask that federal marshals be "stationed throughout the state . . . present in all cases where violence is likely."¹¹

The project began in the second half of June. Instead of the several thousand volunteers that SNCC had hoped for, however, an aggregate of about 900—over 500 of them students—presented themselves for duty. The rigorous preselection and personal expense involved had eliminated many students. Each student paid for his own travel, brought about \$150 for personal expenses, and arranged in advance for \$500 bond money. The ominous atmosphere of Mississippi and the hardships and sacrifices entailed deterred many others who agreed with the project in principle. The first group of 175 arrived on 15 June in Oxford, Ohio, for a week of intensive training and were slated to work on voter registration; on 20 June they left for Mississippi. The second contingent of 275, chosen to establish Freedom Schools, completed its basic training on 27 June. A third group of from 70 to 100 volunteers included 30 New York schoolteachers; 150 lawyers, 100 law students, 100 clergymen, and about 100 field workers from

SNCC and CORE rounded out the task force that manned the project.*

A week of intense training before entering Mississippi provided the students a transition from normalcy to hostility. A host of psychiatrists and psychologists, a few lawyers, and the training cadre of eighty Mississippi veterans referred to as "jungle fighters" greeted the first contingent of incoming students, chiefly from distinguished eastern universities and predominantly white. Whites outnumbered black students by a margin of five to one in the first class and held an 85 percent plurality in the second class held in Oxford, Ohio. Though SNCC would have preferred more black students, the scarcity of funds made this impossible.

Motivations varied: some newcomers were idealistic and conscience-stricken, feeling that no one in their parents' generation had made similar sacrifices to right the wrongs inflicted on the Negro. Others were motivated by a compulsion to befriend the Negro and to forge intimate relationships. Some students, bent on reforming the American civilization, were certain that the Negro would be at the forefront of a new age. Still others were content simply to participate in helping the southern Negro get a chance to live his life in his own way. Not all of the students could be so categorized, and a few reflected mixed emotions.

The training week's schedule divided each day into section meetings, general assemblies, and informal discussion groups. The section meetings familiarized the student with problems and data peculiar to the region of his assignment. Time being short the cadre taught the students the essentials of what they had to know to survive and accomplish their objectives. Among other things, the students learned how to word a press release, the importance of never traveling alone, and the basic essentials about Mississippi.

Students were told that Negroes constituted roughly 42 percent of the Mississippi population and that over two-thirds of them lived in

* See Douglas Dowd and Mary Nichols, eds., *Step by Step* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), for a descriptive account of a Cornell University summer project in Fayette County, Tennessee, in 1964. If hundreds more had come to the South in 1964, the volunteers could have spread throughout Georgia and Alabama, working for the unionization of Negro laborers in the field and factory, agitating for the desegregation of public accommodations, and planning work cooperatives.

rural areas. On an average, Negroes twenty-five years of age and older had completed only six years of school, five years less than white residents. There was no compulsory education in Mississippi, and many Negro schoolchildren in farming belts had to leave school to pick cotton at harvest time. More Negro women, especially urban married women, held jobs than their white female counterparts. Also in urban centers, proportionately fewer Negro men worked than white males. In 1960 the average annual income for Mississippi Negroes was \$606, as compared to \$2,023 for white citizens. "Of the homes in rural areas, over 75% were without any piped water at all, and over 90% of these rural homes had no flush toilets, no bathtub and no shower."¹²

During the general assemblies, the staff tested and tempered the students with rehearsals for their encounter with Mississippi reality. The staff would simulate pummeling the students, playing the part of violently irate segregationists, while the students assumed positions calculated to protect vital parts of the body from serious injury. Experienced cadre warned their charges against overreacting to the embarrassment they might feel when Negro adults fifty years of age or older addressed them as "sir" or acted subserviently in other ways. The black cadre, familiar with racial tension and the personal qualities and attitudes required for successful relations with the rural Mississippi Negro, put niceties aside and probed the visiting white students in order to educate themselves, vent their own feelings, and test the northerners by provoking candid discussions of touchy topics. In addressing the audience, Robert Moses compared racial animosity to a plague permeating American society and encouraged the students to discuss the subject openly in detail. The discussions, organized in groups of about twenty, were modeled after similar sessions initiated within SNCC to expose the underlying reasons for racial friction between certain black and white SNCC workers.*

Since it is difficult for human beings to be completely honest under the best of circumstances, it is not surprising that some students were reluctant to express their innermost thoughts about relations between the races. Some staff members, less reticent than the students, admitted that they resented the visitors, partly for being deprived of the

* Some Negro field workers living in danger in Mississippi resented receiving directives from white staffers stationed safely in Atlanta. This was one reason why SNCC moved its headquarters to Greenwood, Mississippi, later in 1964.

same educational opportunities, but principally because the alien white student threatened the fragile relationship between the SNCC worker and the Mississippi farmer, a relationship that was intended to bolster the Negro's self-confidence and self-respect. On a more personal level, the presence of white students jeopardized the "standing" of SNCC workers in the rural Negro community, not just because the white student was a curiosity, but because the older, uneducated southern Negro reacted with conditioned deference to white people. For their part, some of the white students admitted feelings of guilt and a tendency to communicate with Negroes out of a sense of social duty.

Guest speakers and staff members cautioned the students about sexual exploitation initiated by either male or female, black or white individuals. Sexual consent used as a yardstick to measure the "commitment" of another person to "racial equality" or as a means of assuaging guilt was compared to manipulating human beings for political or economic purposes. Students were also warned that the rural Negro community was conservative, respectable, and churchgoing, and that these Negroes would react adversely to obscenity, Beatnik fashions, or intemperate behavior.

Despite their painful aspects, the meetings were therapeutic and mutually informative as both sides candidly discussed the problems separating the races. These "black and white sessions" (as they were called) also revealed to white students the existence of a cadre suspicion and distrust of which they had previously been unaware. Then on 21 June 1964, Andrew Goodman, a member of the first group to go through the project's orientation program, James Chaney, an eighteen-year-old Negro, and Michael Schwerner, a young white CORE field worker, mysteriously disappeared after being released from the Neshoba County sheriff's office on a traffic charge. Their bodies were found in mid-August, and a group of white men (including two officers from the sheriff's office) accused of the murders were never brought to trial. This event, which occurred just after the first group had entered Mississippi, brought the seamy side of the state into sharp and frightening focus for these students, already edgy because of what they had learned about Mississippi, themselves, and the complexity of interracial relations.

When the basic training in Ohio ended, the students traveled to prearranged locations throughout Mississippi to engage in voter regis-

tration, instruct adults in community centers, and teach in Freedom Schools. The project's communication center was established in a storefront office in Jackson, Mississippi. Round-the-clock telephone surveillance of twenty regional offices gave the project leaders up-to-the-minute information on all project activities. The volunteers worked enthusiastically in spite of the murder of the three civil rights workers, whose slaying only contributed to their sense of mission.

Students assigned to voter registration tried to follow the procedures established by SNCC since 1961. The Mississippi Negro knew, and the student learned, that if the disenfranchised citizen agreed to accompany the student to the county courthouse and register, the local newspaper would post his name as an applicant and he could then expect reprisals of some kind from certain members of the white community: the local general store might cancel credit for the family, the wage earner might lose his job, the family might be subjected to physical harassment, or, again, nothing might happen. As the summer wore on, however, the emphasis in voter registration shifted from encouraging people to register officially at the courthouse to organizing Negroes to fill out Freedom registration forms in preparation for the delegate challenge at Atlantic City.

Although voter registration and Freedom Schools received the most publicity, community centers were important as well. Under the direction of Anell Ponder, a SNCC field secretary, the Summer Project created between ten and fifteen community centers in Mississippi. Primarily for adult Negroes, the centers utilized students in such endeavors as job training, literacy classes, health programs, adult education, and Negro history classes. These centers furthered voter registration by enabling the Negro to expand his education, to become literate and politically conscious, thereby improving his chance of registering successfully or becoming a political activist.

In addition to voter registration, the MFDP, and community centers, Charles Cobb, a SNCC field worker on leave from Howard University, proposed the establishment of Freedom Schools as part of the Summer Program. Cobb envisioned Negro youth liberated from an inferior educational system, from the induced belief in their own inferiority, and transfigured by education and opportunity into committed activists in the movement for social change. He stated the objectives for a system of Freedom Schools in a prospectus presented to SNCC in December 1963 which emphasized:

1. The need to get into the schools around the state and organize the students, with the possibility of a statewide coordinated student movement developing.
2. A student force to work with us in our efforts around the state.
3. The responsibility to fill an intellectual and creative vacuum in the lives of young Negro Mississippians, and to get them to articulate their own desires, demands and questions. More students need to stand up in classrooms around the state, and ask their teachers a real question.¹³

According to SNCC, the Freedom Schools should parallel, and ultimately displace, the regular Mississippi school, just as the MFDP should replace the regular Democratic party; both were alternative structures. The MFDP would rely on national attention and on the residual goodwill and moral courage of labor and liberal leaders within the Democratic party to achieve its goals in Atlantic City. The Freedom Schools, on the other hand, would rely solely on the people themselves and would organize adolescents in Negro neighborhoods as another force for social change in Mississippi.

As Cobb, especially, saw in the Freedom Schools an opportunity to convince young Negroes of their individual potential, he advocated that they be established during July and August, principally for tenth- and eleventh-grade students, who, having theoretically one or two years of high school education left, could make practical use of the knowledge acquired in Freedom Schools before their graduation. This knowledge would include sharpening classroom skills, imbuing the high school student with a dedication to movement goals, and instilling the basis for future statewide student action, such as student boycotts.

That Cobb's proposal initially met firm resistance from Summer Project leaders is understandable. SNCC had labored for three years at voter registration—in its opinion the central lever for ensuring Negro betterment—and the prospect that these schools would siphon vital manpower from voter registration aroused opposition. After considerable debate, however, the potential benefits to Negro youngsters and the expectation of adding a new dimension to the movement persuaded critics to sanction the Freedom Schools as part of the Summer Project.

To promote the recruitment of high school students into the movement, to introduce black students from every part of the state to one

another, and to foster a high school movement strengthening both SNCC and the MFDP, SNCC set up the Mississippi Student Union (MSU) in the spring of 1964. Along with ministers, educators, and other organizations, the MSU helped to attract Negro youngsters to the Freedom Schools. Professional teachers (about forty in all) to staff the schools were sponsored by the Professional Teachers Association, the National Council of Churches, the Presbyterian church, and other institutions with educational interests. University students composed the majority of teachers.

Deciding upon a curriculum to meet the diverse goals of the schools was a thorny problem. On 21–22 March the National Council of Churches held a conference in New York City to formulate a curriculum, and educators who attended produced an outline that complemented related studies undertaken by SNCC workers like Noel Day. Staughton Lynd, one of two coordinators for the Freedom Schools during July and August 1964, was prominent in finalizing the curriculum.* The “solid” subjects originally included reading, writing, basic mathematics, and Negro history; the Freedom Schools’ staff extended these to include typing, special tutoring, foreign languages (French in particular), and algebra, the two latter subjects unavailable in segregated Mississippi schools. In leadership development classes, students were trained in specific organizing skills useful in launching a high school movement and in preparing future activists. Staff members with the appropriate background taught the students rudimentary techniques of community relations, canvassing, handling press and publicity, organizing mass meetings and workshops, and the efficient operation of an office.

A third section of the curriculum, entitled the “Citizenship Curriculum,” was designed to give young blacks an understanding and appreciation of the Freedom movement for social change and to provide insights into the students’ own natures within the context of American culture and its northern and southern variations. The teachers used the technique of intensive questioning (and attentive listening) to attempt to find answers to why the Negro is not taken seriously. Liz Fusco, Staughton Lynd’s successor as Freedom School coordinator,

* A Quaker and a history professor, Lynd lived three years in a rural Georgia cooperative community before teaching at Spellman, a Negro women’s college in Atlanta, Georgia. Lynd signed a contract with Yale University beginning in the fall of 1964, immediately after the Summer Project.

explained how the staff utilized the “question” as a prime teaching aid.

The so-called “Citizenship Curriculum” set up two sets of questions. The primary set was 1. Why are we (teachers and students) in Freedom schools? 2. What is the Freedom Movement? 3. What alternatives does the Freedom Movement offer us? . . . What was called the secondary set of questions, but what seemed to me the more important, because more personal, set was: 1. What does the majority culture have that we want? 2. What does the majority culture have that we don’t want? 3. What do we have that we want to keep? ¹⁴

To call attention to the predicament of Mississippi Negroes, the teachers used historical examples to compare and contrast life in the South with African culture, invoking also Nazi Germany in 1935. The following questions, applied to a situation familiar to Negro youngsters, illustrate:

Who decides what kind of jobs Negroes can get?

The white man who owns the plantation?

The white man who owns the farm?

The white man who owns and runs the factories?

Who are the owners of most of the plantations and farms where we live? Why are most of them white and few of them Negro? How much money do those owners make? Why do they make so much more than we do; is it because they work harder than we do? What kinds of houses do they live in?

What are the biggest plants and factories in your town? . . . Do you know any Negroes who work in the plants? What kinds of jobs do they do? What kinds of jobs do the white people who work in the plants do? . . . Is there a union in the plant? Does the union help Negroes as much as it helps the whites, or does the union also discriminate against Negroes? Does the union make sure that Negroes who do the same work as whites get paid as much as whites? Does it make sure that Negroes get promoted to better, higher paying jobs as often as whites? Does it make sure that the plant hires Negroes? Does the union protect the jobs of Negroes who try to register to vote, or who, in other ways, support the civil rights movement? ¹⁵

Far from suggesting that life in the North offered an escape from the abuses of Mississippi, the staff scrupulously explained the eco-

nomic disadvantages of the northern urban ghetto—a repository of immigrating uneducated Negroes without industrial training—for there is little doubt that Negro students had assumed life in the North to be an improvement over life in Mississippi (54 percent of black graduates from Mississippi colleges in 1963 had left the state to seek opportunities elsewhere).^{*} If the Freedom School teachers dispelled illusions about the North, they also dispelled their students' sense of impotence. As teacher and student together explored specific causes of injustice, the youngsters began to view the Mississippi situation as a network of tangible and related problems that could at least be assailed, if not solved, by political action.

The Freedom Schools were divided into two sessions of six weeks each, with the majority of students enrolled in day schools and some of the more politically promising students attending boarding schools. Locations for the day schools varied from open fields to church and lodge halls. Half of the working day was set aside for solid subjects; the other half of the day and evening was devoted to citizenship training and participation in cultural activities or other project programs. One thousand students had been expected, but by the end of July from fifteen hundred to two thousand students had enrolled in more than thirty Freedom Schools. Teachers reported 90 percent attendance.

Because of the interruption of classes in regular Mississippi schools from early spring to summer to allow Negro high school students to chop cotton, the Freedom Schools competed with state schools for students that summer. The poor quality of education received in Mississippi schools accounted for at least as much support for the Freedom Schools from Negro parents as did the political complexion of the project.

Black Mississippi high school students were years behind in their reading ability—archaic textbooks were used in segregated schools, and the black teachers, educated in nonaccredited Mississippi schools, relied on omnipotent white school boards for their jobs. Furthermore, the brightest students at the Freedom Schools had a chance to take standardized tests under the direction of the College Entrance Examination Board, with the result that some of those who performed ably in the examinations received educational opportunities and financial

^{*} See Holt, *The Summer that Didn't End*, p. 114.

aid leading to college educations which they normally would not have had. Although there were isolated instances of harassment of teaching staffs, segregationists seldom hounded the Freedom Schools, because the threat the schools represented to the southern power structure was slight and remote compared with voter registration and the MFDP.

Meanwhile, preparations for the MFDP challenge at Atlantic City neared completion. The MFDP carefully followed the prenational convention procedure of the regular Mississippi Democratic party—from precinct meetings, to county conventions, to congressional district caucuses, to the state convention, where state delegates approved delegates to the national convention. The MFDP held its state convention in Jackson, Mississippi, at the end of the first week in August; 800 state delegates attended and endorsed 46 delegates and 22 alternates to the national convention. The state convention picked Aaron Henry to lead the delegation to Atlantic City and Fannie Lou Hammer as vice-chairman. The Reverend Edward A. King and Victoria Gray represented the MFDP as national committeeman and committeewoman, and Lawrence Guyot was chosen head of the party's state executive committee. Joseph Rauh, a Washington, D.C., attorney for the United Auto Workers and a member of the Credentials Committee of the national convention, agreed to serve without pay as the MFDP attorney during the national convention.

To challenge the regular Mississippi delegation at the convention, the MFDP had first to appear before the Credentials Committee, and it did not expect a majority of the committee to vote in its favor. The MFDP staff believed, however, that it could garner enough votes in the Credentials Committee to file a minority report that would introduce the question of the Freedom party's status in a roll-call vote on the convention floor. With the nation's attention riveted on that roll-call vote, SNCC and the MFDP expected the Democrats to bow to public pressure and seat a proportionate number of the Freedom party's delegates. For a minority vote of the Credentials Committee to qualify for floor consideration, at least 11 of the 108 members of the committee had to support the MFDP against the regular Mississippi delegation. One other alternative existed for the MFDP. If 8 of the 50 state delegations assembled at the convention agreed to advance the MFDP's cause, they also could force a roll-call vote. By 19 August, two days before the convention convened, the six delegations from Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, and Wisconsin

sin had mandates from their state conventions to support the MFDP; three delegations—California, New York, and Washington (plus the District of Columbia)—had mandates from state executive committees to back the MFDP.

Before the convention began, however, SNCC received ominous news that overshadowed the support for the MFDP expressed by these ten delegations. In Mississippi, Chancery Judge Stokes Robertson, Jr. issued an injunction prohibiting the Freedom party from using the word “Democratic” in its title. Still more portentous for the MFDP was the Republican party’s decision to nominate Senator Barry Goldwater for president. Goldwater’s conservative political philosophy had convinced Democrats that he posed a serious challenge to President Johnson in the South. Capitalizing on the Goldwater threat, the governors of Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Florida met in New Orleans and announced that their states would boycott the convention if the Freedom delegation was seated. Presumably, powerful southern congressmen from these states would obstruct the Johnson administration’s legislative program if the MFDP displaced the regular Mississippi delegation. Apprehensions of SNCC and the Freedom delegation that the administration would oppose their challenge were confirmed by at least two sources: Mississippi Governor Paul Johnson boasted that he had received a telephone call from the White House assuring him that his delegation would not be replaced (a boast that the *Jackson Daily News*—a Mississippi newspaper—reported before the convention started); and Douglass Wynn, one of the members of the regular Mississippi delegation, also claimed that the president backed the regular delegation.¹⁶ *

To compound difficulties, Bayard Rustin failed to produce large numbers of pro-MFDP demonstrators for the convention. But when the convention opened in Atlantic City, CORE, in close cooperation with SNCC, had gathered only about one thousand supporters of the MFDP to congregate outside the convention hall. Ranging in age from late teens to early thirties, the demonstrators conducted themselves peaceably, singing freedom songs while anxiously awaiting reports of the proceedings in the Credentials Committee. According to SNCC, David Lawrence, former governor of Pennsylvania and head

* Lyndon Johnson was allegedly godfather to one of Wynn’s daughters; Wynn’s father-in-law was Edward Clark of Austin, Texas, a close friend of Johnson (Holt, *The Summer that Didn’t End*, pp. 165–66).

of the Credentials Committee, teamed with Senator Hubert Humphrey to prevent the MFDP issue from reaching the floor. Having by now lost most of its preconvention backers, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the District of Columbia, and Guam were among the eight delegations still willing to bring the MFDP challenge to the attention of the convention. Led by Governor Carl Sanders of Georgia, the convention's Rules Committee passed a regulation declaring that only delegates from states could ask for a roll-call vote. This decision emasculated the power of territorial and district delegations and deprived the MFDP of the use of a minority delegation motion to bring its challenge to a vote.

The battle for a minority report from the Credentials Committee lasted longer. Despite President Johnson's displeasure, the dramatic appearance of Fannie Lou Hammer and other Mississippi witnesses on television, before the Credentials Committee, generated fleeting but emotional support for the MFDP. The witnesses described in vivid language the violence and economic oppression they had experienced in unsuccessful attempts to register or otherwise participate in Mississippi Democratic politics.

When it became obvious that administration pressure was undermining the resolve of MFDP's friends on the Credentials Committee, Representative Edith Green of Oregon submitted a compromise plan proposing that an oath of loyalty to the Democratic presidential nominee and platform be administered publicly to each delegate from both the regular and the Freedom party delegations. The convention would seat the members of both delegations who agreed to take the oath, and they would share the total vote.* The delegates refusing to pledge allegiance to the party would not be admitted to the convention.

The MFDP reluctantly agreed to Green's compromise, but the administration unexpectedly countered with a compromise of its own. Under President Johnson's compromise, regardless of the results of the oath-taking, the MFDP would receive only two delegates-at-large, entitling them to voting rights at the convention but denying them recognition as representatives of the Mississippi Democratic party. In addition, the administration promised to exclude discrimination in choosing delegates to the national convention in the future. With the

* A number of delegates from the regular Mississippi delegation returned home rather than take the oath.

appearance of Johnson's compromise, MFDP's supporters on the Credentials Committee diminished from eighteen to four, too few to file a minority report in favor of MFDP. By deserting the Freedom delegation, erstwhile supporters spared President Johnson an embarrassing, if not a humiliating, floor fight, held the southern wing of the party intact, and kept themselves in the administration's good graces.

Although Aaron Henry, Edward King (designated as delegates-at-large under the Johnson compromise), and some other delegates initially opted for the administration compromise, they eventually decided, along with the vast majority of the MFDP, to reject it. Distinguished liberals, including Senator Hubert Humphrey, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bayard Rustin, pleaded with MFDP delegates to accept Johnson's offer, while some prominent liberal newspaper commentators condemned the delegates for their ingratitude and unwillingness to accept reality. But the MFDP had already accepted the compromise proposed by Edith Green of Oregon, under which the MFDP was given the right to share in representing the 45 percent of the adult population of Mississippi that was not permitted to vote or otherwise participate in the political decisions that concerned them.

The administration's "compromise" offered the MFDP nothing more than two figureheads with no right of representation and an unenforceable pledge to eliminate discrimination from future Democratic conventions. In return for this gesture, the Freedom party was asked to drop its demand for equal representation and for an end to racism in Mississippi and the Democratic party and to forget the misfortunes of those Mississippians whose economic and physical sacrifices had made the challenge a reality.

John Lewis expressed MFDP feelings when he said, "All these people . . . said they were supporting us, but at the eleventh hour they said they could go no further. It was an eye opener. . . ." ¹⁷ Many on the staff of SNCC, COFO, and the Freedom party reacted angrily to Johnson's strategy and to the retreat of former allies on the Credentials Committee and in the state delegations, but Robert Moses channeled their rancor into a kind of "creative disorder". With the help of the remaining friends in the delegations that had originally sponsored the MFDP, Freedom party delegates gained admittance to the convention and sat in the vacated seats of the regular Mississippi Democratic party. For two days they refused to allow the con-

vention's security forces to eject them, and this furtive seating was the only tangible victory that SNCC and the MFDP won in Atlantic City.

Achievements and Failures of the Summer Project

The accomplishments of the 1964 Mississippi Summer are the more notable in light of the violent atmosphere in the state at that time. In one four-week period of that summer, 3 volunteers were murdered, 2 were shot, at least 6 beaten, and over 200 arrested. Furthermore, five churches were burned, six more were targets of attempted arson, three cars were shot at, and four homes and two business establishments were bombed. In spite of the danger, however, the Summer Project was successful, above all, as an exercise in political initiative.

By the 60,000 signatures on Freedom registration forms, for instance, 60,000 Negroes signified their intention to take part in Mississippi politics. Over 200 of the summer volunteers elected to remain in Mississippi for varying periods instead of returning North as they had originally planned. These volunteers either continued the ongoing work in voter registration or stayed to teach at Freedom Schools or community centers. Suits by the Justice Department heartened voter registration workers and presented the possibility of registering larger numbers of blacks in several Mississippi counties. Local voter groups coordinating with the MFDP supervised the project's registration campaign after the summer ended. Utilizing the momentum built up by SNCC for voter registration, the NAACP announced late in 1964 that it would begin a crash program to register voters in Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina in 1965.*

The Freedom Schools accomplished more than any other single program of the Summer Project. Because of their experience at these schools, many students were motivated to take a deeper interest in higher education; a number of them, recognizing their potential for the first time, subsequently applied for financial aid under the National Scholarship Service, the Fund for Negro Studies, or the Touga-

* The NAACP drive netted 50,000 new voters by the end of the 1965 summer. The drive was aided by national attention on Mississippi because of a new MFDP congressional challenge—repeal of requirements stipulating that voters interpret the constitution and recite duties of citizenship—and by the astute tactics and organizational ability of the NAACP team itself.

loo Work-Study Program (designed especially for black youngsters wishing to stay in Mississippi). Some Freedom School teachers believe that the political education the students acquired rivaled their academic training in importance. Many of the students inducted into the movement for social change in Mississippi became discussion leaders, organizers, and speakers in their own neighborhoods immediately after the summer. In at least two cases—in the Freedom Schools at Vicksburg and Holly Springs—white children joined black children briefly, raising the possibility of using the schools as a means of communication between the two races.

The Summer Project staff regarded the decision to continue the schools beyond the summer as a triumph in itself, although circumstances in the fall would limit the scope of the schools' functions. As the majority of Negro students attended regular Mississippi public schools, the Freedom Schools held classes in the late afternoon or evening, often in local community centers (frequently the Freedom Schools and community centers shared the same facilities throughout the summer, and this cooperation continued in the fall). Subjects taught in the continuing Freedom Schools included Negro history, political education, modern languages, remedial mathematics, reading, and writing.

Soon after the regular school year began, however, the Mississippi state legislature passed a law forbidding the existence of schools not licensed by the county superintendent of education and denying the license to any school encouraging disobedience to the laws of Mississippi. Because funds were also more difficult to obtain after the MFDP's defiance of the Democratic party, SNCC newsletters in the North and South contained pleas asking that everything from books and erasers to Volkswagen buses and shortwave citizen-band radios be sent to the Freedom Schools.

By the end of the summer, the MSU, the statewide organization of Negro high school students, had established chapters in many areas, with expansion designated for the near future. A series of resolutions compiled and published at the end of the MSU-Freedom School Convention in Meridian, Mississippi, from 6 to 8 August reflected the kind of education offered at the Freedom Schools. The students made up a comprehensive list of topics pertaining to public accommodations, housing, education, health, law enforcement, federal aid, city maintenance, and civil liberties, enumerating under each title the con-

ditions which in their opinion would produce a decent life for themselves and their families.

If the Mississippi Summer Project accomplished some of its objectives, it also experienced defeats. Although thousands of volunteers were expected from the North, less than a thousand came, and programs essential to the overall success of the project suffered proportionately. With the workers thinly spread among voter registration endeavors, Freedom Schools, and community centers, only about fifteen hundred Mississippi Negroes were added to lists of registered voters. The small number of northerners also precluded the kind of threat to segregationist control of Mississippi that might have led to mass arrests and federal intervention. In addition to being supremely important in compelling the Johnson administration to send federal marshals to oversee voter registration, the arrests and intervention would probably have enhanced the public interest required for a triumphant challenge at the Democratic National Convention.

The major failure, however, occurred within the ranks of the Summer Project participants as the skeptical attitude of some SNCC staff members toward the northern white collegians at the beginning of the experiment turned to bitterness at summer's end. Some of the problems between black Mississippi veterans and white students arose in part from their radically dissimilar backgrounds and values. Many blacks also felt that since whites had no racial grievances of their own, since by and large they were neither physically stigmatized nor economically deprived because of their race, they were incapable of genuine empathy with blacks. In 1964 these complaints were reinforced when the tragic event that had initially unified black and white people working on the Summer Project—the murder of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney—served to alienate them. The conclusion that the national attention given the murders arose from the fact that two of the three victims were white aroused black bitterness. Thereafter, James E. Chaney alone became the symbol of martyrdom for many southern Negroes.*

It is only fair to observe, however, that many white students had come to Mississippi with the best of motives and had behaved in an

* Likewise, in the spring of 1970 both the national media and white radicals played up the killings of four white students at Kent State University and virtually ignored the deaths of two black students at Jackson State College a few days later under similar circumstances.

honorable and constructive way while they were there. That two hundred or more volunteers decided to stay for an indeterminate period testifies to their dedication and integrity. Some witnesses praised their conduct. Staughton Lynd marveled at the way the teachers from the North were so quickly accepted in the Freedom Schools. Elizabeth Sutherland, another seasoned observer of the southern scene, was impressed by the extraordinary fraternization between the Negroes and white northerners. On the other hand, Nicholas von Hoffman, a *Chicago Daily News* reporter in Mississippi during the summer of 1964, censured some of the white volunteers for grandstanding and lack of self-control.

Black staff members complained about—and black and white observers noted—the tendency of a sizable number of white students to take control of and dominate meetings, conversations, and organizational details. Not only was this trait personally offensive to the blacks but it jeopardized the rural Negroes' tenuous framework of self-confidence, so laboriously constructed by SNCC over the previous three years. Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint, a distinguished black psychiatrist at the Tufts Medical School, interviewed more than one hundred black civil rights workers in Mississippi during the Summer Project and found too many whites of both sexes guilt-ridden and seeking only sex, publicity, or penance.

Especially damaging was the perpetuation among southern Negroes of the myth that only white people, with their superior education and urban sophistication, could bring about change. Some students made unrealistic promises at the beginning of the summer, only to depart after a few weeks leaving black Mississippians as helpless and powerless as they had been before the summer started. Many SNCC field workers lost respect for these students, and the end result was of cardinal importance to the evolution of the New Left. As Poussaint remarked, there were some "good and effective" white workers, but the black movement could no longer risk including "so many bad ones." ¹⁸

One of the major reasons why SNCC eventually banned white co-workers and built a Black Power movement instead was its judgment that uneducated and unaccomplished black people could not grow and develop under the intimidating influence of radical white allies, a conclusion based in large part upon its experience during the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964. Nor was criticism of a sizable segment

of the northern contingent limited to reporters, black radicals, and psychiatrists. In a speech given on 1 May 1964, Bayard Rustin, an integrationist and architect of coalition politics, chided students coming to the South for the summer.

. . . Let some of the white students who are so happy to go to Mississippi . . . put on old clothes and go into the ghettos of Detroit and Chicago and take on the really tough task of finding the leadership among the white poor and educating them and getting them marching in the streets. . . .¹⁹ *

Distrust of white students was only one of a number of factors contributing to a gradual estrangement between young black and white radicals. Although it did not receive the same publicity, the substitution after 1965 of antiwar activity for community organizing as the predominant program of SDS caused as much displeasure among blacks as the Mississippi Summer episode. Still more important was Mississippi Summer's significance as a point of demarcation, after which SNCC gradually withdrew from any cooperation with the labor-liberal coalition of the Democratic party.

The major factor in SNCC's transformation over the next two years was the federal government; specifically, the Democratic party. SNCC needed federal assistance to restructure the social and economic patterns of Negro lives. It had created the Summer Project to force the hand of the federal government, either directly through intervention or indirectly through recognition of MFDP delegates at the Democratic National Convention.

As SNCC saw it, however, the Civil Rights Bill signed by President Johnson in the first week of July 1964 failed either to increase its leverage or to strengthen the position of rural blacks in the South. The main provisions of the bill outlawed racial discrimination in public hotels, restaurants, and theaters, prohibited discrimination by employers or unions, and prevented registrars from applying double standards in administering examinations to black and white applicants at county courthouses. But, as SNCC would argue, most rural Missis-

* In 1964, SDS held a community-organizing project of its own in selected northern urban ghettos. Rustin's remarks strike at the core of SDS's difficulty in getting more white students to work for the white poor in urban areas. Many preferred to go South and work with Negroes.

issippi Negroes earned less than \$2,000 annually; entering previously white-only restaurants or hotels (when not converted into private clubs) exceeded their means. Moreover, although empowered by the bill to initiate suits and to withhold federal funds if victims complained of violations of the law, the government chose to act only when a "pattern" of violations was located or when local enforcement of law and order broke down. Although patterns of violations and instances of discrimination defying the act's provisions were numerous during and after Mississippi Summer, the government declined to invoke the act and intervene.*

Despite friction between some white and black workers in Mississippi and the apparent unwillingness of the federal government to intervene there, a SNCC western conference held in San Francisco in November 1964 reiterated the importance of northern allies and the necessity of federal support for the success of the movement for equal rights in the South. Robert Moses gave the keynote address, and a working paper for the conference entreated northern friends of SNCC (chiefly on campuses) to pressure the president, the Justice Department, and senators and congressmen to achieve the following goals:

- (1) Federal Marshals should be dispatched to all counties in the South where the right to vote is denied to Negroes. They should be on hand and ready to act at every Courthouse in the South, guaranteeing to Negroes the right to vote.

- (2) The President should make full use of existing Federal law which allows for court injunctions to prevent intimidation of people seeking to register, for appointment of voting referees where there is discrimination, for any other orders necessary to guarantee the right to vote.

- (3) The U.S. Civil Rights Commission should hold immediate hearings in Mississippi and other Southern states and publish public reports on the conditions they find.

- (4) All Federal programs for Southern states should be contingent on an end to the States' discriminatory policies. Federal programs should be extended to Negroes in Mississippi.

- (5) Congress should deny seniority rights to Southern Democrats from Districts where Negroes are denied the right to vote.²⁰

* The *Mississippi Black Paper*, published by Random House in 1965 with a Foreword by Reinhold Niebuhr, compiles signed affidavits evidencing the breakdown of law and order in Mississippi.

In spite of such appeals, the events of Mississippi Summer exacerbated SNCC's anger against middle-class America and the Democratic party. SNCC and the MFDP directed their growing radicalism to rechallenging regular Mississippi representatives of the Democratic party. During 1965, the MFDP contested the right of Democratic congressmen from Mississippi to sit in the House of Representatives. The arena had changed, but the goal remained the same: the acquisition of power to alter fundamentally the social and political structure in Mississippi. There was disagreement, however, about how to achieve this.

Staughton Lynd, for one, argued that instead of battling Mississippi representatives in Congress, SNCC should have gone back in force into the state, taking advantage of the MFDP's newly constructed precinct, county, and state structure for "multitactic" agitation. Lynd contended that Mississippi had become comparatively safe to work in by the end of Mississippi Summer, and the voter registration success of the NAACP in 1965 gives credence to his argument. An occasional sign of a more lenient attitude on the part of Mississippi authorities, however, was not tantamount to a relaxing of opposition to SNCC or the MFDP. This is not surprising: SNCC and the MFDP wanted not integration but the means to realign politically and economically first Mississippi and then the entire South in behalf of black people and in the interests of a new social movement referred to as the New Left.

The lessons of Mississippi Summer indicated to SNCC that its only chance for victory lay in continuing to wage the struggle at the national level. SNCC believed that white segregationists had won the battle of Mississippi Summer, and it recoiled from offering its Mississippi field workers or rural Negroes nothing more than a resumption of programs that had thus far proved ineffectual in achieving a significant breakthrough. Furthermore, it had encountered difficulty recruiting replacements or reinforcements.

Should SNCC have continued to pursue the difficult and often thankless task of community organizing and voter registration in Mississippi? The Freedom Schools and the MSU program had succeeded in generating in hundreds of young black boys and girls a political interest in the movement for social change. For this interest to be preserved and nourished, these adolescents needed the leadership of SNCC field workers to ensure that what SNCC had started would be

continued in the future. No matter how trying the past three years had been, SNCC's obligation to southern blacks and to potential movement members was as imperative in 1964 as it had been in 1960. Therefore, SNCC members failed to fulfill their obligations both to themselves and to young and old rural southern blacks when after Mississippi Summer they looked first to Congress and then to Black Power as a substitute for community organizing.

Mississippi Summer thus represented a critical juncture in the evolution of the New Left. It marked SNCC's last attempt to accomplish its ends within established institutions, in this case the Democratic party in conjunction with the liberal-labor axis. It marked the last stage before SNCC renounced non-violence and turned toward Black Power. It also exposed the suspicion and incompatibility of objectives between many black and white radicals in Mississippi and in that sense presaged the future of the New Left movement. Finally, Mississippi Summer contributed to the radicalization of visiting white students, some of whom would return to Berkeley and launch the Free Speech movement.

The Birth of Black Power

1965: A Year of Defeat for SNCC

The adamant opposition of white segregationists to black demands, the defeat of the congressional challenge by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party, the inconclusiveness of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the violence of Alabama state troopers against civil rights demonstrators in Selma, the Watts riots, the influence of Malcolm X and the organizational effectiveness of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, the shift of SDS from community organizing to campus protest against the Vietnam War, and the demoralization of many individuals in SNCC—all of these contributed to SNCC's decision to renounce non-violence the following year and adopt Black Power as its central tenet.

Because it was still based upon being a “coordinating” committee for student groups long after many of these had dissolved and after SNCC had itself evolved into a band of community organizers, SNCC began 1965 by significantly altering its organizational structure. At a staff session held from 12 to 19 February 1965 and at an executive committee meeting on 5 March 1965, both in Atlanta, Georgia, SNCC proclaimed that the field workers would henceforth comprise the principal decision-making body, meeting four times a year. It would elect the twenty-one-member executive committee which would act in conjunction with a secretariat, consisting of James Forman (executive secretary), John Lewis (chairman), and Cleveland Sellers (project chairman), to make and implement policy between the quarterly sessions of the field workers. To ensure that people touched by policy would participate in its formulation, SNCC elected local leaders from Mississippi in addition to field workers to the executive committee which convened the second Monday of each month. Meetings of the executive committee were open to members of the coordinating com-

mittee, but nonmembers were not permitted to vote. Executive committee decisions were made by a majority vote of the members, who were advised to resign if they missed more than three consecutive meetings.

In keeping with traditional emphasis on community control and local leadership development, SNCC also decided on an all-black summer project in the South for 1965. The format called for a series of statewide "People's Conferences" in Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, and Georgia, at which local people would determine programs, select personnel to operate them, and then convene at a Southwide conference where SNCC believed new leaders for the southern movement would emerge.

A major plan to augment the congressional challenge, discussed at the November 1964 conference at San Francisco, was finalized at a SNCC conference in February 1965 at Atlanta. The plan anticipated recruiting about two thousand college students from the North to congregate in Washington, D. C. in the summer to support the campaign to oust the regular congressmen from the state of Mississippi. In response to inquiries from northern students about summer programs in the South, the staff at SNCC headquarters urged them to exert pressure on Congress, stressing the significance of the challenge as follows:

The efforts of last summer in building the Freedom Democratic Party, the resulting challenge at the convention in Atlantic City, the Congressional challenge on January 4, 1965, and the statutory challenge have led us to believe that the Mississippi challenge—the unseating of the five Congressmen from Mississippi is the most important political event of 1965, notwithstanding efforts to get new voting legislation.¹

The MFDP based its challenge on the fact that the vast majority of Mississippi Negroes had been unconstitutionally denied the right to vote in the primary and general elections of 1964. The challenge of the five Mississippi congressmen rested upon Article I, Section 5 of the United States Constitution, which states that, "Each House Shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns, and Qualifications of its own Members." The statutory challenge followed the procedure outlined in Title 2, Sections 201–26 of the United States Code: the MFDP notified the Mississippi congressmen of its intention on 4 December 1964

and prepared to compile evidence to support the challenge during the ensuing ninety days. On 4 January 1965, Congressman William F. Ryan of New York introduced a "Fairness Resolution" in the House of Representatives aimed at preventing the regular Mississippi congressmen from taking their seats until the House had ruled on the validity of the contested election. Ryan's resolution failed to pass, but 149 congressmen voted in its favor.

In January and February, volunteer teams of lawyers went to Mississippi for the MFDP armed with federal subpoena power to gather evidence to substantiate the challenge. On 17 May, the MFDP submitted to Congress more than six hundred depositions of native Mississippians to support its charges of violence, murder, harassment, and economic intimidation of Negroes attempting to take part in political activities in Mississippi. By the end of April, SNCC's plans for a contingent of students to lobby for the challenge in Washington, D.C. from 13 June to 4 July looked promising.* Named the "Washington Lobby," the students would try to influence legislators in the morning, setting aside the afternoons for critiques and preparation of the next day's schedule.

While SNCC and its allies solicited votes for the congressional showdown in the fall, events in Selma, Alabama, not only demonstrated that violent opposition to the militant Negro movement had not abated but also drove a wedge between SNCC and Martin Luther King, Jr., that in turn widened the breach between New Left activists and the liberal-labor coalition. On 2 January 1965, Dr. King declared the opening of a voter registration drive in Selma, a drive (joined by SNCC on 18 January) that consummated two years of SNCC community organizing and voter registration work in and around Selma (in Dallas County), where only 0.9 percent of the adult Negro population was registered to vote. The Justice Department boosted this endeavor on 15 January by filing suit against the state of Alabama, claiming the voter registration test discriminated against would-be Negro voters.

Near the end of January, the joint SNCC-SCLC project in Selma grew into a large-scale direct action movement composed mainly of

* Approximately 350 students gathered in Washington, D. C. in June and July to lobby in favor of the MFDP's congressional challenge (Mike Thelwell, "MFDP—Congressional Challenge," *Voice*, July 1965, p. 3).

Negroes from the Selma area. By the first of February, the number of participants in and out of jail qualified the Selma campaign as the largest direct action protest for civil rights in two years. Dr. King then proposed a march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital, on Sunday, 7 March, to confront Governor George Wallace, demand the vote for disenfranchised Negroes, and demand new state elections as well.

On the eve of the march, SNCC voted not to participate on the grounds that a successful voter registration drive should be concluded before undertaking a march to Montgomery. When, at the last minute, King decided not to lead the march,* SNCC reversed itself, voted to join the march, and sent three carloads of its staff from Mississippi across the border to Alabama. Stokely Carmichael, whose leadership and organizing abilities in Alabama contributed to his election as chairman of SNCC in 1966, and Silas Norman, SNCC's Alabama project director, flew to Selma from Atlanta for the march. SNCC may have decided to lead the march in King's absence for publicity purposes; it claims, however, that it acted to control the march, having previously criticized King for exposing the marchers to physical danger.

At the head of the column as it left Selma on 7 March were SNCC Chairman John Lewis, Robert Mants, also of SNCC, and Hosea Williams from SCLC. Monitors divided the column into companies and squads led by commanders and split the front ranks into groups of 50 Selma Negroes separated by a SNCC field worker at each group interval. Between 2,000 and 3,000 men and women marched that day. Having ineffectually ordered the marchers to disperse, when the double file of marchers reached the bridge over the Alabama River, the Alabama state troopers charged, some on horseback, others on foot. After the charge, 17 marchers were reported to have suffered serious injuries, and an additional 40 sought emergency treatment at the local black hospital.

James Farmer, director of CORE, and members of SNCC and SCLC met King at the local airport the next day and planned another march to Montgomery for Tuesday, 9 March. Now reporters and

* One explanation for King's absence was that he had to attend Sunday services at his own parish. Another version has it that he was in the North rounding up supporters after learning that Wallace would use force against the marchers.

crews from national television networks converged on Selma; clergymen flew down from the North to participate in the march; prominent liberals, including the Reverend David K. Hunter, representing the National Council of Churches, and Mrs. Paul Douglas, wife of the Illinois senator, also appeared. Once again the national spotlight played on the South, and again the physical safety of northerners was imperiled. If the troopers charged on Tuesday, scattering and injuring scores of northerners, the reverberations might well force the president to intervene actively in the domestic affairs of southern states.* If, on the other hand, the troopers allowed the march to continue unobstructed to Montgomery, the momentum generated might eventually accomplish as much for the Negro as a reckless charge of state troopers.

Government officials urged King to call off the demonstration, but he vowed to march. On Tuesday, King conducted the marchers to the bridge over the Alabama River leading to Montgomery, faced the ranks of state police, and knelt in silent prayer. The troopers moved to the side of the road, no longer barring the forward progress of the march. Instead of moving ahead, however, King turned and ordered his followers to walk back to Selma. Without informing his comarchers, King had compromised with representatives of the national government, promising to stop at the bridge outside Selma. This decision ruptured King's relations with SNCC and increased SNCC's disaffection from the liberal-labor coalition, an amalgam that it identified with the federal government in a Democratic administration. Regarding King's compromise as a betrayal, SNCC staged an angry demonstration and march in the heart of Montgomery with the avowed intent of radicalizing as many students from nearby Negro colleges as possible.

The initial repressive attitude of the Alabama state police in Selma, together with King's agreement with the government to abort the march to Montgomery, enraged SNCC and raised important questions. How long would it take before the doctrine of non-violence was

* President Johnson recalls that he resisted pressure to send troops to Selma, believing this would preclude congressional approval of the voting rights legislation, jeopardize the position of southern moderates, and play into the hands of extremists behind Governor Wallace (Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969* [New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971], p. 162).

scuttled and replaced with one advocating self-defense or even unprovoked assault? How long before black activists substituted for the doctrine of social cooperation and integration in the South a policy based on racial antagonism, Black Power, or separatism? Non-violence was seriously questioned in 1965, and not only because SNCC field workers had sustained frequent physical abuse or because the doctrine of non-violence had failed to make notable inroads against southern white opposition. Since SNCC's founding, well-known advocates of self-defense, violent retaliation, and racial antagonism had inveighed against black activists who persisted in the use of non-violent tactics, and by 1964—certainly by 1965—their influence had begun to tell.

Robert Williams had argued from the beginning for accepting self-defense as an adjunct of direct action tactics. While president of the NAACP in Monroe, North Carolina, Williams had trained members to resist Ku Klux Klan terrorists by force. Later, during the summer of 1961, he had made it plain that elements in the Negro community of Monroe would not sit idly by if segregationists physically assaulted non-violent Freedom Riders. In August 1961, Williams fled to Cuba to avoid arrest on a kidnapping charge, the circumstances of which are still disputed.*

Williams referred to himself as an Afro-American and believed that non-violent resistance degraded black Americans. It is likely that he had read, and was influenced by, the works of Franz Fanon, who, before he died in 1961, had formulated a political-psychiatric rationale for violent colonial upheaval, maintaining that violent resistance invigorated the subjected colonial, resurrecting his manhood. In 1964–65, however, black activists listened more closely to the message of Malcolm X, formerly of the Black Muslims, than to either Williams or Fanon.

Williams lived in exile, Fanon had addressed himself chiefly to natives of overseas colonies; but Malcolm X spoke and wrote expressly for the American black until he was assassinated in February 1965. Malcolm X had transcended a career of petty crime eventually to preside as minister of the Muslim mosque in Harlem, where his oratorical

* Law enforcement officers contend Williams kidnapped a Ku Klux Klansman and his wife to exchange them for Negro demonstrators held in jail. Williams insists he rescued the couple from irate Negroes who had recognized them as they drove through the Negro neighborhood.

ability qualified him as the most prominent spokesman for the Black Muslim movement (its official leader, Elijah Muhammad—born Elijah Poole and originally a Baptist minister—lisped and lacked presence in public gatherings). Separatists who adopted the trappings of Islamic religion while emphasizing the divinity of black people, the Black Muslims condemned integration, rejected American society, lauded their African ancestry, regarded themselves as a nation, and built exclusive retail stores, farms, butcher shops, and fish markets.

SNCC approved the Muslims' effort to upgrade the Negro educationally and to stress the superiority of black culture, but it did not accept the Muslim's insistence on complete withdrawal from the political process. In late 1963, Charles Jones of SNCC explained the attitude of his organization toward the Muslims:

. . . the Black Muslims have chosen to remain in their mosques until the struggle is over. . . . there are very few instances where members of any temple have gone out to register voters, or to engage in boycotts, sit-ins, etc.; for them to do so would be contradictory to their basic tenet of withdrawal from the sea of "white devils." They intend to and are sitting at the gate, waiting to march into society after the "integrating Negroes" and whites have killed each other off.²

Malcolm X disagreed with the Muslims for other reasons, and these led him to resign from the Black Muslims in March 1964. Like SNCC, Malcolm criticized the Muslims' policy of aloofness from civic or political struggles being waged in society at large on behalf of the black man. He also claimed that although the Muslims stressed the religious character of their organization (World Islam did not recognize them), their leaders violated strictures prohibiting smoking, drinking, and adultery. When Malcolm X left the Black Muslims, he persuaded one of Elijah Muhammad's sons and a few of his most important followers to accompany him. Immediately after the break, he toured Africa and on his return founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), an organization designed to forge closer relations between American and African Negroes to end colonialism and to improve the condition of black people in the United States.

Malcolm X did not propound a cohesive philosophy for the American Negro, but he did help to foster black consciousness, pride in African ancestry, the right of self-defense to protect the lives and property of black people, and the potential necessity of armed revolu-

tion. To him, black consciousness was tied to the Negro's pride in his African lineage, a central link in actuating a cultural revolution for black Americans, and he preferred the term "Afro-American" to "Negro." He believed that for the Negro to advance, he needed education and an internationalization of the civil rights struggle. His aim was not a separate state for American Negroes; internationalization meant advancing the cause of black Americans by engaging the support of African states to bring U.S. racial problems before the United Nations under the Human Rights Provision of its charter.*

Utilizing the rhetoric of violence, Malcolm X condemned the United States as "rotten" and urged the black community to improve its living conditions by itself—by staging citywide rent strikes and by performing essential municipal functions in order to eliminate drug traffic, gambling, and prostitution. Auguring Black Power, he demanded that equal strength replace moral persuasion and non-violence in negotiating for Negro rights, that white people be excluded from Negro organizations, and that self-defense be employed in the face of physical provocation. He argued that the government of the United States had no right to ask young black men to defend the people of South Vietnam when it denied them the right to defend black Mississippians from physical intimidation and harm.

Although Malcolm X spoke of violent revolution, he never actually advocated it and may have only used the threat of violence as political leverage to promote the cause of black Americans. He was inaccurately remembered by black activists not as a black leader who endorsed the right of self-defense but as the leader who sanctioned the philosophical and programmatic acceptance of retaliatory and offensive violence.** The popularity of Malcolm X's views among many black activists after 1965 marks the decline of passive resistance as articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and exemplified by early SNCC. On 21 February 1965 three former Black Muslims assassinated Malcolm X as he was speaking at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City (though many black activists chose to believe that he was assassinated by CIA agents).

* In an elaboration of Malcolm X's original idea, in October 1971 Kathleen Cleaver exhorted the United Nations to review the "colonial status" of the black American.

** The end result of the theoretical approval of violence, first only within the context of self-defense, was the adoption of violence by the Black Panther party as an integral part of its program.

At the time of Malcolm X's death, there was an organization in the South called the Deacons for Defense and Justice, organized in the summer of 1964 in Jonesboro, Louisiana, a town with a heavy Ku Klux Klan following, by a few Jonesboro Negroes to guard black neighborhoods from Klan incursions and to protect civil rights workers from injury at the hands of southern segregationists in the absence of local police protection. By mid-1965 the Deacons had between fifty and sixty chapters spread through the Deep South, with headquarters in Jonesboro. The Deacons pledged to use weapons only in self-defense and prided themselves on being able to travel quickly from one location to another to act as a "defense guard unit." Charles R. Sims, president of the Bogalusa, Alabama, chapter of the Deacons, asserted that if a respectable number of Deacons had been nearby when Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman met their deaths in June 1964, there would have been no deaths. The deference that southern whites paid Negroes willing to act in self-defense and the pride these Negroes exuded was not lost on black activists, a development that further undermined the doctrine of non-violence.

An additional blow to that doctrine occurred when the Watts section of Los Angeles, California, erupted in a cataclysm of fire, rioting, and death in mid-August 1965. The disruption had started on 11 August, when black neighbors took to the streets to protest the alleged mishandling of a Negro mother who had come to the aid of her sons during their arrest for drunk driving. By the fourteenth, the mounting civil disorder had reached such proportions that 400 National Guardsmen were ordered to quell the riots. The next day, reports spoke of twenty-two dead and one thousand injured as 7,000 guardsmen fought a "guerrilla war" in Watts.

Why did Watts explode, and what bearing did this have on SNCC? Almost certainly, a chain reaction was triggered when Los Angeles Negroes read about (or watched on television) southern Negroes in Selma and elsewhere submitting peaceably to physical intimidation in order to exercise their rights as citizens. Many Watts residents had migrated to California from the South, often with little money, education, or industrial training, and had severed religious and cultural ties fundamental to a sense of community. They had expected a totally different, radically improved way of life in their new environment, and the reality of Watts had only intensified their frustrations. Crying "Burn, baby, burn," many of Watts' Negroes were inflicting their rage and disappointment on the surrounding community during the August

1965 events, though baser motives also contributed to the depredation, such as the systematic looting carried out chiefly by young Negroes. Watts convinced many in SNCC that the northern Negro was as isolated and ostracized as his southern counterpart. This conviction, together with the Negro casualties resulting from the military operation that ended the Watts' riot, helped persuade SNCC members of the inevitability of Black Power and self-defense.

Another influential event was the passage of the Voting Rights Act by Congress on 6 August 1965. Two days before, SNCC headquarters in Atlanta had published a research paper written by SNCC staffer John Perdew dealing with the rate of Mississippi school integration in light of the 1964 Civil Rights Act providing that federal funds be stopped unless the state complied with the legislative mandate to enforce integration. Perdew's paper recalled that on 5 February 1965 Vice-President Hubert Humphrey announced that the federal government would cut off funds as a last resort only. The administration subsequently deferred to the states by asking only for a plan of "compliance" and then stipulating that for the allotments to continue, state boards of education would merely have to agree to handle funds without discrimination.

Considering the procrastination that characterized the execution of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, SNCC was skeptical about the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The bill suspended all "literacy, knowledge and character tests for voters in all states and counties where less than 50% of the voting age population was registered or voted in 1964," but it left to the discretion of the United States Attorney General the decision of whether to send federal registrars to effectuate the registration that the act made possible. Stokely Carmichael stated that the act had eased, but had not won, the southern black struggle for the right to vote; the problem that remained to irk SNCC and other civil rights organizations was enforcement of its provisions. In 1966, Dr. King commented:

Millions of Negroes are frustrated and angered because extravagant promises made less than a year ago are a shattered mockery today. When the 1965 voting rights law was signed it was proclaimed as the dawn of freedom and the open door to opportunity. What was minimally required under the law was the appointment of hundreds of registrars and thousands of Federal marshals to inhibit Southern

terror. Instead, fewer than forty registrars were appointed and not a single Federal law officer capable of making an arrest was sent into the South. As a consequence the old way of life—economic coercion, terrorism, murder and inhuman contempt—continued unabated.³

Part of the onus for the failure of voter registration to proceed rapidly in the South must fall on SNCC, which did not continue a voter registration drive because the first order of business in 1965 was to marshal forces to seat the MFDP representatives in Congress. The MFDP also concentrated on the 1965 congressional challenge, leaving undone the painstaking labor of local political organization in the various states of the Deep South.

This omission was the more significant because on 17 September the MFDP challenge to unseat the regular Mississippi congressional representatives was dismissed on a “technicality”. The official report of dismissal argued that the contestants had not exhausted other legal remedies before presenting their case to Congress. The MFDP was charged, for instance, for omitting to challenge the issuance of the Mississippi governor’s certificate of election in Federal District Court after the disputed 1964 election. In rebuttal, Lawrence Guyot of the MFDP insisted that Congress had intentionally rejected the challenge on the grounds of a legal technicality to avoid voting on the merits of the substantive question of whether the state-endorsed disenfranchisement of over 90 percent of Mississippi’s Negroes did or did not invalidate the congressional election. Although the verdict could not have surprised SNCC, the reactions to the dismissal published in SNCC’s chief northern newspaper, *The Movement*, expressed indignation and unrestrained animosity toward the United States government. The following excerpt reflects the feeling of many members of SNCC, for whom the concept of Black Power began to represent the best hope for a radical new social order: “I watched the Capitol for a while longer, until the stench rose in my nostrils from Capitol Hill. It rose like the smell of dead fish laying in the hot sun for ten days. When I could not stand the stench any longer I left.”⁴

After the defeat of the congressional challenge and SNCC’s violent reaction to it, Bayard Rustin reminded black activists that to obtain social security benefits, medical care, and federal aid to education for the black and white poor, they needed the machinery of government as well as the bulk of the American people on their side. Rustin ex-

plained that the coalition he had in mind was not a formal alliance with the AFL-CIO or members of congress but rather a politically effective pressure group of trade unionists, black and white liberal businessmen and professionals. SNCC, however, refused to listen to promises or proposals tendered by liberals black or white, in or out of government.

Scornful of liberal America, SNCC would have welcomed organizational support from white radicals, but that support was not forthcoming. If SDS had persevered in its community organizing campaign in the North, SNCC might have taken over duties that SDS had started in black neighborhoods or launched black projects close to ongoing SDS programs in white neighborhoods, to begin an interracial movement of the poor. This, however, did not materialize. By late 1965 SDS community organizing endeavors were minuscule in both black and white urban areas; campus protest against the Vietnam War had replaced community organizing as its major thrust. Voteless blacks and the poor and unemployed of both races were shunted aside by an influx of new SDS members predominantly concerned with the Vietnam conflict six thousand miles away. Therefore, by the end of 1965 SNCC was ready to turn away from both white liberals and radicals and embrace Black Power.

After four years of struggle, one can admire SNCC and sympathize with its efforts on behalf of rural southern black people. Yet when one considers its ambition—to effect a political and economic revolution in the southern half of the country—one wonders how it could have believed that three hundred years of history could even have begun to unravel in four years. The habits, values, and reactions of both black and white citizens in the South had been interwoven over generations into a conditioned, complex social fabric that was highly resistant to change, particularly as advocated by SNCC. Realistically, SNCC should not have expected significant victories in Mississippi, in Congress, or at the Democratic National Convention. Yet important things were accomplished. National concern was aroused, and white activists were obliged by SNCC's example to confront domestic issues. SNCC was probably premature in arguing that Black Power represented a necessary shift in strategy in order to achieve more for the American Negro.

1966: The Birth of Black Power

At the very start of the 1966 New Year, Sammy Younge, Jr., a popular young SNCC member, was murdered by a white filling station owner in Tuskegee, Alabama. Younge's murder was the immediate cause of an already planned announcement by SNCC on 6 January 1966 that placed his death and Vietnam in the same context.

The murder of Samuel Younge in Tuskegee, Alabama is no different from the murder of people in Vietnam, for both Younge and the Vietnamese sought and are seeking to secure the rights guaranteed them by law. In each case the United States government bears a great part of the responsibility for these deaths.⁵

Disregarding obligations to the South Vietnamese and implying that the Vietnamese and SNCC occupied the same position vis-à-vis the United States government—that of an exploited colony outside the pale or protection of international or civil law—SNCC condemned the United States position on the Vietnam War specifically because of the special inequities it believed the war brought to the American black man. White radicals, who opposed the war on moral or “imperialistic” grounds, frequently had difficulty identifying with the position of the black militants. In a 19 November 1966 speech at Berkeley, for example, Stokely Carmichael condemned the war as illegal and immoral not because of the suffering of the Vietnamese people but because of the unique predicament of the black man fighting the war. The draft, he maintained, was peculiarly degrading for the black soldier, who was nothing but a black mercenary, he said: “Any time a black man leaves a country where he can’t vote to supposedly deliver the vote for somebody else, he’s a black mercenary.”⁶ *

Meanwhile, SNCC's burgeoning militancy drastically diminished its flow of financial contributions and reduced its staff—from 225 in 1964 to 135 by 1966. *The Campus Voice*, an SDS organ at the University of Michigan, described SNCC's financial straits on the eve of

* Bayard Rustin and Vincent Harding (a historian specializing in black America) supported the idea that black militants were against the war because it siphoned critically needed men and money from the ghettos. Rustin advanced the proposition that to the ghetto-bound black, the war actually offered an opportunity to learn a profession.

1966: "SNCC is in dire need of money. Staff members have not been paid in weeks. Project offices in Mississippi have no phone. Staff cars sit idle because there is no money to repair them." 7 *

If SNCC's financial future was uncertain, its ideological future was not. Its statement condemning United States participation in the Vietnam War was a prelude to its official renunciation of non-violence and civil rights, symbolized by the replacement of John Lewis (SNCC chairman since 1963) by Stokely Carmichael ** at an all-night meeting at a SNCC retreat near Nashville, Tennessee, on 14 May 1966. Lewis is said to have been replaced because he spent too much time participating in civil rights conferences and away from community organizing, while Carmichael, a leading organizer in a current and important third party black political campaign in Lowndes County, Alabama, was able to bring to the chairmanship firsthand experience from the field.

A second interpretation of the replacement deserves equal consideration. Lewis had remained a moderate while the SNCC majority had shifted toward Black Power. In addition to his obligations to SNCC, which he carried out faithfully, Lewis was a board member of SCLC and reputedly close to Dr. King, with whom many SNCC staff members, in losing faith in non-violence, civil rights, and integration, had lost patience. Moreover, though Lewis argued for all-black leadership in civil rights organizations, he shared with King a belief in a coalition with liberal-labor forces as an indispensable method to promote social justice for the American Negro. The majority in SNCC no longer held these beliefs; instead, they shared Stokely Carmichael's commitment to Black Power and regarded as anathema coalitions with the Democrats on a national or local level.†

* "By mid July, 1965, SNCC was spending almost twice the amount of money it received as income. Expenses for the month had totaled \$64,350.53 as opposed to income of \$37,997.84. The biggest expenditure was for a payroll of \$27,044.58. The financial summary at the end of the month itemized payroll expenses as 'half-pay'" (Jack Minnis, *SNCC Profit and Loss Statement*, To SNCC Staff from Research and Bookkeeping, 19 July 1965, plus a Summary from the End of the Month).

** Born in Trinidad on 21 June 1941, Carmichael moved to New York City while in grammar school and grew up in an integrated neighborhood in the Bronx. He obtained a B.A. in philosophy from Howard University and volunteered for the Freedom Rides in 1961.

† The following incident suggests that the philosophies of Lewis and Carmichael were closer than suspected. Having just returned from two months in Af-

The ushering in of Black Power and SNCC's organizational conversion from an integrated to an all-black staff was not accomplished without the opposition of some leading SNCC members. Although the staff elected John Lewis to the executive committee, he resigned from SNCC within two weeks of the election. The single concession the Black Power bloc made was to elect one white SNCC member, Jack Minnis, to the executive committee. But Minnis' election diminished his overall influence since he ceased to be chairman of the SNCC research committee and could no longer serve on the finance committee.

James Forman (executive secretary since 1961) decided against running for that office again, and twenty-three-year-old Mrs. Ruby S. Robinson, a graduate of Spellman College, ascended to the post (Forman continued to wield great influence in the organization, however). After the May meeting in Nashville, the three-member secretariat comprised Carmichael, Robinson, and Cleveland Sellers who remained program director. SNCC also reduced the twenty-one-member executive committee to ten seats. In another important development, the direct impact of Robert Moses on SNCC waned as he reportedly left Mississippi and changed his name to Robert Parris to avoid becoming a larger-than-life figure to SNCC.

At the same time, SNCC began to elaborate the concept of Black Power. Toward the end of 1965 a SNCC group called the Vine Street or Atlanta Project met secretly to work on a "policy paper," finished early in 1966, espousing theories of Black Power and examining the role of white people in SNCC. The authors explained that dependence on Caucasians, either in SNCC or in the United States Congress, must be abandoned. They credited those white coworkers whose assistance in Mississippi had helped blacks to organize but said that role was now over. Specifically, the following reasons were given for the new stress on Black Power:

The inability of whites to relate to the cultural aspects of Black society; attitudes that whites, consciously or unconsciously, bring to

rica, John Lewis allegedly addressed a SNCC staff meeting in February 1965, convinced that the US was a "racist country". He asserted that the "civil rights movement must be black controlled, dominated and led" and tied the African liberation movement with it as follows: "I am convinced more than ever before that the social, economic, and political destiny of the black people of America is inseparable from that of our black brothers of Africa" (Statement by John Lewis, Chairman, SNCC Staff Meeting, February 1965).

Black communities about themselves (western superiority) and about Black people (paternalism); inability to shatter white-sponsored community myths of Black inferiority and self-negation; inability to combat the views of the Black community that white organizers, being "white," control Black organizers as puppets; insensitivity of both Black and white workers towards the hostility of the Black community on the issue of interracial "relationships" (sex); the unwillingness of whites to deal with the roots of racism which lie within the white community. . . . In an attempt to find a solution to our dilemma . . . we propose that our organization (SNCC) should be Black-staffed, Black-controlled and Black-financed.⁸

SNCC therefore decided to discontinue plans that might involve coalitions with liberal organizations or individuals, reasoning that liberal white allies habitually acted from a position of superior economic and political strength in any coalition involving black people and then sacrificed black interests to their own. The majority of SNCC activists were convinced that gains for the black American could be made only after organizing independent bases of power in the black community. As possible tactics to advance their position under Black Power, boycotts, electoral appeals, rent strikes, and work stoppages were suggested.* White officeholders would eventually have either to bargain with or confront organized black people. Black Power supporters declared their doctrine was not necessarily synonymous with violence but emphasized the right to self-defense when local law enforcement broke down. They also anticipated outbreaks of ghetto violence if black community demands were not met in low-income urban areas.

SNCC deemed a coalition with white radicals as impractical as coalescing with white liberals, though for quite different reasons. SNCC readily admitted that a coalition between poor blacks and poor whites

* Subsequent examples of Black Power in action included farming and marketing cooperatives run by CORE and also by Jessie Norris, a former member of SNCC; Operation Breadbasket, initiated by SCLC and organized to boycott merchants in the black community who did not hire and promote black people; as well as various capital-raising endeavors like NEGRO (National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization) (for further examples see Charles V. Hamilton, "An Advocate of Black Power Defines It," in *Black Protest in the Sixties*, ed. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick [Chicago: Quadrangle Books-New York Times, 1970], pp. 154-68). The program of Black Power also included substituting "preferential treatment" and "compensatory hiring" of Negroes for the traditional liberal idea of equal opportunity and equal treatment.

was not only desirable but the only acceptable coalition; Stokely Carmichael stated that such a coalition represented "the major internal instrument of change in American society."⁹ But the difficulty in organizing whites lay in the incapacity or reluctance of white radicals to enter these communities in sufficient numbers to get the job done. According to Carmichael, "the main responsibility for it [failure] falls upon whites."¹⁰ The original position paper produced by SNCC's Atlantic Project was more specific in its indictment.

So far we have found that most white radicals have sought to escape the horrible reality of America by going into the black community and attempting to organize black people while neglecting the organization of their own people's racist communities. How can one clean up someone else's yard when one's own yard is untidy?¹¹

Racial relations was only one aspect of the doctrine of Black Power. Mainly it promoted the emergence of a new black man within a culturally and politically harmonious black community. For such a community to materialize, however, the entire pattern of social relations in the United States had radically to change. According to Carmichael, non-violence and the appeal to conscience had failed to achieve proportionate political power for the southern Negro because the United States was institutionally a racist nation. If most Americans did not condone individual acts of discrimination or mistreatment of Negroes, they nevertheless caused and perpetuated racism because they preferred to see black people languish in ghettos rather than accept the social discomfort that would necessarily follow their acceptance into the mainstream of American life.

More generally, partisans of Black Power equated institutional racism with colonialism. To them, black people in the South and in northern ghettos were confined as a "colony" and then exploited economically and politically by the white ruling class. Hence, advocates of Black Power identified with and supported the Third World (people of color here and abroad), convinced that they shared the same political problems as well as the same cultural background. American "Negroes" (a white man's term), forcibly estranged from their ethnic heritage and personally degraded in this country, had presumably discovered themselves as African-Americans. Moreover, by vicariously enjoying African successes at self-government and liberation from colonial rule, the American blacks learned that they could pro-

mote the interests of their race without white leadership or advice. Ideally, by close association with the African civilization, American blacks would acquire individual pride and would no longer be compelled to imitate the white middle class. Cultural and psychological self-sufficiency derived from a common African ancestry was thus the first step in forming a cohesive black community, the instrument designed by Black Power followers to end "colonialism" and win political power for Afro-Americans.

Black Power advocates studied the success patterns of other racial minorities and attributed their achievements not just to hard work but to the formation of tightly knit Italian, Irish, Jewish, or Polish communities. Carmichael contended that by voting and conducting themselves as a bloc politically, these communities maximized their strength to achieve definable social and economic objectives. But Black Power meant something more; it meant that whenever blacks were a majority, they should take control of educational and governmental institutions; when the blacks were a minority, they should insist on proper representation.

Spokesmen for Black Power did not deny the possibility that a black community in control might become as racist as some white communities had been in the past.* The goals foreseen by Black Power were definitely antagonistic to white middle-class America but vague as to specific alternative values that would reward black people striving to better themselves. Carmichael candidly admitted that the political and economic structure of the United States must be "modernized" (i.e., replaced) before new values could be created and the middle class transformed. Part of the political structure to be emasculated or eliminated included the Republican and Democratic parties and the administrative apparatus that ensured the continued operation of the government.

Black Power assumed that political organizing and the struggle for

* On 16 January 1972 Huey Newton, leader of the Oakland, California-based faction of the Black Panther party, announced his intention of organizing black picket lines outside stores owned by white merchants in the black community to obtain economic concessions for the "black community". Newton had originally established this practice against stores run by black men in the community, forcing them to contribute to Panther-sponsored community programs or to accept tremendous financial losses. Applied to white merchants in a "controlled" area, this practice not only had racial overtones but would feed the fear of white neighborhoods.

power would satisfy the black community; according to Carmichael, "Our basic premise is that money and jobs are not the final answer to the black man's problem."¹² The statement implies that along with jobs and money, black people needed an independent self-awareness to free themselves from psychological reliance on white people. It also implies, on the one hand, that the white middle class would deny the black man his rightful access to jobs and suburban living or, on the other hand, that the acquisition of middle-class material rewards was tantamount to accepting "white superiority" or "colonial status". In downgrading the importance of jobs and money, because possession of these tangibles would qualify black families as "middle class" and assure their escape from the ghetto, Black Power leaders resembled some New Left intellectuals in Great Britain at the close of the fifties. The latter had deprecated the acquisition by English working-class families of refrigerators and washing machines, or their moving from begrimed neighborhoods to more comfortable housing, because they feared middle-class "luxuries" would weaken the political solidarity of the working class. Some advocates of Black Power may likewise have viewed the success of a black political movement as dependent on an angry black community unable to get private or group relief except by subordinating itself to the movement's political leadership.

In 1966, SNCC chose Lowndes County, Alabama, as a target area to test the efficacy of Black Power by recruiting black residents into a third party to pit against the Democrats in a local election on 8 November 1966. Although Lowndes County had 5,122 eligible Negro voters and 1,900 eligible white voters, not one black man or woman was registered to vote when SNCC started its voter registration program in the county in March 1965. SNCC made little progress registering potential voters until the Voting Rights Bill passed and federal examiners entered the county to insist that county registrars observe the letter of the new voting law. As a result, hundreds of adult blacks quickly registered to vote. SNCC sponsored the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) as an independent political party at the November 1966 elections under an Alabama law validating any party whose candidates receive 20 percent of the total vote. Not wanting to repeat the experience of the MFDP, which had depended on liberal support and competed with the white Democratic party of Mississippi, SNCC insisted that LCFO be independent of both the Republican and Democratic parties.

But opinions differed in Lowndes County about the advisability of abandoning national political parties and building an independent third party. Early in 1966 a meeting was called for all leaders of local civil rights organizations in Alabama to discuss political tactics and especially the question of whether black people should side with the Democratic party or create their own party. At the meeting, Hosea Williams, director of political education for SCLC, differed with Stokely Carmichael on the merits of independent political parties, which Carmichael supported. Williams argued that Negroes should function within the established parties, reminding his audience that it represented only 35 percent of the people in Alabama and 10 percent of the population in the United States. Williams thought the third party idea would be suicidal in the state and national elections and asked Carmichael about the eventual ramifications of LCFO, whose emblem, the "Black Panther," Carmichael proudly described as a "mean cat":

Will they treat white folks like the white folks treated them? Will they hate the white folks like the white folks hated them? That's the question I'm asking.

We may mess around here and create a monster in Alabama. It will be detrimental to generations of Negroes unborn.¹³

Carmichael argued that the idea of separate parties was the poor Negro's only chance to change the conditions of his life. Indigent blacks had been told that if they worked hard every day they could make it, but Carmichael maintained that the life of the rural Negro belied this because they worked from sunup to sundown and made \$3 a day. Sharecroppers and tenant farmers, who composed the majority of blacks in the county, had an annual income of \$985. Carmichael insisted that if Alabama blacks could organize themselves into a solid block of votes, 30–35 percent of the population, they would better their condition by political victories, even on the state level where the remaining 65–70 percent of the vote would be split among Democrats, Republicans, and fractions thereof. The meeting adjourned inconclusively.*

* As part of the campaign, Carmichael later used the pressing economic needs of rural black people in Alabama to comment on the Vietnam War, asserting that SNCC was not against the war for moral reasons but for practical reasons—to redirect funds from Vietnam to Alabama.

Nevertheless, in March 1966 black citizens of Lowndes County formally constituted the LCFO and in the May primary elections chose candidates to oppose Democratic incumbents for the offices of sheriff, coroner, tax assessor, tax collector, and openings on the board of education. Nearly one thousand Negroes assembled in Hayneville, Alabama, on 3 May to vote for their choice on the LCFO ticket.

After the primaries, SNCC field workers spent the period before the November election assisting in the registration of voters and trying to persuade newly registered voters to cast their ballots for LCFO candidates. A week before the election, seventy-five LCFO supporters met to decide how to guard the polling places and provide "helpers" to accompany illiterate blacks into the voting booth, a duty usually performed by white members of the Democratic party. On 8 November 1966, the LCFO candidates, also known as the Black Panther party after their ballot symbol, went down in defeat. The party posted at least 1,600 ballots for each candidate out of 3,500 to 4,000 votes cast, as black people in the county voted for the first time in seventy-five years. Reasons for the defeat included fear, intimidation by plantation owners who escorted their workers to the polling place, and insufficient preparation and apathy among some blacks.

Besides the LCFO campaign, SNCC planned other programs in 1966 that were influenced by the principles of Black Power. Compared to previous years, SNCC had fewer men in the field, and some of these assisted local programs devised at the summer "People's Conferences" the year before. Other members of the staff proselytized black students on southern campuses to become involved in the Black Power movement. Many among the SNCC staff regarded the North as the most promising region for the political organizing of blacks because of ghetto discontent and the potential political power concentrated there. SNCC also continued to work on enlisting local blacks across the Alabama Black Belt along LCFO lines, in counties where blacks enjoyed a numerical plurality.

Paradoxically, despite the new programs, publicity, and the advent of Black Power, SNCC declined after 1966 and eventually disappeared from view.* To SNCC, the shift from non-violence and a vi-

* By 1967-68, Stokely Carmichael and his successor H. Rap Brown were under indictment, and SNCC had lost its continuity. Having decided that SNCC was no longer student-oriented, in 1968 a group of black leaders met at Shaw University (where SNCC was born) and formed the Congress for the

sion of a "beloved community" to self-defense and Black Power was more than a major policy change, it meant a definitive cultural, political, and psychological alteration. This transformation, combined with the physical enervation of SNCC members (compounded by a succession of political defeats), caused many members to leave SNCC to seek new perspectives. Some returned to school or to distant black neighborhoods, still working in the Negro community but in a different milieu—with the government's War on Poverty program, for instance. Others needed a rest and just dropped out. A few had acquired families and new responsibilities that demanded attention. A number of staff members sought relief in alcohol, drugs, or total submergence in new Black Power militancy.

Unity of Black Students (CUBS) to replace SNCC as a campus organization. Present at the conference were Julian Bond, black Georgia legislator and formerly of SNCC, Los Angeles militant Ron Karenga, and poet LeRoi Jones.

SDS from 1960 to 1964: The Torchbearers of the New Left

1960–1963: Establishing the Intellectual and Structural Basis for a New Left

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was originally the student section of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), a well-established social-democratic organization founded in 1905 by Jack London and Upton Sinclair.* The LID was a nonprofit educational organization opposed to communism or any form of totalitarianism and committed to a program of education to “increase democracy in the economic, political, and cultural life of the nation.” A joint LID-SDS brochure printed during the 1959–60 school year stated that “the function of SDS on the college campus is to raise issues, to ask the pertinent questions” about social problems, although “in some situations it [SDS] takes direct action”¹ (direct action by SDS before 1959 included demonstrations against discrimination in the hiring of airline employees and in support of striking unionists). For the most part SDS members were students on eastern campuses. The organization’s major source of financial aid was the league proper and also friends of the LID in labor unions and educational foundations.

Until 1960, SDS generally followed the parent organization’s quasi-activist, educational approach. Then the sit-ins erupted in the South, and the campaign for equal rights—evolved, initiated, and conducted by black students virtually independent of adult leadership—immediately captured the imagination of people in SDS. Led by Robert A. (Al) Haber,** president-elect in 1960, SDS arranged a Conference on Human Rights at the University of Michigan in the

* LID was originally known as the Intercollegiate Socialist Society and SDS was called the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID).

** Vice-President of SDS in 1959–60, Al Haber was a member of the National Executive Committee of Turn Toward Peace and the founder of the Political Issues Club while a student at the University of Michigan.

spring of that year. Aided by members of the National Student Association and other student groups, the conference drew hundreds of students primarily from midwestern colleges. In a four-day series of meetings and workshops, those in attendance learned confrontation techniques helpful in battling discrimination on their own campuses.

Subsequently, SDS sponsored similar but smaller regional conferences in Vermont, North Carolina, and elsewhere in response to the sit-ins in the South. Through these conferences and individual contacts, SDS members met black students who later formed the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), marking the beginning of a relationship so close that in its formative years (especially during its community organizing phase), SDS was known as a northern counterpart, or northern parallel, of SNCC. After the sit-ins were under way, Tom Hayden,* a prominent member of SDS, operated as a field secretary in the South, and, along with other members, worked in liaison with SNCC through 1961. SDS established an office in Atlanta, Georgia, where SNCC had its main headquarters, and SNCC members held positions on the SDS national executive committee.**

In 1960–61, as SNCC established its independence from established adult civil rights groups, SDS became increasingly sensitive about the degree of control exercised over its affairs by the LID. Theoretically autonomous, SDS policy and functions had nevertheless to be within the broad aims and purposes of the LID, while its administrative procedure, policy, and programs were subject to review by the LID. The two organizations communicated through a Student Activities Committee (SAC) composed of members from both SDS and LID.

SDS claimed that between 1960 and 1962 the league interfered with its operation by discharging staff members and curtailing programs. Although interference may have occurred, there was little going on in SDS at the time to interfere with. A campus-based organization, SDS was involved in peace and civil rights work as well as research and writing on social problems. But according to C. Clark Kissinger, a national secretary, SDS was virtually “nonexistent as an

* Hayden was a former editor of the *Michigan Daily*, a free-lance writer, and graduate student of journalism at the University of Michigan.

** In 1962, for instance, Timothy Jenkins, a SNCC founder, and John Robert Zellner, a member of the SNCC staff, sat with fifteen others on the SDS national executive committee.

organization during 1960–1961.”² Still, foundations were being laid within SDS for something new. An SDS pamphlet published in 1961 accurately described the student department of the LID as an “organization being built.”³

By extending the scope of its influence to include other youth organizations, SDS hoped to coordinate activities among these groups in much the same way as SNCC had initially functioned; to this end, it worked to recruit personnel from these organizations into its own ranks.* The following SDS statement emphasizes the significance of its relations with other groups.

Its [SDS] approach to political action has made a bridge between organizations and movements. It is developing a task force in Washington around the Congress and liberal organizations. It has functioning and fraternal relations with the National Student Association, the Young Democrats, the campus group of Americans for Democratic Action, the YPSL [the Young People’s Socialist League], and Student Peace Union, the Young Christian Students and the Student Religious Liberals, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, CORE and Campus NAACP—not simply on the national level and in terms of a network of interpersonal relations, but with the day to day programming by the local units of these groups.⁴

The relationship between SDS and the National Student Association in 1961 illustrates the importance SDS attributed to making its weight felt in this and other organizations. NSA regional and national meetings were a rendezvous at which northern white radicals became acquainted, and, in that respect, the NSA provided SDS with the opportunity for concerted political action: “Probably SDS’s most notable

* In addition to the SNCC members on the SDS national executive committee, the following individuals on the committee were among those who were influential in other organizations by the summer of 1962: Ann Cook, one of the founders of the Northern Student Movement; Judith Cowan, former vice-chairman of the Illinois-Wisconsin region of the United States National Student Association (USNSA); Elizabeth Garmen, a former assistant to the president of USNSA; Timothy Jenkins, a national affairs vice president of USNSA; Theodore Reed, a former member of the national council of the Student Peace Union; Richard Roman, chairman of the Young People’s Socialist League; Robert Ross, a member of the international advisory board of USNSA and director of the SDS Liberal Study Group within USNSA; and Gary Weissman, a former chairman of the national executive committee of USNSA.

activity in the first years was an attempt to intervene in NSA Congresses through a coalition with Campus ADA (Americans for Democratic Action), called the Liberal Study Group.”⁵ This is not to imply that NSA officially condoned SDS politics or goals. Considering the size and administrative complexity of the NSA, it was understandable that smaller, homogeneous groups could often make an impact disproportionate to their numbers. In fact, shortly before the fourteenth NSA Congress held in August 1961, John Feldkamp, chairman of NSA’s national executive committee, stated in a letter to NSA national headquarters that SDS “was nothing officially to the Association” and should not be invited as an official guest.⁶ Feldkamp anticipated a good deal of internal political maneuvering at the August congress: “This Congress could be a real wild one. I myself wish that outside groups such as the Students for Democratic Society and the Young Americans for Freedom would not place such heavy stakes on the outcome of the Congress.”⁷

SDS objectives for the Fourteenth Congress were discussed at length in a memorandum written for that purpose and from which the following information is taken. At previous congresses, and at the Thirteenth Congress in particular, the activities of SDS and allied groups had been conducted under the auspices of a “liberal caucus”. Discussions held during the past year in preparation for the Fourteenth Congress, and in which SDS participated, concluded that a “Liberal Study Group” should act as the principal base of operations at the Madison, Wisconsin, site of the August 1961 congress. Duties at the congress would be divided between the liberal caucus and the Liberal Study Group—the caucus performing as a strategy committee, preparing for elections, competing in the floor debates, marshaling votes for resolutions, and generally monitoring congressional proceedings; the Liberal Study Group becoming the central concern of the SDS-liberal-Left nexus at the congress.

The caucus would present a program of actions; the Study Group would complement this program with a program of education and discussion to define the social goals and values underlying the issues being debated. Specifically, the Study Group would formulate a definite “liberal position” to be presented in resolutions and committee meetings and would serve in addition to respond to conservative political viewpoints within the NSA. The group was directed by individuals of various organizational backgrounds, including the campus divi-

sion of ADA, the Democratic National Student Federation, campus political parties, like Berkeley's SLATE, and various issue groups such as the Student Peace Union and, of course, SDS.

From the point of view of strategy, the congress provided SDS an auspicious opportunity to build local chapters on campuses throughout the country by making an affirmative impression on representatives from the various colleges and universities assembled at the congress. The election of NSA national officers offered SDS another opportunity to advance its position—i.e., NSA's influence might be harnessed for SDS's ultimate benefit. Congressional proposals, resolutions, and mandates were carefully prepared by the Study Group to solidify the candidacy of SDS favorites. As it turned out, SDS's public relations campaign was moderately successful; although it lost the presidency, Paul Potter, a member of SDS, won the office of national affairs vice-president.

After the Fourteenth NSA Congress adjourned, the Liberal Study Group remained intact. Its objectives included establishing "a responsible liberal pressure on the NSA all year round," encouraging new students to develop a program for the next school year, and maintaining communications and liaison with the various organizations in the liberal-Left student community.⁸ * More ambitiously, SDS members dissatisfied with old political approaches regarded the Liberal Study Group as an appropriate vehicle to influence NSA in its entirety. Although falling short in this endeavor, they achieved that objective within SDS itself. In the fall of 1961, Al Haber and approximately sixty colleagues gained control of SDS and began to formulate in more concrete terms their views about the goals of a new student Left in America.⁹

In general, Al Haber, Tom Hayden, and their associates in SDS were opposed to "racism, militarism, nationalism, oppression of mind and spirit, unrestrained capitalism, provincialism of various kinds, and the Bomb."¹⁰ In particular, they rejected various elements of liberalism and social-democratic reformism, as well as Stalinism and the historical determinism of the Marxist doctrine. They contended that the tyrannical bureaucracy of the Soviet Union was more detrimental to the exercise of political rights than the government-military-in-

* In 1962 Robert Ross was director of the SDS Liberal Study Group within NSA and also sat on the SDS national executive committee.

dustrial complex that ruled the United States. Richard Rothstein, an SDS historian, elaborated.

SDS was organized and joined by young people whose experience with the American electoral process, the Communist Party, and the American trade unions led them to be deeply mistrustful of bureaucratic structures and of representative democratic forms. . . .

It was common among us to see the United States and the U.S.S.R. as basically equivalent evils and the common denominator factor was the centralized bureaucratization of both societies where politics took place without "publics," without responsibility . . .¹¹

In the opinion of SDS, the self-perpetuating autonomy of government bureaucracies and invisible oligarchic minorities not only denied American citizens access to, and control over, the governmental apparatus and their own destinies but also resulted in misplaced national priorities. SDS believed that billions of dollars were spent unnecessarily for defense, leaving the more pressing domestic problems unresolved.

SDS grew out of a feeling that SDS could tie together under one heading and one office an analysis which saw civil rights, poverty, and defense expenditures intertwined. The analysis said that poverty and discrimination were inextricably linked, that defense expenditures bred not only war but also domestic slums and hunger.¹²

Liberals were criticized by SDS for either abetting or tacitly accepting the condition of man and the state in the early 1960s. Tom Hayden maintained that the "liberal philosophy dealt inadequately with the 20th century . . . eliminating emotion, dissent and outrage" and leaving people like himself no hope for thoroughgoing change.¹³ In a subsequent statement, Hayden condemned another aspect of what he regarded as liberal optimism: "There is little reason to believe today in the magic mechanism of History and Progress nor in the finality of Truth. Not when we have created the Bomb with our minds and hands, and turned people to soap, and cities to ash."¹⁴

SDS knew in 1961 that mere opposition to accepted approaches and solutions to social problems would not mobilize a New Left. For radical reform, new agencies and programs were required. Many students in SDS agreed with C. Wright Mills that a New Left could de-

pend for radical action not on American workers but on themselves and fellow intellectuals who were educationally equipped to seek and find new solutions. Realizing, however, that alone they could not muster sufficient political strength, they decided upon collective action cemented by a unanimity of purpose undivided by sectarian ideological quarrels. Therefore, in order to change society, a New Left had to draw "on what remains of the adult labor, academic and political communities, not just revolt in despair against them and the world they have designed for us." ¹⁵

To avoid disruptive infighting, SDS foresaw a coherent political philosophy evolving slowly alongside a prolonged examination of the causes of social distress. At the end of 1961, SDS concentrated on formulating a program and a social analysis to be presented at its June 1962 convention. The program would be a "radical democratic" one with a multiissue presentation designed to entice apathetic youth to join a New Left. It would help develop a movement for university reform, educate students about social, political, and economic problems, promote participation in ongoing civil rights, civil liberties, and peace movements, and ultimately expand these movements "into the adult community with the view of coalescing such potentially allied interests as labor, farmers, and minority groups into a unified progressive force in American politics." ¹⁶ Tom Hayden warned the activists about the obstacles they would have to surmount in the course of a New Left movement:

Contrary to what our passions demand, our struggle will not be brief and cataclysmic. . . . It will be slow and exhaustingly complex, lasting at the very least for our lifetimes. For many of us it will not and cannot be a college fling, a costless, painless tugging at our liberal sentimentality. It will be longer, and the cost great.¹⁷

To translate its thoughts into action and to set goals for 1962, SDS convened a leadership meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan, from 28 to 31 December 1961. Tom Hayden, who had worked with SNCC and kept the membership abreast of his activities by means of a series of *Southern Reports*, returned from the South just before the meeting. At Ann Arbor, Hayden was put in charge of drafting a political manifesto setting forth the analysis and program for a New Left to be presented at the June 1962 SDS convention. Although completion of this

document received the highest priority for the new year, other activities were not neglected. An intensive campaign to increase membership and obtain the affiliation or association of independent youth groups was also planned for the spring, and a major student protest against the arms race was scheduled for 16–17 February 1962.

On those two days, five thousand students converged on Washington, D.C., to question members of the Kennedy administration about disarmament and to march for peace. Organized by students at Harvard, the “Washington Project” utilized direct confrontation to challenge President Kennedy’s advisers concerning the pros and cons of atmospheric nuclear testing, disarmament, and civil defense. The cosponsors of the project were the Student Peace Union, SDS, the American Friends Service Committee (a Quaker organization) and Students for a Sane Society.

The SDS leadership met occasionally before the June 1962 convention to discuss different aspects of the manifesto; on 16 February 1962, members of the executive committee met at Swarthmore College for this purpose. As the weeks passed and the sphere of communication broadened, SDS staff members contacted educators and local groups, as well as their Atlanta office and SNCC, to solicit impressions or to continue discussions on the subject.

Meanwhile, SDS kept the LID up-to-date on its progress on the manifesto. On 5–6 May the national executive committee of SDS met at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, drafted the rough outline of its statement on a New Left (Michael Harrington of LID, a well-known social critic and member of the Student Activities Committee, attended the meeting), and agreed to hold the convention from 11 to 15 June. Al Haber and Manny Maravchik, chairman of the SAC, discussed the SDS-LID disagreement about the anticommunist policy of LID and the Left-labor community (SDS favored establishing communications with organizations outside the democratic left) but did not resolve their differences at this meeting.

On 24 May the SAC decided to hold the convention at the Franklin D. Roosevelt AFL-CIO Labor Center in Port Huron, Michigan. The convention elected Tom Hayden president, and Hayden placed the singularity of that convention in its proper perspective: “Only a year old in its present form, SDS truly became a movement and an organization at [this] convention, it found a broad leadership and widespread commitment.”¹⁸

Fifty-nine individuals attended the Port Huron convention.* Of this number, forty-three had votes cast; the remainder were individual or organizational observers. The national executive committee meeting held at Chapel Hill the previous month had produced the formula for voting representation at the convention. Chapter delegates could hold up to, but no more than 5 votes. Persons either from associated groups or at-large had the prerogative of soliciting personal proxies up to a total of 5 votes. All together, eight of the eleven active area or chapter bodies of SDS came to the convention with 118 votes. The following area and campus groups sent voting representatives to the convention: Michigan, New York City, Oberlin, Johns Hopkins, Swarthmore, Earlham, Vassar, and Bowdoin (Syracuse was not yet operating as a chapter, and although Temple and Central State College named delegates, they did not attend the convention). The combined voting strength of Michigan and New York City totaled over 50 percent of the votes cast at the convention. In terms of the total number of students who belonged to SDS in June 1962, "membership from Michigan is about 100 or 16 percent of the membership, from New York City 198 or 25 percent of the membership.**

The voting rights of delegates from other student organizations at the convention hinged on the type of relationship they had with SDS. Representatives from the Young Christian Students and the National Student Christian Federation were seated as observers, as was a member of the Progressive Youth Organizing Committee, known to the convention as the youth-organizing body of the Communist party. Other organizational representatives were seated as voting delegates as follows:

Organizations such as the Young Democrats, Americans for Democratic Action, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Student Peace Union, National Association for the Advancement of Col-

* In 1959, less than forty people were present at the SDS convention. The next year, fifty people attended. SDS claimed that a convention was not scheduled for 1961 due to instructions from LID.

** According to these figures furnished by SDS (see footnote 18), it had almost 800 members at the 1962 convention. For another estimate placing the membership at this time at 300 students, see E. Joseph Shoben, Jr., Philip Werdell, and Durward Long, "Radical Student Organizations," in *Protest: Student Activism in America*, ed. Julian Foster and Durward Long (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970), p. 207.

ored People, Young Peoples Socialist League, and Congress on Racial Equality were "represented" at the Convention by SDS *members* with vote and voice and full participation in deciding on the business of the Convention.¹⁹

The convention elected a president, the spokesman and executor of policy; a vice-president, and fifteen other officers previously known as the national executive committee. Of the national officers, the national secretary was the chief administrative officer, responsible to the president and the national council (NC). The convention established the national council as the major policy-making and program body of SDS; the NC would make policy decisions in the interim period between conventions. The voting members of the council consisted of chapter representatives, the seventeen national officers, and liaison delegates from associated groups and fraternal organizations, who had to be SDS members.

The most important event at the convention, however, was the unveiling of a New Left statement of purpose entitled the *Port Huron Statement*. Written primarily by Tom Hayden, it set the tone for SDS for several years. The document included a social analysis, a program for radical change, and suggested tactics to achieve its program. It spoke for university students raised in material comfort and led to believe in the superior qualities of the American system. As these students grew older, they concluded that what they had been taught was wrong and that America's reality consisted of bigotry, the cold war, the threat of nuclear annihilation, widespread poverty, and political manipulation. Accepting this basically negative view of America, SDS insisted that a New Left was necessary because the established political and educational institutions to which a New Left might turn for guidance were incapable of giving it direction. The universities failed to provide moral enlightenment, and the liberal and socialist faiths had forsaken vision and idealism. The reasons for breaking with the past were various.

The dreams of the older left were perverted by Stalinism and never recreated; the congressional stalemate makes men narrow their view of the possible; the specialization of human activity leaves little room for sweeping thought; the horrors of the twentieth century, symbolized in the gas-ovens and concentration camps and atom bombs, have blasted hopefulness. To be idealistic is to be considered apocalyptic,

deluded. To have no serious aspirations, on the contrary, is to be "toughminded".²⁰

At the outset of its social analysis, the document attributed near-universal student apathy to the effort of university administrations to enforce the practice of *in loco parentis*. Supposedly "moral guardians" of the students, many college administrators were said to stifle dissent and discourage political curiosity. The *Port Huron Statement* depicted the United States as a nation in its doldrums, its citizenry "threatened by forces about which they know little and of which they can say less." Acknowledging that most citizens were content with life in the United States, it questioned whether this apparent approval was real or obtained by "manipulated acquiescence". The document argued that Americans actually felt powerless to sway events that touched them. To SDS, the hub of the problem was that gap in the democratic process which separated people from the real wielders of power, a condition described as "politics without publics." SDS believed that such groups as the southern Negro, the migrant worker, and the poor in general came under this heading, since they had been deprived more than other classes of an opportunity to voice their needs.

The *Port Huron Statement* admitted that most Americans lived comfortably but indicted society for permitting "poverty and deprivation to remain an unbreakable way of life for millions." Hard-core poverty existed because the indigent were "unable to overcome the collection of forces working against them: poor health, bad neighborhoods, miserable schooling, inadequate 'welfare' services, unemployment and under employment, weak political and union organizing."²¹ It was observed that while a small minority of Americans held enormous wealth, work itself was "often unfulfilling and victimizing" and that ordinary citizens purchased goods because of fashion appeal rather than utility.

The tendency to over-production, to gluts of surplus commodities, encourages market research techniques to deliberately create pseudo-needs in consumers—we learn to buy "smart" things, regardless of their utility—and introduces wasteful "planned obsolescence" as a permanent feature of business strategy. While real social needs accumulate as rapidly as profits, it becomes evident that money, instead of dignity of character, remains a pivotal American value.²²

The principal villain in this assessment was the "military-industrial complex," which influenced foreign policy and defense spending while remaining corporately and personally unaccountable to the public and was responsible for the "permanent war economy, the continuous use of military spending as a solution to economic problems." Secrecy and elitism diminished "democratic institutions and habits," while military propaganda, together with congressional investigating committees, "sacrificed civil liberties and social welfare."

In the *Port Huron Statement*, SDS argued not only that American economic prosperity was dependent on military spending but that America's foreign policy was based on a concern for foreign investment and a negative anticommunist political stance. America's anachronistic dependence on armaments and its suspicion of the Soviet Union made an amicable settlement of international disputes impossible. To the SDS collective mind, America's defense posture was illogical in light of the "apparent Soviet disinterest in building a first strike arsenal of weapons" and their disposition toward "real disarmament and real controls." The statement concluded that "the American military response has been more effective in deterring the growth of democracy than communism" and had fostered "suspicion, suppression, and stiff military resistance" to the United States in the Soviet Union. While deploring the absence of personal and institutional freedom in the Soviet Union, SDS argued that the Soviets were not inherently expansionist, aggressive, or prepared to dominate mankind by military means. The risk was remote, in its estimation, that the Soviets would achieve a nuclear preponderance as a prelude to a political or military offensive. To SDS, however, the risk was worth taking in order to promote values and social programs sacrificed or endangered by the military-industrial complex.

The complex was criticized for spending on defense rather than giving more support to underdeveloped countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa and for opposing Third World revolutions in Laos, Guatemala, Cuba, Egypt, and Iran. Since, in SDS's opinion there was no military threat from the Soviet Union, the continuation of a huge defense establishment was solely in the interest of private enterprise and corporate America and totally indifferent to welfare needs. "Needs in housing, education, minority rights, health care, land redevelopment, hourly wages" were subordinated to the primacy of augmenting the military and economic strength of the West. According

to SDS, America's anticommunism, which rationalized defense spending, verged on paranoia, militated against open debate, and spawned movements contrary to democratic institutions. For SDS the military-industrial complex (or power elite) served as a more convenient label for "the bureaucracy," a major cause of SDS unhappiness with modern society. The bureaucracy was a faceless, impenetrable shell that made the decision-making process invisible and the entire system resistant to real change. For SDS, however, the bureaucracy went beyond the corporate, military, and political world and included labor unions as well.

In addition to its social critique, the statement presented a program for radical change to promote welfare legislation and end the cold war, arguing that a reversal of foreign policy assumptions and funding would radically affect domestic priorities and ease international tensions. SDS urged unilateral disarmament measures, discontinuation of the Polaris submarine and missile program, and the dismantling of several military bases contiguous to the Soviet Union. NATO should be gradually eliminated and East Germany and Communist China recognized as sovereign nations within the United Nations.

Equally important for SDS were the domestic repercussions that would result from an end to the cold war. A drastic reduction in military spending would enable implementation of a crucial proposal in the Port Huron platform—an allocation of resources based on social needs of a nonmilitary nature. Public spending would "abolish squalor, terminate neglect, and establish an environment for people to live in with dignity and creativeness." Political and social obstacles impeding the negro's advancement to full equality would be demolished by unprecedented federal funding, directly affecting "wage levels, housing conditions, educational privileges, and employment opportunities." "Local, regional, and national planning" would be initiated to control the corporations and to streamline the government bureaucracy. Further, experiments in decentralization were designed to apply participatory democracy to major cities by dividing them into smaller, manageable communities. The statement exempted education from local control, contending that it was "too vital a public program to be completely entrusted to the province of the various states and local units." Finally, in addition to a gigantic program to meet the needs of developing nations, the principal goal of the United States should be the abolition of "hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance

and violence" and the substitution of "abundance, reason, love, and international cooperation."

Where would SDS find the political support necessary to its program for change? Acknowledging that the sympathetic disposition of the labor movement to its program was "central" to success, the statement scored labor for its lapsed idealism since World War II but trusted that its natural interest in the abolition of exploitation might reconstitute it as a leader in the "synthesis of the civil rights, peace and economic reform movements." A reformed Democratic party was deemed equally essential to the success of the Port Huron program. In Congress, a "liberal force" could be energized to advance the program if the Dixiecrats (southern conservatives) were expelled from the Democratic party and southern blacks permitted to vote in large numbers.

The statement visualized radical students as both agents and catalysts. As agents, they would politicalize the American university and wrest administrative control from its bureaucracy to use the university's intellectual skills and strategic location for "social purposes." The New Left would act as a catalyst to arouse controversy across the nation and awaken other students from their lethargy. The authors of the statement knew that students alone could not persuade the country to adopt a New Left program, with or without the university as a command post, but envisaged themselves making "fraternal and functional contact with allies in labor, civil rights, and other liberal forces outside the campus."

In addition to its social analysis and program for radical change, the statement offered a vision of new values and a new social system. SDS would build a new society on the unlimited promise of man and the concept of participatory democracy. Man was credited with "unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity." The document admonished that man's relations with his neighbor should involve fraternity and honesty. The social system that SDS offered the nation was called participatory democracy, and it was governed by two central aims: "That the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their participation."²³

The concept of participatory democracy had originated with Robert Moses and the original SNCC field workers laboring with rural Mississippi Negroes in 1961. SDS had then seized the concept, coined

the term, and developed the theory, which provided the intellectual guidelines for its community organizing projects and was used subsequently as a yardstick to evaluate the democratic authenticity of economic and political institutions in this country.

The doctrine was criticized, however, for being too vague. Hal Draper, an influential political militant and social critic, described the problem this way:

My difficulty is that I do not have the least idea what it means. I was confused enough when I heard it meant rejection of representative democracy, or else a "consensus" form of meeting. . . . Things were worse when Staughton Lynd explained in *Dissent* that it means the dual-power institution idea, among other things. When I found out from Sid Lens, in *Liberation*, that "participative democracy" exists under Castro, Nasser and maybe even Sukarno *more* than in the U.S., and that it does not necessarily entail free elections, I decided to go back to old fashioned democratic democracy.²⁴

There was a reason for this vagueness. SDS regarded the 1962 *Port Huron Statement* as only the first in a series of social statements. As it turned out, the organization's purposes and values changed with time and circumstances, and efforts to develop a fresh New Left analysis and ideology ceased.* Thus, the original definition was left open to individual interpretation. SNCC and SDS took the concept literally, because for both organizations it was a theoretical and functional antidote to the bureaucratization that they believed nullified the democratic process for most citizens. Economically, participatory democracy suggested a belief in socialism rather than capitalism. The search for an American expression of socialism was never successfully concluded, however, partly because of an awareness of the bureaucratic consequences of public ownership—i.e., they recognized that individual liberty would be limited under socialist planning: ". . . For if the decisions which affect countless lives are still so centralized and concentrated under socialism that the person affected is rendered impotent, a radical planner is little better than an entrepreneurial planner." 25 **

* By 1965, SDS had begun to turn from reform to revolution and Marxism-Leninism.

** For a comparison of statements coming closer to a full acceptance of socialism under the term "participatory democracy," see Staughton Lynd, "Social-

If SDS was proud of the *Port Huron Statement*, the League for Industrial Democracy, its parent organization, was not. On 6 July 1962 Tom Hayden and Al Haber (the new national secretary) were summoned by the LID executive committee to hear charges based on the contents of the statement and the SDS convention. According to SDS, the LID accused it of allowing the Michigan delegation to control the voting power of the convention, of favoring a popular front, and of being comparatively uncritical of the Soviet Union in placing the blame for the cold war. LID informed Hayden and Haber that while neither the present program and mandate of SDS nor the standing of the seventeen national officers composing the national executive committee (NEC) would be tampered with, the salary for the SDS staff would be discontinued, and SDS was enjoined from publishing and distributing material which, in any case, LID would not pay for. LID planned to appoint a student secretary to oversee the daily operation of the group. SDS claimed that on Monday, 8 July, the lock on its New York office was changed and its members denied access to organizational facilities.

The national executive committee of SDS rallied quickly and sent a thirty-page memorandum to the LID executive committee labeling as "absurd" the charge that it had adopted a popular front position for seating Communist youth observers and insisting it was the most "democratic position to allow all persons who request the privilege to be able to observe." At the June convention one individual who belonged to the Communist Progressive Youth Organizing Committee had been accorded this privilege, and SDS stressed that accepting him as an observer was not tantamount to either sanctioning his beliefs or including him into the developing New Left community.*

Another reason for LID's concern about SDS "popular fronting" at the convention was the defeat of certain proposed amendments to the SDS constitution. Examples from the proposed amendments and the explanations SDS gave for their defeat ran as follows:

ism, *The Forbidden Word*," *Studies on the Left* 3, no. 3 (summer 1963), pp. 18–20, and Ronald Aronson and John Cowley, "The New Left in the United States," in *All We Are Saying . . . : The Philosophy of the New Left*, ed. Arthur Lothstein (New York: C. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), p. 42.

* James Weinstein, a writer whose articles often appear in Left journals, has contended that "several of the early leaders of both [SDS and SNCC] had been in the CP youth organization . . ." (see James Weinstein, "The Left, Old and New," *Socialist Revolution* 2, no. 4 [July–August 1972]: 40–41).

The first of these concerns is an amendment which read in its original form: "The SDS welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with other individuals and organizations in jointly sponsoring specific programs and taking joint stands on specific issues . . ." The section following read: ". . . provided (1) such individuals and organizations are firmly committed to maintaining and developing democratic organizations and (2) are opposed to any authoritarian or totalitarian system of government." Part (2) was withdrawn by the makers of the amendment as unnecessary and repetitious; part (1) was amended by substitution to read "the NEC shall be empowered to determine specific cooperative activity" with a note that cooperation does not imply endorsement.

A further amendment which read: "this would exclude cooperation with pro-communist or pro-fascist groups" was defeated on the grounds that it wasn't necessary and that we didn't want to exclude the possibility of joint (non-fraternal) work with such groups in some conceivable educational debate or conference and that the NEC was perfectly competent to evaluate such a situation.²⁶

SDS did include a clause in its constitution stipulating opposition to anyone advocating any "totalitarian principle as a basis for governmental or social organization" (SDS expunged this paragraph and removed this requirement for membership in 1966). It refused, however, to exclude supporters of "authoritarian" forms of government or social organizations, because in underdeveloped countries the term "posed problems for democratic theory that we should not prejudge. . . ."

To LID's charge that it was less critical of the Soviet Union than of the United States, SDS replied:

To see the exact text of the section of the SDS "Manifesto" which deals with Communism and foreign policy is to realize that it is an absolute distortion to consider it "pro-Soviet" or enfolded in a double standard. . . . This is to urge a careful reappraisal of the whole concept of inherent *military* expansionism on the part of the Soviet Union which leads to military "solutions" and analyses of the threat of the Soviet system to democracies and which prevent this country from presenting an effective radical democratic movement which can deal with the basic differences between the two systems through positive programs and peaceful initiatives.²⁷ *

* According to a noted SDS historian: "In the Port Huron Statement, charges of elitism and bureaucratization of the Old Left (Stalinism) and the American

SDS denied that it employed a double standard by pointing to various paragraphs in the statement that were critical of the Soviet Union. Finally, it appealed the parent organization's decision, making it clear that it would continue as an independent group and take its case to the liberal community if rebuffed by LID. On 20 October 1962 Tom Hayden issued a "President's Report" explaining that this disagreement resulted in SDS reaffirming its autonomy except for general powers of review by LID. In the original version of the report (there were two), Hayden stated: "Various leaders in educational and political circles intervened in behalf of SDS against the LID as well, and by summer's end a general rapprochement was achieved, including an agreement on basic principles."²⁸

This did not, however, mean clear sailing ahead. In general, the activist euphoria that greeted the election of John F. Kennedy had begun to wane.* More specifically, although the 1962–63 school year marked a period of rapid growth for SDS because of the publicity engendered by the *Port Huron Statement*, SDS had no functional program to implement the document. It made every effort to get individual projects started, however. After the Port Huron Convention, Hayden and Haber journeyed to Washington, D.C. to try and put together a task force composed of members of Congress and liberal organizations sympathetic to the organization's goals. It also planned to maintain close liaison with SNCC, support the northern civil rights movement, and continue the Liberal Study Group within the NSA. Moreover, SDS established a Peace Project Office in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to administer various peace programs during the school year. One such endeavor was the setting up of a coordinating and research center for political candidates running on peace platforms. This center would see that pertinent information and position papers were published and exchanged among various candidates vying for office on campus or in public elections. SDS members involved in this

union movement were toned down below the actual intensity of feeling on the subject by SDS people: for opposite reasons this was necessary to pacify the LID sponsors. LID had an uncritical anti-communist hatred of the USSR. The Port Huron Statement's moderate criticism of both bureaucracies were statements of limited political independence from the LID (Rothstein, "Representative Democracy in SDS," p. 1).

* For an example of deep disillusionment and sharp criticism of John F. Kennedy, the man and president, see Wilson C. McWilliams, "Kennedy: End to Politics," *Activist* (fall 1962): 13–15.

activity attempted to organize citizen committees to influence local campaigns.

A pivotal part of the SDS peace program was the Peace Research and Education Project (PREP). Started in the summer of 1962 in Ann Arbor and associated with the Research Council on Peace Strategy, the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution, and other academic groups, the purposes of PREP were set forth as follows:

The project is to stimulate major changes in the professional priorities and intellectual concerns of students and faculty—to direct their research interests and educational efforts toward the problems of peace. Some expected outcomes of such an effort are: improving the intellectual and technical competence of peace activists; reform of university curricula toward education on peace problems; increased social concern and political relevance for intellectuals and scholars; increased cooperation between students and faculty—in addition to the more obvious goal of improving the ability of policy makers to cope with world problems without the use of violence.²⁹

SDS expected that a coordinated effort of research and political action concentrated on the peace issue would generate interest in SDS on the nation's campuses.

Extending its multiissue approach, SDS also planned a university reform project for the 1962–63 academic year. At this juncture, its purpose was not fundamentally to challenge university authority but to begin the essential task of dispelling student complacency and to expose students to a political education congenial with SDS beliefs and objectives, an education that would enable students eventually to remake the university into an agency for a new social order as an ally of a revitalized liberal-labor combine. Its objectives included:

- 1) A stimulation of basic research and discussion by students on the present nature of university education in America, the dominant values and purposes of students pursuing that education, the role of the University in society, the impact of the Cold War on the University and the potential of the University to act as an agent of social change.

- 2) The direction of student action, independently or in conjunction with faculty support, to the task of remaking the University into an institution that is dedicated to and concerned with the pursuit of scholarship, education for social responsibility, transmission of demo-

cratic values and the development of the creative capacities of American youth.³⁰

In the 1962 SDS position paper *Students and Social Action*, Tom Hayden contended that according to current educational studies, most students felt the foremost function of the university was to teach students how to get along with other people and to improve their job potential. Very few students thought that citizen participation should receive high-priority attention from the university. Hayden strongly opposed the doctrine of *in loco parentis*, arguing that it provided the rationale for university administrators to control student conduct and conditioned students subsequently to accept the decisions of governmental authority. Nor did Hayden believe that students could acquire a genuine independence of mind within American universities: "An authoritarian institution does not develop independent people. An authoritarian college within a society that basically values money and power, conformity and success, established habits and the status quo does not develop independent people."³¹ To Hayden and SDS, the university reflected deeper social problems, so that "reforming" the university system was a good place to begin changing society. To this end, faculty and students should collectively determine academic policy, leaving the university bureaucracy to perform administrative service functions. Only then would students be free to make the necessary connections between private and public issues that would motivate them toward making radical changes throughout society.

High on the list of SDS resentments was what it saw as the subordination of the university and its students to the requirements of corporate America. One aspect of this attitude could be observed as early as December 1959 when activists in the National Student Association took vigorous exception to directives published by the University of California at Berkeley to limit the purposes of student organizations to the educational objectives of the university. In an "Open Letter" to Dr. Clark Kerr, university president, the national executive council protested university efforts to prohibit student organizations from affiliating with any partisan, political, or religious group or from taking positions on, and pursuing, off-campus issues.

In 1962, a book entitled *Industrialism and Industrial Man*, written by Dr. Kerr, was criticized by some New Left activists for coupling the professional and specialized needs of American industry with the

educational responsibility of the university at a time when activists in SDS and elsewhere were demanding that universities train "independent-minded" graduates capable of a critical view of private and corporate enterprise. These activists dreaded the emergence of a corporate molded society that would reduce the power relationship to one of the "managers and the managed." * In trying to rouse students around the issue of university reform, Paul Potter, an SDS leader, accused American universities of official involvement in the cold war by accepting substantial funds from the Defense Department for research and development activities. Potter declared that higher education created graduates who perpetuated the system that the New Left was committed to change and suggested that in order for SDS to launch a "revolutionary model . . . students and faculty must move outside university activities." 32 **

In addition to attempting to germinate active dissent on campus, SDS addressed itself to the problem of constructing a powerful liberal-labor coalition. In September 1962, it published *Students and Labor*, a position paper by Al Haber, which speculated how a New Left might put together the coalition for radical reform originally discussed in the *Port Huron Statement*. For Haber and SDS, an alliance was absolutely essential for generating a viable strategy of opposition in American politics:

To speak of an alliance is to talk of a strategy for social change. In very broad terms, the strategy we see is *realignment*—the development of political organization on the local level representing the demands of labor, the Negro and other minorities, the city poor, the small farmer and businessman, the liberal intellectual; and the extension of that organization to the national level through the expulsion

* Furthermore, Kerr annoyed New Left activists by observing that many students were not sufficiently responsible to make policy decisions considering they were "not fully answerable for consequences." Coincidentally, activists were riled at Kerr for forbidding student political groups from using the Berkeley campus for their business meetings. The three authors of the following article on Kerr's books were all members of Berkeley's SLATE, and Payne was NSA coordinator for SDS (B. Payne, D. Walls, J. Berman, "Theodicy of 1984," *Activist* 2, no. 3 [spring 1962]: 4–11).

** The search for a "revolutionary model" anticipated the "new insurgency tactic" expostulated by Richard Flacks in an SDS position paper, *America and the New Era*, in 1963 and the parallel structure concept experimented with by SNCC.

of the Dixiecrats and urban machines from domination of the Democratic Party. In this we see university centers playing a crucial generating role for political ideas and programs and a crucial supporting role in strategically designed research or action moves.³³

To forge this alliance, SDS appealed to sympathizers in the Democratic party to erect a "liberal wing" under which members of a New Left could begin to design effective programs to achieve their objectives, and that this "liberal wing" devise an economic program to the left of the "conservative economic policy" of the Kennedy administration in anticipation of the release of billions of dollars for domestic spending upon the consummation of a total disarmament agreement.*

In general, the economic program that SDS envisaged would be centered in a national planning agency setting domestic priorities and geared to achieve the following goals: a program of full employment, a national unemployment compensation system, a program of job security, an end to discrimination, a program of community development to abolish poverty, and a reapportionment plan to decrease rural influence in state legislatures. The active participation of labor in a New Left coalition was indispensable. The question for Haber and SDS was whether labor could shed the role of a "reform club within the establishment" to support SDS, which required militant organizations that were willing to "move men into the streets" or "march its forces to Washington as an ultimate demand for change." Haber admitted, however, that as of the fall of 1962, "students did not see in labor this kind of movement."³⁴

Even though SDS had stressed the strategic necessity of forming a coalition with prominent elements of the liberal-labor nexus within the Democratic party, the likelihood of such a coalition was questionable by the June 1963 SDS convention. A revised SDS outlook was expressed in an important position paper presented at the convention, entitled *America and the New Era*. Written mainly by Richard Flacks, this document updated the *Port Huron Statement* and analyzed the contemporary political situation. The document accused the Kennedy

* This would be one way of achieving the Port Huron goal of a reallocation of federal funds from military spending to domestic use and for the industrialization of emerging nations. Haber wrote that "liberals must give immediate attention to developing a social and economic plan for disarmament. We can expect—unless war intervenes—a disarmament agreement in the next five or ten years" (Haber, *Students and Labor*, p. 9).

administration of "engineering a society where debate is diminishing and the opportunities to express opposition and create ferment are declining."

It is clear that, in the present situation, the New Frontier cannot solve the three most pressing needs of our time: disarmament, abundance with social justice, and complete racial equality. The tokenism of the Administration with respect to unemployment, automation, poverty, and social stagnation is clear. No program has been offered which can begin to cope with these problems . . . tokenism cannot bring racial equality to a society which is radically segregated, nor can it meet the increasing demands of the Negro freedom movement.³⁵

America's liberal community also came under attack.

During the fifties liberal social critics talked of problems of leisure, mass society and abundance. But all the while poverty and racial oppression, and public squalor and selfish interests continued to exist, neglected and unsolved by liberal organizations. . . . Organized liberalism must take at least part of the credit for America's political stalemate. A style of politics which emphasizes cocktail parties and seminars rather than protest marches, local reform movements, and independent bases of power.³⁶

Despite its emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, SDS grew impatient with the Democratic party for failing to show more interest in central control, planning, and integration of the American economy. Movement in this direction by a liberal wing of the party would stem the growth of "corporation government" and induce more direct experiments in democratic planning and public social control to achieve a redistribution of income, a guaranteed minimum standard of living, massive social welfare projects, and the financial provisions to industrialize underdeveloped countries.

SDS felt that "tokenism" could become real reform if liberals and laborites joined those in the peace and civil rights movements already insisting on changes that would accomplish New Left goals. In *America and the New Era*, the emphasis was more on labor's self-interest than on its social obligations. The document advised that greater militancy and forthright dissent within the Democratic party, aimed at

urban political machines and southern conservatives, was necessary to swell union ranks with unorganized white-collar workers and unemployed whites and blacks.

But it had become increasingly clear to SDS—especially in view of the difficulties SNCC had encountered in the South—that something more than moral suasion was necessary to push labor and other liberal groups into militant action. *America and the New Era* concluded that direct appeals to the labor movement hierarchy and to the liberal leadership in Congress, the universities, and elsewhere were insufficient. Thus, in line with SNCC's emphasis on community organizing to achieve political power, SDS formulated the "new insurgency," or the tactic of "boring from below." *America and the New Era* addressed itself to the people represented by these labor and liberal leaders, who in turn could compel the "establishment" to act in their behalf:

As new constituencies are brought into political motion, as new voices are heard in the arena, as new centers of power are generated, existing institutions will begin to feel the pressures of change, and a new dynamic in national social and political life could come into being.³⁷

What elements would compose the new constituencies? The document reemphasized the role of students and intellectuals as agents of social change and foresaw peace and civil rights activists joining with students who sought in vain for "high purpose" in their education. Intellectuals in and out of universities, whose research and study were unfulfilling, were welcome, as well as those liberals and radicals who were tired of "complacency, cynicism, and loss of political will." Trade unionists desiring innovative economic programs could start a new labor insurgency, even though outside the labor movement. Al Haber had hinted in *Students and Labor* that if the New Left should fail to induce established labor and liberal leadership to act for change, new and underlying forces might coalesce into a movement with the same purposes. *America and the New Era* was more explicit: instead of allying with established powers, SDS and a New Left would form "a popular left opposition" for real reform. Jack Newfield, the author and SDS member, identified the new opposition as "an anti-establishment alliance of southern Negroes, students, poor whites,

ghetto Negroes, indigenous protest movements and SNCC all constituting an independent power base of millions.”³⁸

America and the New Era endorsed local insurgent actions that included mass direct action and voter registration campaigns among Negroes, political reform movements directed against entrenched Democratic machines, and political action projects for disarmament. Mentioned as barely begun was a program that came to be known as SDS community organizing, described broadly as

efforts to initiate organized protest in depressed areas and urban slums, to organize non-union workers, to focus reform political clubs and candidates on issues and programs directly relevant to the urban poor, and to involve slum-dwellers directly in political efforts.³⁹

In addition to endorsing *America and the New Era*, the June 1963 SDS convention elected Todd Gitlin president. Hayden, who continued to exercise his influence after the convention, was probably the dominant figure in SDS at the time, both as a political leader and a theoretician, but participatory democracy dictated that he be replaced after one year in office. This interrupted the momentum of Hayden's leadership, and annual presidential elections inadvertently placed the responsibility for programmatic continuity on the SDS national staff, especially the national secretary.*

ERAP: The SDS Community Organizing Project

Neither the university reform nor the peace programs of SDS aroused enough enthusiasm among students or adults to get a New Left movement off the ground. Of equal moment, SNCC's voter registration and community organizing efforts, the sole New Left program in operation at the time, were encountering stiff resistance in the South. Hence, the centers of economic and political power were still remote from SNCC and SDS, and there was little indication of an im-

* Similarly, the national executive committee (NEC), formerly a part of the national council was terminated, and its fifteen national officers became the hub of the council. The national council stressed the participation of chapter delegates and opened its meetings to individual members of SDS who wished to attend.

provement in the offing. Then, in the summer of 1963, SDS received a \$5,000 grant from the United Auto Workers. SDS originally planned to use the money to disseminate radical economic literature on university campuses, but members of the SNCC staff persuaded SDS leaders to use part of the funds in an experiment organizing poor whites in the North. SDS lacked a program, and SNCC's suggestion looked promising.

Michael Harrington's book *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* had generated interest in the poor and made an indelible impression on a number of SDS activists. Using an annual income scale of from \$3,000 to \$3,500 per year, Harrington estimated that 40 to 50 million people could be classified as "poor" in the United States. According to Harrington, the poor were either on welfare or held low-paying jobs; they did not belong to unions and had either never possessed appropriate skills or had lost them as the economy had advanced to more sophisticated levels of technology. Harrington called for a "crusade against poverty," appealing to the conscience of young activists with the accusation that the poor existed because society lacked the compassion to help them.*

In addition to appealing to the idealism of some SDS members, organizing the poor and unemployed might lead to the "new insurgency" anticipated by *America and the New Era*. SDS hoped such events would ignite the mass protest required to stir prominent liberals and labor union leaders to support the major SDS goal of redirecting the nation's resources from military to domestic concerns. Still another important stimulus for an SDS-sponsored northern community organizing project came from, or concerned, SNCC and the civil rights movement.

SDS understood the radical potential of the Negro civil rights struggle and hoped, by mobilizing the poor in the North, to establish a movement that could eventually couple with SNCC's organizing drive in the South. Moderate and radical blacks alike encouraged such a project; young black activists in the South, especially, resented attempts by northern white radicals to direct them and urged white ac-

* Members of SDS who later became involved in community organizing were criticized by other activists on the Left for helping the poor not out of compassion but because they viewed them as the "sole repository of uncoopted virtue: they had not been bought off or corrupted by material possessions" (Bolduc, "A Brief History of SDS and the Ideology of the New Left," p. 5).

tivists to remain in the North and take care of their own people. SDS leaders also felt that unless an alliance between northern poor whites and the southern civil rights movement was forged around economic issues, racial violence would erupt following a white backlash to growing black claims for jobs and equal opportunity:

SDS had concluded that the job of white radicals was to provide the civil-rights movement with white allies who would positively reinforce the power of Negro demands. And what better allies are there than those organized around their own needs and demands, a functional and not merely charitable alliance? The dream of a new inter-racial Populism was hard to resist . . . an inter-racial movement of the poor, in which whites too were demanding decent homes and incomes, could not help but demonstrate that civil-rights acts which merely outlawed segregation of accommodation facilities missed the essential point.⁴⁰

Finally, some SDS activists hoped that a successful movement to organize the white poor in the North would enable white students to act as a catalyst in expanding the operational center of the New Left above the Mason-Dixon line.

Like SNCC, SDS had a political objective in mind—namely, the acquisition of power—convinced, as it was, that poverty continued because of the powerlessness of the poor. The objective was to redistribute political power, starting at the neighborhood level, by giving people on welfare more control over social policy and welfare programs. Having constructed local and neighborhood organizations in predetermined areas, the pattern would be repeated across the country until a national movement evolved. Ultimately, the creation of insurgent political power would be sufficient to challenge the consensus, and, either alone or in concert with a liberal wing of the Democratic party, accomplish the objectives set out in the principal SDS position papers. To traditional Left theorists who decried substituting the poor for the working class as the agency for social change, Tom Hayden answered:

Central to ERAP [Economic Research and Action Project] is the assumption that poor people—Negro and white—can be organized around economic and political grievances, and that there is a natural alliance among all poor in their common need for jobs, income, and control of their lives.⁴¹

In 1963, Paul Potter described the insurgent mood of SDS as a "very conscious effort on the part of a few students to promote and lead a social revolution."⁴²

SDS established the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), the administrative vehicle for community organizing, two days after the 1963 march on Washington. The project was first tested when Joe Chabot, a college dropout and SDS member from Michigan, volunteered in September 1963 to try to organize unemployed white youth in Chicago. Simultaneously, SDS members from Swarthmore College, who had worked in Cambridge, Maryland, during the summer, opened a promising community organizing operation in the Negro ghetto of Chester, Pennsylvania, around the issues of jobs, housing, and health care. The Swarthmore group, by conducting a survey on local conditions and requirements and canvassing 300 of the 27,000 Negroes in Chester, subsequently furnished other organizers with accurate statistical information about the area and its inhabitants and demonstrated the advantage of conducting research before and during the actual organizing program.*

In December 1963 the SDS national council met in New York, with approximately one hundred members attending. Based on the Chabot and Swarthmore experiments, the council decided to increase the number of projects after the first of the new year and arrange to have students participate in a summer project organizing northern poor to parallel the 1964 COFO program in Mississippi. The national council elected an ERAP committee to oversee the regular staff in Ann Arbor to ensure the formulation of a program in harmony with the objectives enumerated in *America and the New Era*.

Momentum increased in January 1964 as organizers were dispatched to Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Louisville, Newark, Philadelphia, and Trenton. ERAP organizers learned in the course of time how to improve their effectiveness. Police officers, for example, although often viewed as the enemy, were drawn into conversation by the organizers to reveal their attitudes and reactions to proposed demonstrations. Frequent staff discussions were held within individual projects, and comments were solicited from neighborhood people, to

* For additional information on the results of the Swarthmore project, see Nick Egleson, *The Survey and Community Organizing* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Radical Education Project, 1963). Egleson sat on the SDS national council and was a member of the Chester Freedom movement.

guard against, or offset, mistakes and indiscretions that organizers might make living with people from a different economic and educational background. Leading organizers stressed the overriding importance of tailoring a program to meet the circumstances of a particular community, insisting that until the poor and unemployed coalesced into centers of power to press for real change, neither local living conditions, crime rates, nor the quality of secondary education would improve. Of crucial importance, a program for community organizing should provide viable alternatives of political action to give men and women in the community a plausible reason to support ERAP rather than the elected or appointed officials in their ward or local government. By April 1964 a staff of over one hundred community workers had been consolidated within ERAP. The ERAP April conference adopted the title "Interracial Movement of the Poor" and finalized plans to train and accommodate students enlisting for two-months' duty in northern cities that summer.

Two approaches to community organizing were discernible by spring 1964. Projects in Chicago and Baltimore called JOIN (Jobs or Income Now) stressed obtaining jobs for the young and unemployed. Taking a different approach, organizers in Newark and Cleveland felt they should react to any problem important to the community, even the issue of garbage removal.* Projects adopting the latter approach described themselves as community unions. Various preconceptions were discarded as organizers came to know something of the poor, but serious problems had still to be solved if ERAP was to succeed. Through miscalculation, for example, many, if not most, projects were located not in white but in Negro areas, a development not originally intended. Likewise, Rennie Davis, graduate student at the University of Michigan and ERAP's director, wondered how to induce motion and change among unorganized white people, how to relate "the middle class to the lower class . . . whites to Negroes . . . and finally, how do we build a national coalition?"⁴³

One hundred twenty-five students assisted ERAP in the North during the summer of 1964.** These students, and SDS members in gen-

* Initially, ERAP projects like the one in Newark were called GROIN (Garbage Removal or Income Now). Not unexpectedly, the term "community unions" displaced GROIN as a designation for this approach.

** The majority of students willing to do community organizing that summer were more interested in the rural black districts of the South and migrated to the COFO program in Mississippi.

eral, were asked to take a leave of absence from college; like the poor, at a subsistence level, those who accepted lived in the neighborhoods where they worked. Many guilt-ridden middle-class students who had never known poverty and filth were radicalized by sharing the life of ghetto inhabitants in cities like Chicago and Newark. As the office of the JOIN project in Chicago was located next to an unemployment compensation office, the JOIN staff learned that the unemployed were principally old and resistant to pleas by activists for militant action. The men on welfare whom the student organizers did recruit sold apples in locales where union men would be certain to pass on the way to and from their jobs—the objective being to remind the workers of their own job insecurity in the hope that they would support JOIN.*

Part of the larger ERAP scheme, the Newark Community Union Project (NCUP), set the standard for community union activity. The guideline was to weld a local area together by acting on all grievances arising within the community, regardless of their nature. In Newark the issues varied: welfare benefits, demands for playgrounds and day care centers, and problems pertaining to housing, rent, and urban renewal. SDS organizers found themselves, on the one hand, battling landlords over rent payments, the absence of hot water, and the presence of rats in apartments; on the other hand, they were at odds with municipal officials over urban renewal that threatened to dislodge resident families unable to meet the higher rent scale expected in the new apartment complexes.

SDS planned eventually to convert the community unions into alternative power centers to which people could entrust their allegiance instead of looking to civic officials for solutions to their problems. Thus, the community unions were built on the principle of participatory democracy; their success would extol the objectives expressed in the SDS convention documents of 1962 and 1963. To SDS, community unions therefore represented a suitable beginning for an alterna-

* By October 1964 it was clear that the JOIN approach had failed in Chicago, and the staff moved uptown to the city's most deprived white area. In February 1965, SDS organizers in Chicago jettisoned entirely the unemployment approach to organizing for a new goal of "community union." One reason for the failure of this approach was the absence of support from leftist trade union members. The JOIN team had originally put together an advisory committee composed of these people, but it had disbanded when further help from the union bureaucracy was not forthcoming.

tive social system, because they posed a threat to capitalist excesses and to those in government accustomed to making decisions for others.

ERAP opposed the administration of the government's War on Poverty program in Chicago by canvassing areas to be affected and asking potential recipients to band together and demand local control of the program and the prerogative to judge how the funds should be spent. Other than this application of participatory democracy in community unions, however, there was no general ideological framework which SDS wanted to impose. Asked if socialism were not needed to solve the problems of the poor, SDS leaders replied, "we don't want to tell the poor what the solutions to their problems should be."⁴⁴

The stakes riding on the success or failure of community organizing were high for SDS. Just before the 1964 summer project, Todd Gitlin, outgoing SDS president, asserted that the community organizing venture was not just a question of establishing an interracial movement; the outcome of these projects would decide "victory or defeat" in the struggle for widespread social change. For him, the government's war on poverty was also a "war on us," and unless radicals were involved "in community organizing—beginning now, beginning yesterday—then *surely* the organizational-managerial society *will* triumph . . ." ⁴⁵

Despite the significance attached to community organizing, only forty full-time organizers survived the summer of 1964 to man the remaining projects. For many of the volunteers who chose to return to school in the fall, the experience had been rewarding, for they saw the results of their work and realized a degree of fulfillment that comes infrequently to people of college age who do traditional political chores for parties, candidates, and protest groups. As an organization, SDS appeared at first to profit from the summer's experience. With seven of the ten ERAP projects continuing into the fall of 1964, the days of paper projects seemed to be past.

This is not to suggest that ERAP was a success, however; the program was just beginning, and serious problems remained. ERAP organizers criticized inadequate staff preparations that had resulted in an inefficient utilization of summer volunteers, as well as unproductive and even counterproductive encounters between students just removed from the security and isolation of middle-class campuses and skeptical adult inhabitants of inner cities. Casey Hayden, an SDS or-

ganizer in Chicago, remarked, "I don't think anything like a summer project should be considered for Chicago again unless full-time staff is willing to spend a great deal of time planning how to use students and training them when they arrive."⁴⁶ Richard Rothstein, an ERAP organizer and historian, observed, "You don't go into a neighborhood of apathy, indifference and despair, talk for two months of how we can build a better life together, and then go back to school when vacation is over."⁴⁷ Rothstein struck a nerve. The unwillingness of SDS members to spend more than a couple of months in target communities, either for reform or revolution, seriously hampered the ERAP program.

Many volunteers who remained in the projects after the summer felt such guilt about what they had failed to achieve in their communities that the ERAP staff met in January 1965 to bolster their spirits. The meeting was attended by SNCC field workers (still the prototypes for organizing) for an examination of conscience and review of organizational techniques. Although the ERAP staff left the meeting psychologically uplifted, the community organizing projects were still in trouble, and the danger signals had been relayed to the SDS membership by Rennie Davis immediately after the 1964 summer experiments were over.

According to Davis, inroads had been made on a street-by-street basis, but no project had succeeded in starting an interracial movement of the poor, and no project had succeeded in organizing a community. There were fundamental questions about issues, organization, and the kind of people with whom SDS should work to achieve its goals. Davis admitted that the answers to these questions should come from a variety of sources—"students, teachers, union research staffs, newspaper men," and any others who might be interested.⁴⁸ The fact that this assistance did not materialize was a principal, but by no means the sole, cause for ERAP's eventual dismantling in March 1965. Hardly less important was ERAP's inability to persuade the white poor to join an interracial movement for radical change.

According to Richard Rothstein, organizers tried but failed to persuade white workers in defense plants in Boston to become a pivotal group for social reform.* The ERAP staff in Newark also recognized

* See Richard Rothstein, "ERAP: Evolution of the Organizers," *Radical America* 2, no. 2 (March–April 1968): 1.

that its efforts were more successful among Negro poor than among their white counterparts. ERAP workers in Newark and Cleveland attributed the comparatively affirmative response of Negroes to a wider range of grievances and a more pervasive feeling of being left out. Another explanation for the disinterest among poor whites was their conviction that there was room for them to advance by their own bootstraps, or by aid and opportunities provided by federal agencies, rather than by relying on abstract advice offered by students from another social class. Tom Hayden intimated that labor and civil rights personnel, SNCC, and SDS would have to make a greater effort if poor whites were to align themselves with an interracial movement.

Carl Wittman, president of the original SDS Swarthmore project in Cambridge, Maryland, and Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1963 and 1964, contended that the neglect of whites was the major failure of the project:

There is a natural antipathy toward whites among those of us who have spent time in the Negro movement, and a disinclination to work with this group. They are most open in their racist feelings and most likely to beat one up in a demonstration. And it takes a good deal of courage and initiative to launch into this area which none of us has experience or confidence in.⁴⁹

Casey Hayden agreed that there were enough obstacles in dealing with poor whites in the North without compounding them with the inadequacies of some SDS volunteers. For example, tough, aggressive young white males living in the areas being organized were constantly trying "to make it" with comparatively sophisticated female activists on leave from universities, while male student organizers were often taunted and dared to fight by neighborhood youths. Since these young students were physically and mentally unequipped for street fighting, they would have to back down. One organizer remarked frankly that "middle-class guys couldn't deal with violence . . . we could not handle ourselves in street fights."⁵⁰ Rennie Davis stated that one had to adapt to the circumstances—run and fight and drink and still retain the capacity to direct the program toward a definite objective.

But student organizers were vulnerable in other respects as well. Though they did their best not to appear superior, they nevertheless carried condescending middle-class attitudes with them into the ghettos (some students were eventually able to overcome this, learning to

understand and respect the poor as human beings). Another ERAP trait that may have contributed to the unresponsiveness of the white poor was a fervent though totally abstract moral zeal. A commendable characteristic generally, it proved disadvantageous in working with miners seeking welfare benefits in Hazard, Kentucky. The students' fear of personal "corruption" caused them to oppose any form of bureaucratization, however beneficial, in leadership or organizational structure. This apprehension of using others for one's own ends was so deep-seated among the ERAP organizers that its manifestations tended to weaken the movement.

These observations concerning ERAP's troubles in white communities should not suggest that it enjoyed clear sailing in black areas. Todd Gitlin stated that while white students in Negro communities dominated by their experience, their hold on some elements of the community weakened when black resentment grew as a result of white students' "access to female organizers."⁵¹

Unable to persuade the labor-liberal coalition to take action for radical social change or to accomplish its goals independently via an interracial movement of the poor, SDS bitterly denounced union and liberal leadership for refusing to cooperate. Labor unions in Cleveland, for example, were not interested in reforming the employment patterns of the area to promote more jobs. In Chicago, city officials kept JOIN members off boards and committees handling government antipoverty funds. In Newark, SDS claimed that liberal Democratic politicians and representatives of the established civil rights groups rebaited ERAP men and women. Also in Newark, the organizers reported they were subjected to police harassment, arbitrary arrests, and plagued by eviction suits by fearful landlords. Reviewing every ERAP project throughout its existence, only two concessions were gained from "the power structure"—a free lunch program in Cleveland and a recreation area in Newark.

There are practical explanations for the aloofness and even opposition evinced by the labor and liberal establishment toward SDS's community organizing projects. Not content with raising the poor to a more comfortable station in life, ERAP saw these unorganized people as a means to political power and fundamental social change; through ERAP, SDS wanted to challenge the liberals' vested interest in property and position, the very foundations of economic and political power. On another level, ERAP representatives accused city officials

and welfare workers of collusion with slumlords. They demanded an end to urban renewal and the acceptance of alternative rent codes and costly community improvement programs. Finally, ERAP demanded that actual political power be shifted from city hall to inner-city neighborhoods. Thus by the time ERAP was dismantled, there were "no allies to be trusted," causing Rothstein to observe:

Whether ERAP was justified in concluding after so short a trial that the ranks of labor and liberalism could not be galvanized by the power of our example and that the "power structure" was totally inflexible and unresponsive to demands from below is a question that must remain unanswered.⁵²

By the December 1964 national council meeting, SDS leaders had decided that ERAP and community organizing did not fit into the overall SDS program. Considering the fanfare that had greeted the introduction of the project little more than a year before, it is natural to seek other reasons for its demise. One explanation is that students were disinclined to join ERAP in large numbers or for long periods of time in 1964 and 1965. Though Rennie Davis estimated community organizers should work with the poor for two to five years if community unions were to succeed, SDS was rarely able to muster more than 150 members at one time to engage in community work. Very few of those who served in off-campus communities were willing to devote more than two or three months. An unwillingness to give more of themselves was a significant factor in the loss of enthusiasm for ERAP among the SDS membership by 1965.

There were other factors as well—among them, the organizational errors of the SDS leadership and the distortion of participatory democracy within ERAP. By allowing ERAP to develop separately from SDS-based campus units, the SDS hierarchy was faced with a situation in which nonstudents (those who had graduated or dropped out of school) were organizing nonmembers while the regular membership of SDS remained full-time students. The inability of top SDS officers to counter the near-anarchistic interpretation of participatory democracy likewise contributed to the eventual isolation of community organizing projects. SDS took no countermeasures, for instance, when the office of director in most individual projects was abolished in the wake of organizers' demands for collective decision making.

Next, some community workers balked in the name of participatory democracy at receiving guidelines from the ERAP director and the SDS-elected ERAP committee in Ann Arbor. Succumbing to the cry of participatory democracy, the Ann Arbor ERAP staff abandoned its central administrative positions and melted into the sundry projects.*

The effect of this interpretation of participatory democracy on some of the individual projects was exemplified as follows:

The problems of operating a staff of 45 in a democratic manner are much greater than anybody seemed to realize at first. Although many of us regard voting as undemocratic, there is a real question about whether we can afford to take eight hours to attain a consensus on every issue.⁵³ **

Since leadership of some kind was necessary, the directors of the separate projects continued to exercise direction, but furtively and without real authority. These efforts to increase "democracy" in the projects often resulted in manipulated politics and a decided decrease in organizing effectiveness. Moreover, the disbanding of the ERAP committee severed the umbilical cord linking ERAP to SDS. Months later, surviving organizers lamented its passing: "Since the ERAP Committee has long been abolished there is no central office that makes any decisions. We have no formal mechanism for making decisions that affect large numbers of ERAP people."⁵⁴ For these people, the disconnection brought a loss of perspective, revenue, momentum, and staff recruitment.†

Other factors responsible for the dissolution of national ERAP in-

* This interpretation of participatory democracy caused some organizers to refuse to provide even minimal guidance to the poor the projects tried to reach, fearful that their conduct would be branded antidemocratic and middle-class.

** SNCC remained the archetype for northern community organizing and was very influential in this regard in 1964. The fervent belief in participatory democracy, even when carried to extremes, emanated from SNCC. Led by Robert Moses, SNCC intended to "transfer decision-making so far as possible to grass roots leaders outside the SNCC structure" (Staughton Lynd's introduction to Robert Moses, "Mississippi 1961-1962," *Liberation* 14, no. 9 [June 1970]: 7).

† According to Richard Rothstein, Rennie Davis had solicited "tens of thousands of dollars, established from 10-15 community organizing projects . . . and recruited over 100 students to work as community organizers." With the abolition of ERAP's national staff, these benefits ended (Rothstein, "Representative Democracy in SDS," p. 7).

cluded tension between SDS on-campus and off-campus factions as early as April 1964, when Todd Gitlin alluded to this friction in his "President's Report." Gitlin admitted that SDS was remiss in failing to provide a program for students who did not see their future in building an interracial movement of the poor. In July 1964, Paul Potter, the new president of SDS, acknowledged the existence of the first leadership crisis in his memory, blaming the older leadership for concentrating solely on building an American New Left while ignoring students interested in such campus issues as university reform, which had motivated them to join SDS in the first place. The leadership never consulted the rank and file about their interests or asked whether they were concerned in implementing the ERAP project.

Potter conceded that the SDS membership was increasingly absorbed with the possibility of larger political involvement, a development the SDS leadership was "unwilling to recognize."⁵⁵ For their part, the community organizers were skeptical, disinterested, or hostile to any action leading to electoral or reform politics, in part because of SNCC's experience with the Democratic party but also because they feared losing a potential insurgent constituency to the enticements of a local political machine. To a certain degree, the indifference of newer SDS members to ERAP was owing to ERAP's inability to break through from a few small isolated outposts of community activity to an interracial movement on a national scale. In addition, ERAP was unequal to the task of formulating a theory captivating enough to replace the allegiance reserved for labor unions and the civil rights movement.

But it was student dissent against the war in Vietnam that broke the back of community organizing. Considering the many problems that beset SDS-ERAP, it is not surprising that Vietnam drained enthusiasm away from the attempt to build an interracial movement of the poor. Bending to the will of its membership, SDS elevated Carl Oglesby, an articulate opponent of the Vietnam War, to the presidency in June 1965.

The period of transformation SDS entered into in 1964 affected other programs besides ERAP.* The Peace, Research and Education Project, for one, found itself in the process of redirection in 1964.

* The last SDS community organizing project, the Chicago ERAP operation, folded at the end of 1967.

From the beginning, PREP had suffered a geographic disadvantage. Like ERAP, its offices were in Ann Arbor, Michigan, physically separated from the main SDS offices in New York and Chicago. Moreover, SDS began to question the efficacy of peace research. The Student Peace Union had expired by the summer of 1964, leaving PREP alone to service campus peace groups. More important, however, was the growing conviction within SDS that PREP's present emphasis—building peace programs on campuses through research and liaison—was unproductive. PREP's ultimate objective, consonant with other SDS programs before 1965, was to make a contribution to end the cold war, a condition precedent to new radical programs for widespread domestic change. This had not happened. Student response was disappointing and, of greater consequence, SDS realized that it had failed to influence American policy. Therefore, by the end of 1964 the focus of PREP began to shift to the Third World and American intervention in Vietnam and Latin America.

The dissolution of ERAP, the reorientation of other programs, and the similar but not identical metamorphosis of SNCC during the same period all contributed to the transformation of SDS between 1964 and 1966, both organizations moving well to the left of the political positions they had held prior to 1964. The conversion of SDS from an organization espousing radical political reform to one favoring revolution involved some of the following factors. In the process of changing the locus of its organizational activity from the community to the campus, SDS substituted a concern for self in place of a concern for the poor and the powerless. SDS condemned corporate liberalism and burned its bridges with the labor unions and influential liberals. Reversing its earlier position of conditional acceptance of American society, SDS repudiated all American institutions. SDS projects had failed to promote widespread interest among students or to achieve New Left objectives elaborated in the convention documents of 1962–63. SDS adopted a platform primarily concerned with the Vietnam War, American foreign policy (imperialism), and the Third World rather than domestic social change. SDS was unable to decide on a program attractive to the membership and conducive to achieving new goals, and an influx of new members exceeded the capacity of the SDS hierarchy to assimilate them. At the same time, SDS abandoned its antitotalitarian position and accepted the membership and influence of the Com-

munist Progressive Labor party. Ceasing to strive for ideological and political innovation, it began gradually to declaim the current variations of Marxism-Leninism. SDS, in practice, rejected the original concept of participatory democracy, engaged in political manipulation, and sanctioned elitism.

The New Left Transformed

The Berkeley Free Speech Movement

In the autumn of 1964, a movement involving thousands of students in various stages of commitment materialized at the University of California at Berkeley to sever the remaining bonds of *in loco parentis* (the tradition of the university exercising vicarious parental authority) and win the right to full political advocacy on university property. The radical tradition of the San Francisco Bay Area contributed to the likelihood of such an eruption. From the time of Jack London, the Bay Area has tolerated all shades of political radicalism; Mario Savio, the Free Speech movement's most publicized leader, called the Bay Area one of the few places left in the United States where a history of personal involvement in radical politics was not a form of leprosy. A radical tradition also existed at the University of California at Berkeley, where every sort of extreme Left group was represented: the W. E. B. Du Bois Club (communist), the Young Socialist Alliance (Trotskyist), the Independent Socialist Club (revolutionary Marxist socialist), and the Progressive Labor Council (Maoist). In general, Berkeley students had always exercised their political rights to meet and speak freely on campus more than American students elsewhere.

Because of the mystique of SNCC in the South and the successes of local activists in the immediate vicinity of the university, civil rights had been the most important New Left activity in northern California before the events of autumn 1964 shook the Berkeley campus. Although interest had initially begun in the fifties, civil rights activities in the Bay Area accelerated in 1960 when the National Student Association began picketing Woolworth and Kress stores to magnify the effect of the southern sit-ins. In Berkeley at that time the Campus NAACP and Berkeley CORE, combined with other related civil

rights organizations, numbered little more than one hundred people.

Civil rights activity picked up in 1963. A contingent of Berkeley students attended the August march on Washington, and some political and civil rights groups banded together to pressure local businesses to hire more Negro employees. In October 1963 these organizations opened their campaign by picketing Mels' Drive-In restaurants.* Campus CORE at the University of California boycotted the demonstrations on the grounds that they were politically motivated (one of Mels' owners was a mayoralty candidate in San Francisco) and lacked monitors to prevent violence. During the Mels' encounter, the police arrested ninety-three demonstrators, of whom thirty-seven were Berkeley students. In November, the owners of Mels' acceded to the students' demands, and the young activists turned to other targets.

By this time the civil rights advocates had coalesced into a Direct Action Committee (later renamed the Ad Hoc Committee) comprising the "W. E. B. Du Bois Clubs of San Francisco and Berkeley, Youth for Jobs of San Francisco and Oakland, SLATE from Berkeley, Direct Action Group from San Francisco State College, and Citizens against Discrimination."¹ In December the committee launched its drive against the San Francisco Sheraton-Palace Hotel and was upheld by established civil rights organizations. The activists, sometimes three thousand strong, contended with the Hotel Owners Association until March. Then, after a sit-in within the hotel itself, the association agreed to a considerable increase in hotel employment for black people. Immediately after this battle, the committee, allied with CORE and NAACP, directed its attack on car dealers along San Francisco's "Automobile Row". For their participation in this engagement, many Berkeley students were among the more than three hundred persons arrested. Subsequently, scores of Berkeley students participated in protests at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco against the Goldwater nomination and at the *Oakland Tribune*,

* According to Seymour M. Lipset and Paul Seabury, this campaign was "strongly influenced by various leftist groups" (see "The Lesson of Berkeley," *Reporter*, 28 January 1964, p. 36). In *These Are the Good Old Days*, Michael Myerson, a leader of the Du Bois Club, which he acknowledged was "set up in Berkeley and San Francisco on the initiative of young Communists," explains how the Du Bois clubs made their debut by participating in the civil rights demonstrations against Mels' Drive-Ins and also describes the remainder of the campaign.

owned by William Knowland, Senator Barry Goldwater's northern California campaign manager.

Thus, SNCC had proved to Berkeley activists that direct action could be used against powerful foes. The successes of the Ad Hoc Committee illustrated that civil disobedience was effective in accomplishing limited tactical ends in pursuit of civil rights objectives. The civil rights activity in the Bay Area also had the effect of honing the demonstrators' skill in methods of protest, enabling them to react quickly and effectively in situations such as they later encountered on the Berkeley campus during the Free Speech movement.

Six days before the university published the decree that ignited the FSM, the SLATE liberal-radical group published a "Supplement" to the University of California General Catalogue containing a letter listing a set of demands including: a program for undergraduates eliminating courses, grades, and units; the invalidation of rules in university housing; the establishment of a persistent and independent student voice in running university affairs; the reconstruction of the Board of Regents, either by firing certain members, by expanding the board, or both; and "maybe a mass student strike . . . something that seems unthinkable at present." An excerpt from the letter gives an idea of its tone and theme.

THE MULTIVERSITY IS NOT AN EDUCATIONAL CENTER, BUT A HIGHLY EFFICIENT INDUSTRY: IT PRODUCES BOMBS, OTHER WAR MACHINES, A FEW TOKEN "PEACEFUL" MACHINES, AND ENORMOUS NUMBERS OF SAFE, HIGHLY SKILLED, AND RESPECTABLE AUTOMATONS TO MEET THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT.

This institution, affectionately called "Cal" by many of you, or, as the Daily Cal might put it, "the Big U," does not deserve a response of loyalty and allegiance from you. There is only one proper response to Berkeley from undergraduates: that you *organize and split this campus wide open!*

FROM THIS POINT ON, DO NOT MISUNDERSTAND ME. MY INTENTION IS TO CONVINCE YOU THAT YOU DO NOTHING LESS THAN BEGIN AN OPEN, FIERCE, AND THOROUGHGOING REBELLION ON THIS CAMPUS.²

The ostensible cause of the student uprising at Berkeley was an administrative decree published 16 September 1964, prohibiting stu-

dents and organizations from using a twenty-six-foot strip of university property at the Bancroft and Telegraph streets entrance:

. . . for the purpose of soliciting party memberships or supporting or opposing particular candidates or propositions in local, state, or national elections . . . Posters, easels, and card tables will not be permitted in this area because of interference with the flow of traffic. University facilities may not, of course, be used to support or advocate off-campus political or social action.³

The political organizations affected by the ban defied the edict, and on 30 September assistant deans cited five students for infractions of the new rules. Later the same day, from 300 to 500 students accompanied the 5 defendants to disciplinary hearings, and the FSM was on.

Before the issue was decided in December, the university experienced four sit-in demonstrations, a student and faculty strike, and innumerable rallies.* The furor was not over a denial of free speech per se, since students and guests of any political persuasion were free to address meetings anywhere during the dispute. The controversial twenty-six-foot strip was traditionally reserved not merely for the promulgation of ideas but for the advocacy of action and the marshaling of forces for political ends. The FSM was formed to combat the revocation of this privilege.

At the time, Berkeley student groups were busy corralling votes for Proposition 14, a proposed California fair housing act. Some student activists contended that the September regulation forbidding political advocacy on campus would cripple their efforts on behalf of the proposition. SNCC, CORE, SDS, YSA, SLATE, the Du Bois clubs, and the Young Democrats argued that the administration decree denied students their constitutional rights of expression and assemblage in order to perpetuate administration jurisdiction over them and to defeat Proposition 14. This approach gained the sympathy of a great many Berkeley students who had either been part of civil rights cam-

* For different views of the Berkeley rebellion, see Max Heirich, *The Beginning: Berkeley 1964* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) and Lewis S. Feuer, *Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), pp. 436–501.

paigns in the past or who joined the FSM to compensate for not participating in various civil rights demonstrations in the Bay Area and in the South.

By early October 1964, the FSM was an association of independent student organizations linked together to force the university administration to rescind the decree. Its nearly twenty member organizations reflected political viewpoints ranging from the far Left to the far Right. Virtually every student organization on the Berkeley campus was involved. The greatest influence within the FSM, however, was exercised by the fifty members of the executive council and especially by the steering committee of eleven members elected by the council. The steering committee, which was considerably to the left of the FSM as a whole, conducted FSM negotiations with the administration.

After a disruptive sit-in at Sproul Hall, the central administrative building on the Berkeley campus, the administration agreed on 23 November to allow student groups to advocate direct political action but refused to permit students to urge or incite unlawful acts. This concession fell short of meeting FSM demands for the cessation of university authority over speech or conduct, as the following excerpt from the FSM platform illustrates.

Similarly illegal speech or conduct should receive no greater protection on campus than off campus. The administration may not regulate the content of speech and political conduct, and must leave solely to the appropriate civil authorities the right of punishment for transgressions of the law.⁴

The administration's announcement seemed to satisfy most students, however, and Thanksgiving vacation brought not only the traditional recess but a marked decline in student support for the FSM and division within the organization's steering committee regarding future tactics. After the holidays student interest revived when the administration pressed charges against Mario Savio * and three other movement leaders for violating university rules during earlier demonstrations. On

* Mario Savio, then a student at Berkeley and the best-known leader of the FSM, was arrested at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel civil rights demonstrations and went South the summer of 1964 as a SNCC volunteer. In the fall of 1964 he was elected chairman of University Friends of SNCC.

2 December, the FSM held a mammoth sit-in at Sproul Hall, requiring twelve hours for police officers to remove the more than seven hundred limp bodies of protesting students.*

To all intents and purposes, FSM demands were met on 8 December 1964 when the university's Academic Senate convened amidst escalating student clamor on behalf of the FSM. Five thousand students waited outside Wheeler Auditorium where the Senate met, alternately cheering and jeering as they listened to the proceedings through loudspeakers. The first motion, sponsored by an ad hoc group of two hundred professors, proposed that the university should not subject members of the FSM to disciplinary measures for violation of university rules and regulations prior to 8 December. The group concluded that the university should leave the matter of what is lawful or unlawful to civil authorities and concern itself (as stated in section 2 of the resolution) only with the "time, place, and manner of conducting political activity" on campus. The key section was number 3 of the resolution:

. . . The content of speech or advocacy should not be restricted by the University. Off campus student political activities shall not be subject to University regulation. On campus advocacy or organization of such activities shall be subject only to such limitations as may be imposed under section 2.⁵ **

Professor Lewis Feuer offered an amendment to the ad hoc committee's resolution, suggesting that the content of speech or advocacy not be restricted by the university if it were not directed toward acts of force or violence. Feuer's amendment was defeated, however, and the ad hoc committee's resolution carried 825 to 115.

In effect, there was more to the FSM than negotiations to define the limits of advocacy and student conduct on the university campus. In both spirit and letter, for example, the FSM diverted from the tra-

* Students arrested at that sit-in did not avail themselves of SNCC's "jail-no-bail" tactic to call attention to their cause. Reports concur that the overwhelming number of students arrested were shocked by the rough, impersonal treatment they received as prisoners and left their cells as quickly as bail could be posted.

** The rights of students to free expression and advocacy, etc., were spelled out in a statement of "Universitywide Policies Relating to Students' and Student Organizations' Use of University Facilities and Non-Discrimination" issued by the president of the University of California, 1 July 1965.

ditions of SNCC and the southern civil rights movement with which it had originally tried to identify. Professor William Petersen of Berkeley observed:

In the South, the principal effort of the civil rights workers has been to uphold laws broken by those in authority—for example, the laws granting suffrage irrespective of race. . . . [But] it is an entirely different matter to attack legal authority indiscriminately as a means of blackmailing the community, and then to whine when one is arrested.⁶

Mario Savio, on the other hand, having returned from a stint in the South for SNCC, contended that “the same rights are at stake in both places [Berkeley and Mississippi]—the right to participate as citizens in a democratic society.”⁷ The distinction between the civil rights legacy of SNCC in Mississippi and the variations observed at Berkeley in 1964 transcended the legalistic difference noted by Professor Petersen. SNCC field workers were not primarily concerned with themselves but with improving the fortunes of poor, uneducated, voteless black people in the South by building a political movement. The FSM was overridingly concerned with the self-interest of white middle-class activists already enjoying political and economic advantages because of their education and affluence. Savio candidly admitted, “The focus of our attention shifted from our deep concern with the victimization of others to outrage at the injustices done to ourselves. . . .”⁸

Some students in the FSM regarded themselves as objects of injustice, first, because they believed the university was too impersonal, and second, because this apparent detachment was exacerbated by what they believed to be the university’s role in society—to do the bidding of the “military-industrial complex” and to mold students into the technicians and professional servicemen required by the corporate world and government bureaucracy to sustain American society in its present form. As a nonpolitical newcomer to the FSM explained to Mario Savio, he was “sick and tired of being shat upon.” Savio went on to say that students wanted “to be treated as human beings” instead of being “numbered, sorted on punch cards, and moved around on IBM machines.”⁹

These complaints were mainly directed at the concept of a modern university sketched by Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, in his book *The Uses of the University*. Kerr presented a his-

tory of the university beginning with Greece and concluding with a description of the modern university with its multiple facets and functions, which he called "multiversity". He stressed that knowledge had never been more important and that it would serve, as the automobile had in the first part of the twentieth century, "as the focal point for national growth." According to Kerr, the intellect was most at home within university walls. The intellect, however, was not only an integral part of society but a "component part of the military-industrial complex," and the university had become a "prime instrument of national purpose." Kerr admitted that research was now valued higher than teaching, that students lived under "a blanket of impersonal rules," and that the undergraduate in particular suffered as a result.¹⁰ In a subsequent article, Kerr noted that he had only assessed, not approved or endorsed, the multiversity. In fact, he pointedly disapproved of "student misery . . . the disappearance of the liberal arts college . . . and the submergence of teaching by research."¹¹

The conception of the university as excessively impersonal or as an agent of the "power elite" was not shared by a majority of students at the time of the FSM. An authoritative survey taken by Professor Robert Somers, a sociologist at Berkeley, in November 1964 substantiated this.* Somers' analysis found that 82 percent of the 285 students comprising the sample were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with courses, examinations, and professors at Berkeley; 92 percent agreed that "the President of the University and the Chancellor are really trying very hard to provide top-quality educational experiences for students here." Approximately 8,000 students took part in the FSM out of a total student enrollment of 27,500 in 1964-65. According to Somers, widespread student sympathy for the FSM (in addition to the actual participants) was attributable to the students' resentment at being deprived of their rights to political activity at a time when they were optimistic about the possibilities for social change.¹² Likewise, the "Muscatine Report" to the Academic Senate at the University of California at Berkeley concluded after a year of deliberation that the most

* A number of authors who wrote about the events at Berkeley during this period, and who might have disagreed about other matters, concurred about the reliability of the Somers Report (see Hal Draper, *Berkeley: The New Student Revolt* [New York: Grove Press, 1965], pp. 14, 169.; Calvin Trillin, "Letter From Berkeley," *New Yorker* 13 March 1965, p. 65.; and Elinor Langer, "Crisis at Berkeley: (I) The Civil War," *Science*, 9 April 1965, p. 200).

“obvious cause” of the FSM was a “desire to obtain freedom of political advocacy on campus.”¹³

Though most Berkeley students wished to recapture the rights of advocacy they had lost through the administration’s September decree, a few observers suspected that some FSM leaders wished to attack the university in order to shake public confidence in social institutions. Calvin Trillin, writing for *The New Yorker*, asked Stephen Weissman, a leader of the FSM, about the charge that

the immediate goal of their action is less important to them than fomenting trouble or demonstrating the sickness of the society or, as some critics at Berkeley have asserted, attempting to undermine faith in the democratic process. “You’re not naive enough not to realize that there’s a grain of truth in that,” Weissman said.¹⁴

For an increasing number of students, in any event, protest was becoming a way of life, whether in the context of the FSM, civil rights, or the Vietnam War. For some, like Michael Rossman, a leading member of the FSM, picketing was a natural outgrowth of an interest in politics and the exuberance of youth. As Rossman somewhat defensively explained: “Don’t get me wrong . . . I picket *seriously*; just the same, it’s a place to see the girls and sometimes we have a great time. It’s our way of living.”¹⁵ Distinct from Rossman and others concerned primarily with political objectives, another category of students existed—dropouts who were increasingly absorbed by the ritual of protest regardless of the cause. Kenneth Rexroth, poet, columnist, and intimate of the original Beats, accused this group of “parasitism,” describing them as “voluntary outcasts who identify their own personal alienation with the actions of others protesting to achieve definite goals within society.”¹⁶ *

What, in sum, did the FSM presage for the future of the New Left? First, it represented the possibility of a radical New Left constituency composed exclusively of students—an innovation considering the history of the New Left before the FSM. SDS and SNCC had hoped to build a New Left with the help of a liberal-labor nexus or the poor enlisted in an interracial movement throughout the country. Although

* For an elaboration of the two types of protestors noted here, see Michael V. Miller, “The Student State of Mind,” in *Revolution at Berkeley*, ed. Michael Miller and Susan Gilmore (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1965), p. 54.

SDS foresaw portions of the student community involved in the construction of a New Left, it was expected that students would work in concert with other segments of the population. Berkeley raised the possibility of American students acting as the sole revolutionary constituency of the New Left.

Second, the FSM proved that students could be inspired to engage in mass displays of civil disobedience if the issue captured their imagination and if the tactics employed involved suspense and danger—a “bust” by the local police, for instance. The success of the FSM, however, was not predicated on the contention that the university reflected abhorred social values. Students were primarily concerned with a specific issue and reacted unsympathetically to accusations that the purposes of the university as an arm of the “military-industrial complex” were inimical to their welfare. The New Left generally failed to engender student support for these charges until SDS began connecting the university with war-related research after the campaign against the Vietnam War became the New Left’s central focus.

Yet, New Left activists were not daunted by their inability to promote pervasive dissatisfaction with the university during the FSM. Steve Weissman explained that the Berkeley episode was just the beginning of New Left efforts to transform the American university:

The vision of a free university; the belief that students have a right to shape the environment in which they live and work is our most powerful weapon for the subversion of the multiversity. . . .

If we are serious about controlling our lives and education, we must constantly affirm the right to revolt when we are affected by rules and practices over which we have no say.¹⁷

Hence, by what it achieved and by what it augured, the FSM signaled the end of *in loco parentis*, an objective of SDS and other activists since the start of the New Left movement.

The Berkeley revolt had wider implications as well. It indicated that students on other campuses could also engage in strikes, sit-ins, and disruptive behavior—not with impunity but with good chances of achieving their purposes. The FSM at Berkeley was correctly credited for the student unrest that occurred immediately thereafter at Colorado, Columbia, Maryland, Ohio State, Yale, and elsewhere. In most cases the issues nourishing the dissidents were regulations governing

behavior in dormitories and other living group accommodations and the campus food service rather than the anonymity of university life or the role of the university in American society.*

The FSM victory at Berkeley proved the university was more susceptible to militant student influence than was the adult community at large. Coinciding as it did with SNCC's impatience with its white volunteers, growing student interest in the Vietnam War, and the inability of SDS to man ERAP projects, Berkeley signaled a change in the organizing locus for the New Left from the community to the campus.

As a result of the FSM, for the first time since the New Left began, white middle-class activists had scored a victory based on their own grievances rather than behind the moral banner of Negro rights. Black students comprised a small minority on the nation's northern campuses and were therefore not in a position to advance issues important to them.

Finally, the success of the FSM spurred efforts by partisans of campus-based New Left programs to direct SDS away from the adult community and back to the university. Instead of enlarging the scope of student participation in the formulation of university policy, however, SDS turned its attention to Vietnam.**

1965: SDS Searches Anew for Program and Perspective

SDS opposition to American involvement in the Vietnam War did not manifest itself until 1965, but it was well under way in 1964.†

* The priority of issues had changed by 1965–66, when protest against the Vietnam War became the prime concern of most protesting students.

** A major objective of the University Reform Program of both SDS and the FSM was to increase the power of students on American campuses until they played a substantial role in making the rules and regulations that governed the university. Growing opposition to the Vietnam War in 1965 and thereafter postponed projects to achieve this goal (see *The Position of the FSM on Speech and Political Activity—Position Paper* [undated; published after 20 November 1964]).

† By the fall semester of 1964, a number of SDS chapters were concentrating exclusively on the war, a development that aggravated the deepening chasm between community organizers and campus action advocates. In the autumn and winter of 1964, the chapter at the University of Michigan aided faculty members in preparing the first teach-in against the war, which was held in March 1965.

The May Second Committee (also known as the May Second movement) strongly influenced the political attitudes of many SDS activists by taking an antagonistic position toward accepted premises of American foreign policy and by introducing such issues as imperialism, university cooperation with the military, and the draft before SDS publicized them.

The May Second Committee was formed at a "Symposium on Socialism in America" held from 13 to 15 March 1964 at Yale University and sponsored by the Socialist Union of Yale. Reacting against America's involvement in the Vietnam War, symposium delegates founded an ad hoc May Second Committee to organize a mass demonstration on 2 May in New York City to protest the war. Students from the Young People's Socialist League, the Young Socialist Alliance, the Progressive Labor party, and SDS were among those who planned to participate in the protest. The Committee was chaired by a member of SDS, and the *SDS Bulletin* carried an announcement of the 2 May demonstration. Although the May Second movement's membership included both liberals and revolutionaries, the communist Progressive Labor party (PLP) controlled policy and decision making.* On 2 May one thousand students marched in New York's Times Square, while smaller crowds protested in other cities. In August, demonstrations were again held to foster public disapproval of the war at the behest of the May Second movement.

Public protests, however, were only one aspect of the May Second movement's plan to activate opposition to the war. An editorial in the first issue of the *Free Student*, the organ of the movement, accused university administrators of serving America's military and corporate complex, which used the university to advance its own interests in promoting "cold and not-so-cold wars."¹⁸ The university supplied "the American empire with potential managers, technicians, and apologists—the students."¹⁹ The *Free Student* expressed total opposition to "armed intervention by the United States government anywhere, anytime, in the world" and pledged brotherly solidarity with the "nationalists, communists, socialists, separatists, anarchists, tribalists" striving in Africa, Asia, and Latin America for "liberation".²⁰

* The leadership of the PLP—Milton Rosen, Mort Scheer, Fred Jerome, Sue Warren (Lisa Armand), Jake Rosen, and Bill Epton—were cashiered from the US Communist party in 1961 and 1962 for following the lead of the Chinese Communist party.

The same article included a declaration that was circulated on over one hundred university campuses across America, defying the training of “murderers” to fight in Vietnam.

We the undersigned, are young Americans of draft age. We are opposed to United States intervention in the war in South Vietnam. United States participation in that war is for the suppression of the Vietnamese struggle for self-determination and national independence. We herewith state our refusal to fight against the people of Vietnam.²¹

Describing the government’s Vietnam policy as “imperialistic” was highly significant because it introduced the theme subsequently used by SDS to denounce the war. In the second issue of the *Free Student*, the editors indicted the United States for “creating” the South Vietnamese government in order “to further United States objectives . . . to maintain and expand its economic hegemony over all of Southeast Asia, from the Philippines to Thailand.”²²

The SDS President’s Report published in October 1964 reflected the influence of the May Second movement.

We must disconnect the concerned peace activist or scholar from his belief that American foreign policy is benign and motivated by a concern for the “protection” of democracy, and make him face the reality of American imperialism and the forces that sustain it.²³ *

The political and ideological overtones of the New Left attack on American foreign policy that began at this juncture differed markedly from that of the peace movement, which couched its criticisms of foreign policy in moral terms.

The new orientation was evident when the national council of SDS met in December (the meeting was attended by 296 registered participants and by many more who did not bother to sign in). The initial debate revolved around which issues should be considered in detail. As two viewpoints clashed, council officers divided the meeting into two workshops—one dealing with national student and campus pro-

* Brochures against the war published jointly by SDS and the May Second movement were being distributed by 1965. One example was *What the War Is All About* (May Second Movement, 640 Broadway, Room 307, New York City, and SDS, 1165 Broadway, Room 410, New York City).

grams, the other deliberating on possible political and community organizing projects. Although the political action arm of SDS (the Political Education Program, or PEP) decided to aid the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party's congressional challenge, SDS as a whole was dubious about participating in electoral activity. Following lively debate about how to register its opposition to the United States role in Vietnam, the council resolved to hold a march and rally against the war in Washington, D.C. on 17 April 1965.*

On 11 March, some twenty-five faculty members at the University of Michigan decided to foment a strike in protest against the war. Encountering campus resistance, the faculty members and interested students (including members of SDS) organized the first teach-in criticizing the war on 24 March. On the twenty-fifth, a similar teach-in occurred at Columbia University, and by the end of April approximately thirty colleges and universities had staged their own versions of the teach-in. Speakers at the various meetings assailed the war for reasons ranging from concern that the American presence could jeopardize a possible *détente* with Moscow to fears that it might lead to a nuclear war.

Jean-Paul Sartre, the French writer, augmented anticipation of the 17 April march by cancelling a trip to the United States at the beginning of the month, pleading for a worldwide condemnation of American policies in Vietnam. Peace and social democratic organizations such as SANE and the League for Industrial Democracy were extremely perturbed over SDS's plan to invite to the march all political parties and groups that wished to join, including those with communist affiliations, such as the May Second movement, youth group of the Progressive Labor party; the W.E.B. Du Bois clubs, the youth arm of the Communist party; and the Young Socialist Alliance, student auxiliary of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers party. SDS was also reprimanded for criticizing only the United States and the South Vietnamese, omitting reference to the necessity for self-determination in Vietnam, and for the suggestion made by its postures and songs that North Vietnam was "free" while the United States and the South Viet-

* President Lyndon Johnson's decision to send bomber aircraft over North Vietnam in February was extremely important in engendering student protest in general and for the SDS march in particular. C. Clark Kissinger, SDS national secretary at this time, played a major role in convincing the national council to schedule the April march.

nam government were cooperating in oppression and extermination in the South.

The twenty- to twenty-five thousand students and adults convened in Washington, D.C. revealed that a New Left existed in force. This massive demonstration sponsored by SDS differed from previous efforts by peace groups to ban the bomb or to end war between nations. The peace groups were mainly concerned with the "immoral" aspects of armaments and military conflict; the 17 April march was conceived as a political demonstration, aimed at the total rejection of American foreign policy in general and United States involvement in Vietnam in particular.

Paul Potter's speech highlighted the rally and summarized the SDS position toward the war at that time. The war, Potter said, destroyed any lingering illusions about morality and democracy being the guiding principles of American foreign policy. American troops were being used to control political unrest in Saigon and to drop "napalm or gas . . . indiscriminately on women and children." American policy and its execution were, in his view, so base that he preferred to "see Vietnam Communist than see it under continuous subjugation of the ruin that American domination has brought." Potter called on those present and all concerned individuals to create a massive social movement centered around the issue of Vietnam.²⁴ At the conclusion of the march, workshops were set up where SNCC representatives (about 10 percent of the students at the march were black) conversed indecisively with SDS leaders about the direction of the New Left movement. SDS suggested a nationwide teach-in on 15 May.

Reacting to the surprisingly large turnout at the march, the SDS national council decided to hold a "National End the War in Vietnam Week" from 3 to 8 May. Also encouraged by the march, coordinators for local anti-Vietnam projects arranged to plan a summer program against the war, which was finalized at a conference on 9 May at Swarthmore, sponsored by the college SDS chapter. SDS membership also benefited from the success of the march. At the beginning of the year, a little over one thousand students belonged to SDS; immediately after the march, applications began pouring in at a rate that increased the membership to between three thousand and four thousand by the end of the year.

In May, spurred by sponsors of the original University of Michigan teach-in, panels of faculty members spoke on the Vietnam War in Wash-

ington, D.C. and on campuses around the country to mixed reactions. Sponsors of the teach-in and students at George Washington University were pleased at the balanced presentation. Self-restraint was less evident at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin. At Berkeley, defenders of President Johnson's foreign policy were denied a forum as Professor Robert Scalapino, resident political scientist, and State Department representative William Bundy were almost shouted down.* At Wisconsin, the notion was advanced and defended that professors should forsake their detachment and merge education and protest within the university community. Teach-ins at most universities were criticized for omitting to include students on the panels or in the proceedings generally. Assessments of the effectiveness of the teach-ins were mixed, varying from opponents who denied their value to proponents who heralded them as having legitimatized antiwar dissent.

At the end of May 1965, many in SDS (especially the newer members) wished to launch a more systematic and structured movement against the war. The large attendance at the Washington, D.C. march had generated nationwide interest in SDS, and critics of the war expected the organization to capitalize on its success by immediately mobilizing mass protests. SDS, however, was unprepared to assume the leadership of an expanding antiwar movement. Just before the SDS convention in June, Paul Potter, outgoing president, spoke of the desperate need to answer questions about how best to deal effectively with the Vietnam issue.

We really do need to be urged to consider strategically what SDS should be doing about Vietnam, locally as well as nationally. This is not simply a question of what tactic is most effective as the next point in protest; instead the time has come for basic thinking about how we are organizing around the issue . . . what kind of pressure is needed to end the war and do we really think we can generate it. What possibilities are there for local programs that extend beyond the groups we have thus far reached.²⁵

* Almost twenty-five thousand participants joined the teach-in and the "National End the War in Vietnam Week" in Berkeley in May. The large turnout fostered antiwar interest that resulted in the development of the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC).

SDS held its 1965 convention at Kewauqua, Michigan. Since the Vietnam issue was foremost in the minds of most participants and was fast becoming SDS's central concern, it was not surprising that the convention generally ignored the isolated ERAP projects.

The general direction was away from last December's NC meeting's emphasis on community organizing and toward concern with student activity and a position on organizing that goes broadly beyond the students or the poor . . . there appeared to be a gulf in the levels of discussion between the older leaders and newer members. . . .²⁶

According to the *ERAP Newsletter*, "Campus SDS seems to be more worried about what was going on in Vietnam, while ERAP-SDS were more worried about the surrounding areas where they worked."²⁷ Carl Oglesby, a young man who had not participated in the founding of SDS and who became prominent chiefly because of his antiwar activity, was elected president.

Proposals on the war ranged from suggestions that SDS should not concentrate on the war at all to "kamikaze plans" designed to persuade American soldiers to desert and then convert their trials into propaganda forums. The convention decided to postpone the establishment of a definite antiwar program until the national council met in September. For the moment, SDS chose to avoid mammoth demonstrations and tabled a plan that would qualify all SDS members registering for the draft as conscientious objectors. SDS sanctioned off-campus experiments in certain poor communities to radicalize slum dwellers on the issues of the draft and the war. This plan mollified advocates of community organizing but never evolved into an effective program because of the isolated projects and the absence of enthusiasm for community organizing among the burgeoning SDS membership. The convention also resolved not to adopt an illegal antiwar program that could lead to government "repression" without first polling the membership by referendum.

There were various reasons for SDS's inability to produce a workable Vietnam program in June 1965. Some members disagreed with the antiwar theme, fearing that it would limit SDS to a single-issue approach, a disadvantage that had previously hindered the peace movement. Other members were apprehensive of possible government reprisals for direct interference with the war effort. Some veteran SDS

members still believed in the virtues of scholarly research and community activity, approaches that were no longer popular, and these members retained sufficient leverage to impede programs with which they disagreed. Finally, there was the administrative problem of educating and rallying new members to support a particular antiwar tactic. SDS's decision to delay organizing mass public demonstrations against the war in Vietnam was condemned by the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) as "one of the most amazing and damning decisions in its [SDS] history."²⁸

The convention voted to remove the ban on Communist party participation in SDS by expunging the constitutional provision barring advocates or apologists for totalitarianism from membership, a decision that demolished the remaining mutual confidence between SDS and the LID and led to the eventual dissolution of their relationship.* Michael Harrington despondently commented:

They [SDS] see no imminent prospect of revolutionary change—no new proletariat within the United States. But their conclusion is a militant despair. In a vague and confused way, they look for eventual salvation from the revolutionary Third World forces. Domestically, they tend toward symbolic and even Kamikaze-like action [i.e., opening the door to communist influence].²⁹

In September the national council agreed to support nationwide antiwar protests scheduled for October 15–16, and to promote conscientious objection as a method for draftees to escape induction; the program was to be submitted to the membership for approval.

In the meantime, large-scale demonstrations against the war were being planned for 15–16 October by the "Vietnam Day Committee," which had originated in Berkeley. When the FSM lost its impetus at Berkeley in early 1965, many activists found themselves between movements. The Vietnam Day Committee, initially created to organize a teach-in on 21–22 May 1965, provided them with a purpose. There were important differences between the FSM and the VDC, however. Michael Rossman, an influential member of the FSM, remarked that the VDC experience lacked the "dialogue, joy, diversity, spontaneity, impact, and individually self-directed and self-changing

* In October 1965, SDS voted to sever amicably its relations with LID. On 1 January 1966, the formal severance was concluded and SDS was on its own.

(“learning”) behavior” of the FSM.³⁰ Others depicted the VDC as being a step further removed than the FSM from the peaceful resistance spirit of the civil rights movement and less concerned about non-violent tactics and democratic leadership. In fact, leadership techniques were more rigid and bureaucratic than in the FSM, an early indication that the New Left would eventually accept many characteristics of the communist Old Left that it had originally shunned.

The VDC was essentially a composite of individuals from other Left political organizations—SDS, the Progressive Labor party, the Du Bois clubs, Trotskyists, the Communist party, and pacifists. Others included nonstudent acid freaks and sexual freedom advocates, and the nonpolitical “independents” may even have constituted a majority. The VDC program consisted mainly of demands that the United States withdraw immediately from Vietnam and recognize the National Liberation Front, and that President Johnson be impeached for backing the war.

The Vietnam Day Committee played a strategic role in developing opposition to the war. It drew more than ten thousand spectators to the 23 May Vietnam Day teach-in at Berkeley. In October the VDC enticed fifteen thousand protestors to rallies and demonstrations to stop troop trains headed for Pacific demarcation points for Vietnam. Its antiwar marches of 15–16 October in the East Bay Area were the largest peace marches against the Vietnam War in the history of California.

The successful VDC protest on 15–16 October had consequences for SDS. During the demonstrations law enforcement authorities picked up instruction sheets entitled “Brief Notes on the Ways and Means of Beating and Defeating the Draft,” giving detailed instructions on how to defraud the draft system by pretending to be a homosexual, a subversive, an epileptic, a psychotic, etc. In October, United States Attorney General Nicholas B. Katzenbach announced the possibility of an investigation of SDS for alleged attempts to encourage draft evasion. In response, Paul Booth and Carl Oglesby issued a defensive statement stressing SDS’s intention to “build, not to burn” and emphasizing its concern with providing legal and honorable alternatives to serving in the armed forces.* This press release irritated many

* “We propose to the President . . . that he test the young people of America: if they had a free choice, would they want to burn and torture in Viet-Nam or to build a democracy at home and overseas? There is only one way to make

SDS members, some of whom criticized the national office staff for proceeding with a draft program without referendum approval of the membership, describing the action as "not democratic."³¹ Others reprimanded Booth and Oglesby for seeming to reject the draft program and "copping out" to Katzenbach. Some West Coast SDS members wired Booth in Chicago: "Statement falsely indicates draft program dropped for all SDS and implies local autonomy non-existent."³² As it happened the government decided not to take action against SDS, which played down its program for several weeks afterward.

While SDS tried to develop an antiwar program, the peace movement was undergoing changes of its own. In April SDS had rebuffed attempts by moderate and radical peace groups to exclude Old Left political organizations from anti-Vietnam demonstrations, and these peace organizations were reluctant to disagree with SDS again. The resolution to oppose the inclusion of Communist parties collapsed altogether when the peace groups realized that satisfactory attendance depended in large measure on the participation of organizations like the Du Bois clubs and the Young Socialist Alliance. A mammoth march was planned for 27 November in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by SANE, its spokesman let it be known that no one was excluded from the march, nor would anyone be excluded from the National Coordinating Committee Convention to End the War in Vietnam to be held three days prior to the march itself.

The National Coordinating Committee was established by a pot-pourri of new and old radicals to foster support and coordinate protests against the war after SDS decided not to lead mass demonstrations. The committee donated its services, for instance, to the demonstrations that the VDC led on 15–16 October. The National Coordinating Committee Convention was arranged to enable the Old and New Left to meet, exchange views, and advance plans for future antiwar protests. Arrayed at the convention were representatives of various communist factions as well as the noncommunist New Leftists. The importance of the convention to the Old Left was illustrated by the following excerpt from the Du Bois Club newsletter.

that choice real: let us see what happens if service to democracy is made grounds for exemption from the military draft. I predict that almost every member of my generation would choose to build, not to burn; to teach, not to torture; to help, not to kill" (Paul Booth, SDS National Secretary, 20 October 1965, in *Guide to Conscientious Objection* [SDS booklet published November 1965–January 1966], p. 11).

SANE has called for a "mobilization in Washington" on November 27. The national office has decided to urge all local clubs to send as many people as possible to D.C. for this mobilization. Also the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam which coordinated the October 15–16 demonstration nationally and internationally is going to have its convention in D.C. on November 25–28, so that it can support the SANE action. It (NCCTEWN) is going to be the major peace organization in the country that can appeal to masses of people. We have to make sure that the NCCTEWN maintains this broad nature, and we can best do this by getting our members there in large numbers.³³

Factional bickering among the Old Left groups was so intense, however, that many SDS and SNCC members, astonished at the systematic campaign by the Trotskyists to take over the convention in order to increase their own power, withdrew from participation. Although between one thousand and twelve hundred people attended the convention, the sectarian disagreements left little time for discussion of program, strategy, or overall goals. The Washington march on 27 November drew forty thousand participants, making it the largest antiwar demonstration to that time. The audience gave Carl Oglesby, president of SDS and the principal speaker, a standing ovation.

In an article written four years later, Oglesby asserted that 1965 was the year the New Left movement "explicitly abandoned reformism" and began the long march toward "a theory and practice of revolution for the United States. . . ." ³⁴ In his speech, Oglesby began where Paul Potter had left off on 17 April, addressing himself to the task of naming and analyzing the "system that creates and sustains the war in Vietnam." "Liberalism" and the "American corporate system" were combined into the evil hybrid "corporate liberalism"; in Oglesby's view, liberalism had become so corrupt and the corporate system so destructive that there seemed no alternative but revolution.

Oglesby contended that the National Liberation Front was fighting "as honest a revolution as you can find anywhere in history." The proponents of corporate liberalism had tainted this revolution and others like it by charging they were communist inspired and led. Corporate liberalism painted "honest" revolutions Red to delude the people while safeguarding American corporate interests around the world. He denounced "beardless liberals" as "bright-eyed, hard-hearted, slim-waisted, bullet-headed, make-up artists" who could order two

hundred thousand soldiers to Vietnam but would not send one hundred voter registrars into Mississippi.³⁵

Shortly after the Washington demonstration, SDS held an important national council meeting from 27 December 1965 to 2 January 1966 at the University of Illinois. Among the items discussed were a Radical Education Project (REP), the administrative structure of SDS, an adult movement for radicals, and Vietnam programming.

The REP, proposed by Al Haber, was intended to offset the growing loss of ideological perspective within SDS. A national council report explained:

In the past 15 months, SDS has grown from 23 chapters to 125 chapters. In the past year, activist demands and chapter servicing have placed research analysis and publications at such a low level that organizationally these activities have almost ceased.³⁶

The membership needed education in political theory, values, and program. At a time when SDS was groping for a mature social analysis and a workable strategy of dissent, the intellectual resources required to formulate them were almost nonexistent. With the influx of new members, mostly undergraduates oriented more toward action than reflection, SDS had begun to lose the appreciation for research and analysis that had made it a "new" Left only a few years earlier. The national council hoped the REP would intellectually reinvigorate the membership. The council realized that the national office staff could not satisfy the educational requirements of SDS and still cope with its administrative tasks, that its own manpower was insufficient to provide the intellectual guidance required, and that it "must draw on skills and knowledge of many people not now in the organization." ³⁷

A temporary REP committee that included Al Haber, Richard Flacks, Todd Gitlin, Carl Oglesby, and Lee Webb was given a \$1,000 budget for the next three months; later, at the April 1966 national council meeting, a permanent committee of from fifteen to twenty-five people would be selected to promote radical education and research. REP plans anticipated the publication of a biweekly research bulletin and the establishment of a speakers bureau. The national council resolved that the Radical Education Project would be SDS's first priority. The REP budget would be about \$75,000 (which was more than the current budget for the national office); the council also decided

that the REP should be administratively separate from the national office and responsible for further fund raising.

A workshop at the national council meeting also considered the feasibility of an adult "Movement for a Democratic Society" (MDS),* an idea which had been discussed since 1963. The concept had merit insofar as it would provide an outlet for the radical energies of former SDS members who had graduated from college and for other sympathetic adults as well. The workshop believed that such an organization should be administered at the local level with participants corresponding by newsletter.

The adverse reaction of many SDS members to Paul Booth's "build, not burn" statement after the Katzenbach furor caused the national council to make certain alterations in the SDS organizational structure. Reacting to criticism that its draft policy was unauthorized and arrived at undemocratically,** the council decreed that the national office should henceforth consider itself as strictly the administrative arm of SDS and not attempt to create programs or priorities. A National Administrative Committee composed of at-large council members and staff from Chicago and elsewhere would oversee and assist the national office in making major administrative decisions, such as the allocation of substantial sums of money or important staff assignments. The national council concluded that a National Interim Committee (NIC) should be activated to render decisions on substantive matters during the periods between the quarterly national council meetings. The NIC, provided for by the SDS constitution but not previously utilized, was composed of fifteen at-large delegates elected by the national convention and two national officers. The council trusted that the NIC could grapple successfully with any contingency short of a major crisis (calling for an emergency council session), thereby confining the national office to purely administrative matters. The national office had expanded to ten to fifteen staff members and included the national secretary, who was elected by the national council.†

* Embryonic at this point, the concept took definite shape in 1967 and eventually came to be known as "radicals in the professions."

** For example, the membership had voted against adopting the SDS September draft program, but the total number of members who voted was considered so insignificant by the SDS leadership that the results were generally ignored.

† At the December 1965 NC meeting, the NAC was enlarged to include six people from other areas in the country in addition to the seven from the Chi-

The controversy about the undemocratic decision making had additional repercussions at lower levels of the organization. Many members at the chapter level felt that although the Katzenbach affair had had to be dealt with promptly, the national office staff had acted largely by default. The result was that many chapters established regional offices to represent them, so that local leaders might meet more often, coordinate their activities, and see their own ideas implemented. In this way the following situation would be avoided: "It's gotten to the point that I get up in the morning to read the *New York Times* to find out what SDS policy I have to defend today." ³⁸ Many chapter representatives in the Midwest and elsewhere agreed with the following remark from the West Coast: "We and not some executive body composed of people we barely know must address ourselves to these questions: how to maintain autonomy and still work together; how do we conduct democratically the affairs of thousands from Maine to California?" ³⁹ The establishment of regional administrative centers reflected SDS's rapid growth and diversity at the same time that it demonstrated a failure of leadership by the national council and the national staff. Since there was no provision for regional centers in the SDS constitution, their rise meant the creation of semiautonomous fiefdoms to which some chapters would give more loyalty than to national SDS.

The state of flux that characterized SDS at the end of 1965 had as much to do with its previous history as with specific events of that year. At the beginning of 1966, SDS's central problem involved coming to grips with what it symbolized. SDS had sped through a series of programs and agencies for change since its inception; it had looked to students, liberal-labor forces, and the poor for help in launching programs dealing with university reform, disarmament, radical domestic change, community organizing, and urban insurgency. But the development of a coherent New Left political philosophy had not kept pace with the rapid turnover in programs and agencies for change. In fact, the evolution of a New Left philosophy had not progressed significantly since 1963 and *America and the New Era*. By the end of 1965, SDS had become increasingly contemptuous of American so-

cago area elected by the NC to the committee. By the end of 1967 the total number had been reduced to nine. Similarly, by the end of 1967, the NIC had been reduced from fifteen to eleven officers.

ciety, and this, too, contributed to its susceptibility to Marxism-Leninism.

For better or worse, the fate of SDS was linked to opposing the Vietnam War. At the end of 1965 its Vietnam program was ambiguous, ineffectual, and a source of frustration that exacerbated the resentment toward society felt by many members. Some believed the draft program should advise draftees how illegally to avoid serving in the armed forces; others were unwilling to go that far. Many people in SDS felt that tactical opposition to the war should be left to individual chapters, and indeed this was done in the absence of unifying leadership from national SDS.

To what extent even the most prominent leaders of SDS were dubious or critical of the organization's thrust and policies may be seen from a position paper written by Paul Booth and Lee Webb for the December 1965 national council meeting and entitled *The Anti-War Movement: From Protest to Radical Politics*.

Essentially, we think that the movement against the war in Vietnam is working on the wrong issue. And that issue is Vietnam. We feel that American foreign policy, and thus the war in Vietnam, is impervious to pressure placed directly on it. Secondly, we feel that the issue of the war in Vietnam cannot involve masses of people here in the United States. Finally, we look with extreme concern on the single issue orientation of the anti-war protest. We think that this single issue politics, perhaps valid in another time, is simply an obstacle at this time. We are concerned about all of the issues of America and think that the only way to deal with them is together.⁴⁰

The authors, and many SDS members, wished to forge a multiissue movement out of opposition to the war. Although Booth and Webb believed that efforts to build a domestic radical movement should be redoubled, they did not provide a workable strategy to accomplish this. Therefore, although SDS continued to be preoccupied with the war, the how and wherefore of opposition was left largely to the local chapters, and the national leadership was unable to do more than prepare a "Guide to Conscientious Objection." It was in this indefinite state that SDS entered 1966.

SDS from 1966 to 1967: The Tortuous Road to Revolution

1966: Toward an Unstable Revolutionary Mixture

In 1966, SDS fell into a vicious circle. The more its members were committed to ending the war, the greater their anger at their failure to do so. The decision by the communist Old Left to give SDS more of its attention contributed to the mounting problems within the organization.

On 1 January 1966 the League for Industrial Democracy permanently severed relations with SDS, in large part because SDS had rescinded its constitutional clause excluding "totalitarians" from membership and had insisted on cooperating with Communists in anti-Vietnam War protests. Over the weekend of 4 February, the May Second movement voted to dissolve and to enter SDS, announcing its decision in the SDS weekly *New Left Notes* with the innocuous statement that it wished to "add a new element to the Movement by introducing [its] perspective" into SDS.¹ The explanation in its own newspaper, *Free Student*, was more to the point: "Our goal is the development of a mass socialist student movement in America."² The M2M leaders realized that New Left groups had not yet determined "in favor of [a] socialist, left, or anti-imperialist perspective" but estimated that these groups represented a potentially fertile political ground. They therefore decided "to throw all our energies into their [existing New Left organizations] development as the radical student movement in America."³

Meanwhile, from December 1965 through the early months of 1966, *Political Affairs*, the theoretical organ of the Communist party of the United States, ran a series of articles on the New Left, indicating that party would follow the example of PLP in joining SDS.* In a

* The Communist party was not nearly as successful as the communist Progressive Labor party in influencing the future of SDS.

comprehensive analysis of the New Left, John Proctor noted that its members were middle-class intellectuals not interested in the working class, but he chided the party for having contemptuously avoided contact with the movement. Instead, he suggested, "Our new policy should be to join in the struggle in the New Left whenever it is possible and prudent for us to do so."⁴ Succeeding articles agreed, urging "the Party to consider the New Left as a recruiting ground for our militant cadre"⁵ and predicting a "growing relationship between the New Left and the Communist Party."⁶

That disciplined members of the communist Old Left entered SDS underscored the failure of effective SDS leadership, especially in view of a swelling membership insufficiently educated in political theory and antagonistic to elected authority. A debate ensued in *New Left Notes* on the question of leadership, with Al Haber contending that for SDS to accept the national council as the decision-making body was imperative. Because of its representative nature, the council seemed perfectly suited to this task. Voting members included chapter delegates, national officers, and emissaries from groups associated with SDS, such as SNCC. Full acceptance by the membership of national council decisions would enable the organization to reestablish its identity, render it less vulnerable to outside influence, and pave the way for effective programs. Haber asserted:

We should develop and make use of the full political functions of the National Council, not only in determining program but also in debating and adopting political resolutions in the name of the organization. Until the NC is treated as an important group and is given important, public political functions, it cannot be expected to operate as a responsible political body . . . (e.g., the national office and leadership should not initiate programs, make statements or take actions which have political "significance" for the organization without seeking approval of the NC).⁷

Most SDS members, however, were less preoccupied with internal problems than with the Vietnam War. Richard Flacks discussed the ambivalent effects of the war on the New Left in *New Left Notes*.

The Vietnam war has made the movement much more sensitive to the international scene, but has rendered the domestic strategy of the left largely irrelevant; has increased the size and heterogeneity of the

movement but thereby diluted the possibilities for effective political dialogue and decision making; increased the militancy and alienation of the left, but therefore distorted its capability for rational political analysis; made the new left an important source of political opposition in the United States, but one lacking a definite set of strategic goals around which national programs can be organized.⁸

The unwillingness of SDS members to formulate a domestic social critique was matched by their inability to create a concept of "imperialism" that would transcend the Leninist theory, criticized as a "necessary but insufficient explanation of American foreign policy for the New Left." *

In spite of internal structural difficulties and its theoretical unpreparedness to cope with the Old Left, SDS held an NC meeting at Antioch College on 8–10 April to map antiwar tactics for the spring. The council approved a program to protest Selective Service examinations for the draft, set for 14 May, but there was disagreement concerning which tactical approach best suited the occasion. Some members preferred to boycott the examinations, thereby placing their 2-S student deferments in jeopardy, a tactic calculated to appeal to young men not in college and subject to the draft. Opponents responded that this approach would drive college students away from SDS; most students were not willing to discontinue their education and defy the draft for "the movement."

The council decided instead to devise a counter-"examination" of its own to be distributed along with the Selective Service examination at the appointed time at each examining center. Advocates maintained that this would dramatize SDS opposition to the war and serve as an effective organizing tool as well. On 14 May, the first day the Selective Service examinations were given, almost all of the 400,000 draft-age college students on 800 campuses also received SDS's "National Vietnam Examination," composed of eighteen multiple-choice questions and answers complete with sources of information. The questions and answers were intended to arouse doubt in the reader's mind about the legitimacy of the United States' Vietnam policy.

Class ranking, one aspect of Selective Service reclassification,

* See Robert Wolfe, "American Imperialism and the Peace Movement," *Studies on the Left* 6, no. 3 (May–June 1966): 28–43 for a good introduction to this problem which the New Left never satisfactorily solved.

stirred even greater resentment in New Left circles than the examination. Draft status was to be determined by the grades a male student earned in university classes. Those with low grades were subject to an immediate draft, while high-grade students were deferred from military service until graduation. The issue of draft deferments understandably elicited much interest on university campuses. Demonstrations against the deferment plan were held at Columbia University and the universities of Michigan and Wisconsin; at Roosevelt University in Chicago, candidates ran for the student senate on an anti-draft deferment platform. At the University of Chicago, SDS told officials that deferment would result in a rush for "snap" courses and lenient graders and that classroom dialogue would be inhibited for fear of offending professors who could consider other factors than a student's work in deciding grades.

The SDS line on electoral politics, a topic involving considerable difference of opinion, was set down at the same national council meeting in April, where it was decided to support "New Politics" candidates, thus countenancing an independent political force as distinguished from the old liberal coalition. The NC proclaimed that a new-style political organization must operate around local issues and hold as its first priority the creation of a permanent radical organization to extend beyond the election itself. Finally, the candidacy must be independent from both the Democratic and Republican parties.

In 1966 the campaign generating the most interest in the New Left was Robert Scheer's attempt to unseat Jeffry Cohelan, a Democratic liberal and dove on the Vietnam War, for Congress. Scheer, an editor and financial backer of *Ramparts*, was supported by the Vietnam Day Committee in Berkeley, where most of the campaign was centered. But SDS abandoned Scheer because he was contesting Cohelan in the Democratic primary, violating a condition established by the national council.

For SDS, a political campaign meant more than winning an election; it was a means to establish a radical movement in the area encompassed by the election. In the Scheer case, since the primary ended 7 June 1966, it was impossible to maintain the organizational momentum after the election was over. Furthermore, from the SDS point of view, registering new voters as Democrats would hamper future efforts to collect enough signatures to put an independent radical

candidate on the ballot. Although only 7,800 signatures were needed to establish Scheer's independent candidacy, advocates of the Democratic primary idea asserted that it was virtually impossible to organize an independent party. They defended Scheer's multiissue platform, which was concerned, in addition to the war, with the failure of the poverty program, with school segregation, civil liberties, job discrimination, police brutality, and urban renewal.

Jerry Rubin, a leader of the Vietnam Day Committee and a Scheer partisan, was certain the new front behind the campaign would make "room for thousands of new people . . . liberals who could not accept the raucous style of the VDC."⁹

In the end, Scheer received a respectable 45 percent of the vote, but spokesmen for the New Left condemned the campaign for failing to fulfill its original purpose—to serve as a vehicle for community organizing. Instead, they contended, the major voting effort was made in "the black ghettos" rather than in middle-class neighborhoods or working-class districts in Berkeley and Oakland, California. The process of building a movement around an independent third party would take "five to ten years" of effort, and the Scheer campaign, notwithstanding its good intentions, had compromised this effort.¹⁰

Scheer's defeat in June 1966 also symbolized the end of the Vietnam Day Committee, which had reached the pinnacle of its success as a viable antiwar organization the previous October. Many of the VDC members had helped to promote Scheer's campaign. His defeat, coupled with the VDC's unsuccessful attempt to incite a student strike at Berkeley at the beginning of 1966, brought about that organization's demise.

Meanwhile, the SDS national council met at the University of Michigan in June to prepare for the national convention scheduled for August. The passage of a resolution on behalf of SNCC and Black Power was preceded by a letter to Stokely Carmichael from Paul Booth, national secretary of SDS, in which Booth assured Carmichael that SDS would continue to be an ally of SNCC by working to fulfill their joint vision of a new radical America. The resolution endorsed SNCC's plan of organizing independent bases of power in Negro communities, the council acknowledging that "if we really want to help we will be organizing primarily among the powerless, the disenfranchised, the dependent whites—poor, working class, and middle

class.”¹¹ * The national council also announced a joint SDS-SNCC statement addressed to the United States Congress demanding the termination of the draft. Beyond this demand, however, little was done at the meeting to formulate a definite antidraft program for SDS. In addition, the council inadvertently undermined its own authority by resolving that the prerogatives of the national secretary (a member of the national office staff) should be broadened to include participation in programming, internal education, and the coordination of staff assignments.

SDS internal troubles in 1966 included financial matters as well. Deficit spending had placed the organization several thousand dollars in debt, so that it had to appeal to its membership for relief. Previous reliance on wealthy radicals and liberals was insufficient for an operating budget of nearly \$100,000 per year. C. Clark Kissinger, among others, admonished SDS members who could well afford to contribute to the organization but who preferred to spend their money otherwise.

Commenting generally on the council meeting, Paul Booth, national secretary at the time, also summarized the vicissitudes of SDS's organizational emphasis over the past two years and concluded with a promising, if vague, description of SDS in 1966.

Our Movement has changed its priorities dramatically at a number of junctures; in spring, 1964 we transformed SDS from an intellectual center into a community organizing campaign; in spring, 1965 we made SDS the leader of the student antiwar movement. This year we have moved to make it a radical political action organization with a broad program.¹²

The SDS national convention was held from 27 August to 1 September at Clear Lake, Iowa. The predominant theme called for a mass movement for change; the unanswered question was how to translate this ambition into a realistic program. The chaotic plenary session was deluged with resolutions, proposals, and constitutional amendments mainly concerned with how to change the system.

A resolution urging the formation of unions of college students to

* Richard Flacks explained why SDS would never fulfill this function: “A movement of the poor . . . can't be the main task of thousands of middle class youth who have become radicalized. . . . It requires certain kinds of people, willing to make very extended and total commitments, possessing particular kinds of social skills (Flacks, “Whatever Became of the New Left?” p. 1).

resist the draft was passed with an addendum stipulating that any executive plan concerning the draft that might make the membership liable for conviction of a felony must be submitted to the general membership for approval.* Many contended that SDS should not assume a leading role against the Vietnam War but that local chapters should take the initiative for demonstrations or direct action tactics in the absence of programs originating at the national level.

Despite the disorder at the 1966 convention, the representatives there decided that campus organizing would be the main emphasis for the coming year. Unwelcome in the black movement and unwilling to concentrate on the adult white community, SDS in August 1966 continued the tendency "to organize themselves around questions that affected their own lives." Published in September, the position paper that prompted the emphasis on campus organizing was written by Carl Davidson, newly elected SDS vice-president, and was entitled *Toward a Student Syndicalist Movement or University Reform Revisited*. Davidson endorsed Carl Oglesby's description of the American system as "corporate liberalism" and endeavored to demonstrate a relationship between "the university and corporate liberal society at large" and "dormitory hours and the war in Vietnam." The connection was that the university trains the men and women who operate, control, and direct the system, from university administrators imposing rules of behavior to policy makers devising foreign policy strategy. The university produces the "elites . . . defenders . . . apologists . . . manipulators . . . and propagandists" that enable corporate liberalism to flourish. The primary end, he suggested, was to "radically transform the university community." The movement might have a fighting chance to change the system if students obtained control of the university and "themselves decide what kind of rules they want or don't want. Or whether they need rules at all."¹³

Aware that many newcomers to SDS lacked the political and philosophical backgrounds of earlier members, most of whom had been

* About fifty student activists favoring draft defiance, and behind the "We Won't Go" campaign sprouting at several campuses, met in Des Moines, Iowa, 25–26 August. SDS was represented by Paul Booth and Jeff Shero. Although the militancy of SDS on the whole did not match that of the activists at this meeting, the rash of "We Won't Go" projects in the fall intensified SDS hostility against the war by its December NC meeting (see Michael Ferber and Staughton Lynd, *The Resistance* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1971] for a history of the antiwar resistance movement).

graduate students in the social sciences, convention delegates also endorsed the Radical Education Project (REP) as the best method of providing a radical political education for members who would take advantage of it. This education would involve alternative reading lists and countercurricula in addition to written assessments of different aspects of the movement. By the time of the convention, the purpose of REP was "to develop a research, education, and publication center designed to strengthen the movement toward a new left in America." In addition to seminars, analyses, and publications, REP would set up an "international intelligence network" to provide current information on timely subjects of interest to the movement. Such a network would include "scholars, journalists, leftist youth leaders, government officials, guerrilla leaders, etc." Among its other functions, the REP would organize radicals in, or preparing for, the various professions,¹⁴ a concept still in its embryonic stage, although activity was already astir in different parts of the country toward the establishment of new organizations to be known, for example, as "Movement for a Democratic Society" or "Citizens for a Democratic Society".

Another issue of major importance discussed at the convention was the role of Communists in SDS, chiefly members of the Progressive Labor party. An important distinction was made between the traditional SDS emphasis on building a movement and the PLP emphasis on the primacy of the party. SDS's conception of a movement had always been abroad, heterogeneous, and adaptable. Regular SDS members rejected "democratic centralism" (the acceptance of decisions from above) and a preordained ideology. At the convention they reaffirmed the preeminence of participatory democracy and their intention to create a movement that was new, American, and revolutionary. The Progressive Labor party had another goal in mind, however. PLP leaders at the convention wished to build a Maoist party, not a movement. The convention voted against forcing Communists to disclose their dual party affiliation when running for office within SDS, but not before the "blatant fear was expressed that members of PL and CP (Communist Party USA) would try in the coming year to take over SDS or use it as a recruiting ground and thereby wrecking it." ¹⁵

The fall of 1966 brought enhanced campus resistance to the Vietnam War. By September, more than one hundred students had sought legal protection from the draft, and many more elected other methods to delay or avoid induction. As the quotas for draftees increased,

antagonism toward the war at colleges and universities also increased, until in November the antiwar movement seemed headed toward open confrontation with the government on the draft issue. SDS promoted operations at City College of New York, Columbia, Chicago, San Francisco State College, Queens College, Brooklyn College and others, to prevent these schools from sending grades to Selective Service offices. At Berkeley on 18 November, activists began harassing Navy recruiting tables on campus, a tactic that would grow increasingly popular as time went on. SDS believed that by effectively disrupting the draft and university services connected with the military, it would seriously thwart business and government interests and the Vietnam War and at the same time be a step closer to student control of the university.

At the SDS national council meeting in late December 1966 at Berkeley, important matters concerning the internal operation of SDS were again raised but summarily dismissed by the council. Problems dealing with structure, staff, and finances were brushed aside, the national secretary explaining:

SDS just simply was not interested in talking about organizational problems or about political analysis. Neither ideological clarity nor organizational stability are fundamentally important to SDSers. What counts is that which creates movement . . . what people can do with their lives . . . and with their bodies.¹⁶

The national council passed an anti-draft resolution by a vote of fifty-three to ten, testifying to the growing radicalism of the organization since August, when a similar resolution had required membership approval. In the resolution, SDS contended that the draft was "intimately connected with the requirements of the economic system and the foreign policy of the U.S." Speaking for SDS, the council pledged to organize unions of draft resisters who would avow voluntarily "that under no circumstances would they allow themselves to be drafted." In addition, the council enumerated other antiwar methods to be used on a nationwide basis—demonstrations against draft boards and recruiting stations, encouraging servicemen to oppose the war, and education and direct action aimed at potential inductees, if possible at induction centers.¹⁷

SDS awaited the coming year with anticipation, having decided to

rely on a constituency of student militants on the nation's campuses. But since neither the national council nor the national office enjoyed close working relations with the chapters, there was no assurance that the latter would follow national resolutions or directives.

1967: From Protest to Resistance

One of many problems that deterred SDS from leading an American New Left was the altered character of its membership. Since 1965, a sizable number of new members had lacked the intellectual interest, political perception, and revolutionary zeal necessary to develop a workable alternative social system. In 1967, SDS expanded to more than 6,000 students and over 200 chapters; in addition, there were an estimated 20,000–30,000 members who participated in the activities of local groups but who did not pay national dues.*

At the beginning of 1967, Carl Davidson and Nick Egleson, respectively vice-president and president of SDS for 1966–67, made a report after touring the chapters, and Davidson described the “shock troops” who comprised from 85 to 90 percent of the members in any SDS chapter.

They are usually the younger members, freshmen and sophomores, rapidly moving into the hippy, Bobby Dylan syndrome . . . staunchly anti-intellectual and rarely read anything unless it comes from the underground press syndicate. They have never heard of C. Wright Mills or even Bob Moses, nor do they care to find out. In one sense, they have no politics . . . they turn out regularly for demonstrations. They are morally outraged about the war, cops, racism, poverty, their parents, the middle-class, and authority figures in general. They have a

* Because the mystique of decentralization resulted in an absence of permanent records, it was difficult to determine accurately the membership of SDS at any given time. The tabulation of members fluctuates. In the spring of 1966, for example, it was estimated that SDS had 5,500 members in 151 chapters. Another estimate placed the figure at 20,000 members. The latter figure seems exaggerated and probably included activists who did not pay national dues (Cf. Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority* [New York: New American Library, 1966], p. 85, with E. Joseph Shoben, Jr., Philip Werdell, and Durward Long, “Radical Student Organizations,” in *Protest: Student Activism in America*, ed. Julian Foster and Durward Long [New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970], p. 208. For the 1967 figure, see Richard Blumenthal, “SDS: Protest Is Not Enough,” *Nation*, 22 May 1967, p. 656).

sense that all those things are connected somehow and that money has something to do with it. They long for community and feel their own isolation acutely, which is probably why they stick with SDS.¹⁸

Davidson maintained that most SDS members were motivated more by action than by ideas. They would appear at demonstrations and then withdraw into their own worlds until some other protest was called. According to Davidson, the remaining 10 to 15 percent of the membership of a given chapter was composed of "superintellectuals" who mapped chapter strategy, and "organizers," who recruited new members and saw that plans were executed. The three subgroups were not congenial, and a tremendous waste of manpower resulted. The organizers regarded the intellectuals as opportunists who lacked the guts to confront the adult community; the intellectuals considered the organizers "sloppy thinking mystics with no sense of history"; the shock troops admired the organizers but placed the intellectuals in the same class as their "parents and the Dean of Men."¹⁹

Despite such divisiveness, members of the typical SDS chapter tolerated each other politically on the basis of their mutual distaste for American society, every aspect of which was condemned by "shock troops," "superintellectuals," and "organizers" alike. New Left activists scorned the state, courts of law and jurisprudence, the Democratic and Republican parties, religious institutions, the universities, and the pursuit of excellence in individual endeavor, the arts, and literature. Tom Hayden attributed this wholesale rejection of society to the assassination of John F. Kennedy, "the hardening of resistance to civil rights," especially in the North, and the orientation of the country to a "permanent war basis" in reaction to "revolutionary or communist-led revolutionary countries in the third world."²⁰

That SDS and SNCC had experienced certain tactical reverses does not explain the indiscriminate repudiation of American society by New Left activists. The fact is that many of them lacked revolutionary self-discipline and were inept at political analysis. The Old Left had understood the necessity of retaining many features of an advanced technological society while changing the basis of ownership and the nature of political authority. As Richard Rovere and Dwight Macdonald, two older writers of the Left, indicated, with the exception of "a few doctrinaire Marxists," this spirit of indiscriminating repulsion of society that exemplified the New Left after 1965 "never really existed in the Old Left."²¹

If SDS "shock troops" did any political reading at all, they probably read Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, a book that competed with Che Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare* in 1967 as required SDS reading (in the fall of 1967 the New York regional office of SDS held a conference on the "thought of Marcuse," especially the questions raised in *One Dimensional Man*). Here and elsewhere, Marcuse nourished the seeds of elitism in SDS by doubting the capability of most Americans to decide what was best for them and by downgrading their cultural preferences.

For Marcuse, American society was totalitarian—"a non-terroristic economic-technological coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests." Multimedia advertising had mesmerized the average citizen to the point of mindless consumption, with the result that most Americans were incapable of making the decisions that shape their lives independent of the political-economic interests that seek subtly to rearrange choices and preferences for self-serving ends. As long as citizens were "indoctrinated and manipulated," they did not know their own minds, and the answer to the question of what their true needs were "cannot be taken as their own."²² Marcuse contended that the negative characteristics of human nature might prevent citizens from making the right decision in a free election even if they received accurate information from the government beforehand: "The weakness and ignorance of the people would cause them to be subject to the powers that be . . . under such circumstances, even a free vote could be a vote for servitude, and a democracy could become a system of domination and exploitation by consent."²³ But most Americans did not know what they really wanted and, instead, "recognize themselves in their commodities: they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split level home, kitchen equipment."²⁴

Marcuse not only contributed to the elitism of the New Left, he added to its problems as well. *One Dimensional Man* caused widespread dismay among radicals by Marcuse's denial of available agents for radical rearrangement of American society. According to Marcuse, the "bourgeoisie and the proletariat . . . no longer appear to be agents of historical transformation." Prosperity and technology had made the workers, the traditional Marxist force responsible for the overthrow of the capitalist state, complacent and unrevolutionary. He conceded that the people of the Third World were potential

revolutionaries—"the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable."²⁵ But, he later added, it was unrealistic to imagine that either middle-class intellectuals or the poor (*Lumpenproletariat*) could replace the working class as an effective prototype for revolution; they could function only as possible catalysts of revolt within the industrial working class.*

Many members of SDS agreed with Marcuse that they lived, or would probably live, an intolerable one-dimensional existence, but they felt at the same time that his revolutionary theories were too pessimistic. One result of this acceptance of many of Marcuse's critical postulates but dissatisfaction with his practical conclusions was SDS's sudden interest in elaborating a "new working class" theory.

This theory was introduced and developed at the 17–19 February 1967 conference of the Radical Education Project held at Princeton University and sponsored by the local SDS chapter. The analytical basis from which the theory emerged was a 30,000-word paper written by three SDS members and entitled *Toward a Theory of Social Change in America*. According to the paper, the new working class was composed of three subclasses: (1) "technical and professional workers," such as engineers; (2) "higher-level industrial workers" in manufacturing and research production, who were distinguished from blue-collar workers by their level of education and specialization; and (3) "social service workers," such as teachers, social workers, lawyers, doctors, artists, and performers, who were to play a central role in social organization and development. The "social service workers" would be "the unifying aspect of the new working class,"²⁶ and the

* Especially in light of the student-inspired May–June 1968 upheaval in France, Marcuse granted that a "revolution may originate from outside the laboring classes" and then engender militant opposition among the workers (Robert L. Allen, "Interview with Herbert Marcuse: Turning Point in the Struggle," *National Guardian*, 9 November 1968, p. 9). Yet as recently as February 1971, Marcuse dismissed as indecisive the effects of Third World revolutions in the United States because their occurrence did not seriously upset the social, political, and economic system in this country (E.M., "Cops Clear Kant," an analysis of a speech by Herbert Marcuse at the University of California, Berkeley, *San Francisco Good Times*, 12 February 1971, p. 18). For an amplification of Marcuse's definition of the revolutionary role of minorities, such as middle-class intellectuals, students, and members of ghetto populations, see Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 50, 53.

paper anticipated that the majority of college students would join one or another of these three subgroups.

Since it was unlikely that economic deprivation would act as a radicalizing agent, the sponsors of the theory seized upon "the workers' lack of control over their own means of livelihood" as a potent source of revolutionary motivation.²⁷ The sense of powerlessness would be used to revolutionize the new working class and prompt it to seize the command posts of economic production in America. The theme of participation and control, the keynote of SDS's program for the university,* would be utilized to induce newly graduated students to use their professional positions for revolutionary purposes. For the new working class to be effective, its future members would have to be "indoctrinated" (radicalized) in college. This strategy stressed the supreme importance of student control and reconstruction of the "multiversity," where the students would be "trainees" for the new working class. Instead of being prepared to perpetuate the present social and political system of American democracy, they would be trained to render it inoperable and then remake it along revolutionary lines.

Meanwhile, the student antiwar movement, of which SDS was an important part, was internally divided over the question of tactics. The initial dispute arose when SDS had decided against vigorously supporting mammoth antiwar demonstrations on the grounds that they were ineffective in halting the war. Moreover, they attracted many of the same people repeatedly and ignored students and adults who might be radicalized if emphasis were placed on the domestic consequences of the war and the relationship between the war and such social ills as poverty, unemployment, and racial discrimination. A disagreement over antidraft tactics that arose in 1967 ultimately weakened the overall effectiveness of the student antiwar movement. The principal antagonists were national SDS and a group of activists who called themselves "The Resistance," though in some instances they enjoyed a dual membership and shared a mutual respect.

The inspiration for The Resistance came from young men like David Harris (former president of the Stanford University student body and often singled out for his leadership), Lennie Heller, Steve

* "Student power," the theme of Carl Davidson's *Toward Student Syndicalism or University Reform Revisited*, published in September 1966, could be traced back to Tom Hayden's primer on radical university reform, *Students and Social Action*, published by SDS in 1962.

Hamilton, and Dennis Sweeney. Gaining momentum on the West Coast, The Resistance spread to the East, and to Cornell University in particular. Its purpose was to undermine the Selective Service system "by taking the position of complete and open non-cooperation with the draft."²⁸ The organization was made up of both undergraduate and graduate students shielded from the draft by 2-S deferments. By joining The Resistance they announced their intention to forego university deferments (by burning draft cards, etc.), lay themselves open to the draft, and to choose prison rather than evasion when they were called.

The motivation for this self-sacrifice was complex. These young men had the courage of their conviction that the war was wrong and should be opposed, and they would not remain safely ensconced in the university sanctuary while the poor, the black, and young workmen went to Vietnam in their place. A few white members of The Resistance had worked as students in the South for SNCC in the early sixties. Because of their clerical skills, they had found themselves in SNCC or CORE administrative offices, and they did not wish to repeat the experience of sitting in safety while black students did the dangerous job of organizing in the community. Politically, The Resistance hoped that enough students would surrender their deferments and submit to the judicial process to clog its machinery, fill the prisons, and create a national furor causing people to question the legitimacy of the draft, American foreign policy, and the state itself. The Resistance made its first public appearance at the 15 April 1967 mobilization march against the war in New York when approximately 175 students burned their draft cards in Central Park.

A number of SDS regional councils and many local chapters voted against endorsing the 15 April march, chiefly because, to them it was just another conventional antiwar demonstration. According to Carl Davidson, the induction center was the place for disruption and proselytizing against the war. He argued that it was sufficient to denounce the 2-S deferment to "reach out to non-student young people and their families" and to provide "easy and radical access to high school students."²⁹ * Davidson viewed antidraft organizing as a means to build a radical movement:

* Former experienced members of the JOIN community union in Chicago thought that organizing around the draft, in and of itself was a mistake. It would be vulnerable to government countermeasures and useless unless the or-

Anti-draft organizing moves from protest activity to activity that takes on more and more of the characteristics of a seditious resistance movement. Direct action at induction centers and courtrooms begins to desanctify those traditional American institutions oppressing people both at home and abroad.³⁰

At the same time, however, Davidson accused The Resistance of "making people feel weak" and therefore dividing and isolating the movement. Instead, he advocated both legal and illegal methods to combat the draft and the military, from conscientious objector counseling to immigration to Canada, from helping AWOLs and encouraging insubordination in the military to going underground.³¹ SDS thought it counterproductive to lose antiwar leaders to prison, particularly since it planned that antidraft union cadre should enter the new working class (radicals in the professions) upon graduation. Finally, the disagreement that grew between SDS and The Resistance was based on SDS's denial that the burning of draft cards was a political act and the beginning of a political movement.³²

Meanwhile, SDS chapters were active in forming antidraft unions at more than twenty-five universities; they also organized in high schools, interfered with induction proceedings, pleaded with servicemen to desert, and harassed military recruiters and business representatives whose companies manufactured weapons used in Vietnam. In March 1967 Todd Gitlin called for a national movement to expel the military from the campus. Subsequent action along these lines at Columbia, Harvard, and elsewhere, however, usually originated at the chapter level and was not the consequence of national SDS influence.

At the SDS national convention held 25–30 June at Ann Arbor, Michigan, both the new working class theory and the SDS program against the war were discussed. Carl Davidson, elected interorganizational secretary, warned that the student power movement should not be allowed to become entangled in issues on the campus that lacked political impact for society at large; rather, student issues should be related to national issues important to large segments of the public. An observer at the convention reported in *New Left Notes* that the Progressive Labor party disagreed with the student

ganizer lived in the community and had a job and friends there (Members of JOIN Community Union, "Take a Step into America," *Movement*, December 1967, p. 8).

power—new working class concept and reiterated “the traditional Marxist emphasis on the industrial workers.”³³ Proponents of the new working class theory countered by underlining the revolutionary potential of boring jobs and of college graduates deprived of control over their own work, though prosperous in an affluent society.*

Concerning Vietnam, Nick Egleson reported to the convention on his recent trip to Hanoi, and the delegates deprecated the single-issue orientation of the National Mobilization Committee (an outgrowth of the National Coordinating Committee) for its decision to march on Washington in October. The convention did demand immediate withdrawal of United States forces from Vietnam and called for servicemen to desert. While the convention approved the spirit of The Resistance, the latter was criticized for seeking confrontation instead of building community opposition to the war.

The bizarre antics of some of the delegates reflected the heterogeneous composition of SDS at this time. According to a sympathetic observer at the convention:

All at once people are squirting each other with water pistols, blowing soap bubbles, flying paper airplanes and firing cap guns as others stand and sing “Solidarity Forever.” Arms above their heads in the clenched fist of the socialist salute. A few display copies of the little red books containing Mao Tse-tung’s selected thoughts. CBS gets ready to roll.³⁴

A month after the SDS convention, SDS-REP sponsored a Radicals in the Professions Conference. In a comprehensive account of the conference, Al Haber and his wife Barbara revealed the difficulties and decisions that faced individuals interested in joining the new working class. One of the revolutionary models considered at the conference revolved around the class struggle to be waged by teachers, technicians, and certain professionals whose purpose would be to build a new revolutionary party. The authors stated that the role of the radical professional was to raise demands “that cannot be met without a massive political upheaval.” Another model was predicated on a revolution occurring gradually, over a long period of time, with-

* The PLP admitted after the convention that its working class ideology was still rejected by many in SDS and that the cry for student power or student syndicalism was still strong (see “The WSA Caucus and Why ‘Fight to Win’,” *Fight to Win* 1, published by WSA caucus internal to SDS).

out a single decisive struggle. In this scenario, revolution could be achieved

. . . by mobilizing small enclaves of radicalism in a variety of social locations, by changing people's consciousness, by creating alternative ways of living, by extending people's definitions of the possible. . . .

Disaffection will be on issues of quality of life and work as well as economic deprivation and political disenfranchisement. Life-style issues even when accompanied by affluence, are seen to be legitimate concerns of a radical movement. The role of a radical is to create programs which lead people beyond their subjective experience of discontent toward a radical analysis of society and into struggles for root changes. Such struggles will not be successful until there is enough strength on the left. . . .³⁵

One of the problems encountered by radicals in the professions at this early stage was a lack of organizational coordination between different groups.* More serious was the unwillingness of many radicals "to make any significant commitment to the movement or to make any concrete effort to change their lives to accord with their politics."³⁶ There would have to be real sacrifices and discipline if the movement was to succeed. Loyalty to fellow members in the movement should take precedence over loyalty to outsiders, and professional success was to be secondary to movement objectives. Considered essential was a tithe of 10 percent of all income over \$4,000 per family to be placed in a fund for movement projects.³⁷

In *The New Radicals in the Multiversity*, a position paper by Carl Davidson published a few weeks after the conference adjourned, Davidson applied the ideas of student power and the new working class to specific circumstances found in the universities. In a renewed plea for student power, he denounced the universities for specializing in occupational training and nourishing the prevailing middle-class culture instead of developing "independent-minded" critics. Though the term student power ** was admittedly "vague and undefined," Davidson

* In order to promote better communications, the REP began publishing a *Radicals in the Professions Newsletter* shortly after the conference. The name was changed to *Something Else* in 1969, with this admonition: "We must see ourselves as movement cadre, not as careerists seeking involvement in the movement" (Editorial, "Something Else! or: RIP Didn't Die, It's Just Growing," *Something Else* 2, no. 1 [March 1969]: 3).

** In part, this term was used by white radical students in universities to match the revolutionary slogan of "black power" raised by black militants.

contended that the rebellion of college students (trainees of the new working class) over the issues of participatory democracy and worker control provided the best approach for revolt in the United States.

The document asserted that while in college, students should increase their power by obtaining equal or dominant positions on university councils and committees, by controlling student discipline procedures, abolishing grading systems and compulsory courses, barring military-related activity, and formulating issues conducive to student strike action. The single overall purpose of the student power concept was to create the necessary political consciousness among those students who would hold jobs in the strategic sectors of the economy. Davidson urged that "engineers and technical students and education majors" should be preferred as members of the new working class because of the crucial positions they would occupy after graduation. Furthermore, students should be organized at community and junior colleges and state universities in preference to religious colleges or Ivy League schools.³⁸

Meanwhile, two conferences took place—one illustrating the high-pitch of radicalism reached by black militants, the other testifying to the widening chasm between black and white radicals. In July, the first national conference on Black Power was held in Newark, New Jersey, just after Newark and Detroit had experienced the worst race riots since Watts. The political views of the one thousand delegates, representing forty-five black organizations, ranged from moderate to revolutionary. Integrationists such as Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Whitney Young, Jr. of the National Urban League, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not attend. Since the conference was the first of its kind, the participants planned to lay the foundations for future programs and to forge that cohesion among black people that Black Power symbolized. The influence of African culture was apparent in the dress and names of many of the delegates. The fourteen workshops of the conference reflected a distrust of white society and concentrated on every aspect of the black community and the obstacles to be surmounted on the road to political power. H. Rap Brown, the SNCC chairman, stated, "Black people are going to be free by any means necessary." ³⁹ * Some of the resolutions passed requested a boycott of

* SNCC elected Brown chairman in 1967. Brown proclaimed that civil rights was dead and endorsed the use of violence. SNCC declared itself a human rights organization that would apply to UNESCO for status as an affiliated nongovernmental organization. A SNCC position paper published in July 1967

black churches that did not join the black revolution, a black militia to teach self-defense, a school for political organizers, a black university, and a national antidraft program. The conference also urged the delegates and those who had sent them to buy only from stores owned and operated by black people.

At the New Politics Convention that met between 31 August and 4 September 1967 in Chicago, many white delegates, coming face to face with Black Power for the first time, were at a loss to understand the mentality and behavior of black militants. The convention was sponsored by the National Conference for a New Politics, a coalition of civil rights, peace, student, and independent radical political groups formed in November 1965. Its sponsors envisioned a coalition of radicals in a single political movement supporting the black revolution, a campaign to save American cities, opposition to the Vietnam War, and the defeat of President Lyndon Johnson in 1968. All shades of the American Left, old and new, were present, and when the convention began, forging a political third force was uppermost in the minds of most of the three thousand five hundred delegates assembled.

The preoccupation with electoral politics and visions of unity vanished, however, when a black caucus at the convention, composed of some four hundred delegates, boycotted the convention sessions and informed white delegates that the boycott would continue unless their thirteen-point resolution was accepted. Included among the provisions of the resolution were demands for "fifty percent representation for black people" on all convention committees, a demand to "condemn the imperialistic Zionist war," a demand to support all resolutions from the Newark Black Power Conference (some of which were se-

compared the African liberation movement with the struggle of Afro-Americans. In this regard, SNCC asserted its "independence" from America, including white radical America, by taking a position that was subsequently adopted by the Black Panthers and its supporters in SDS: "We also come to assert that we consider ourselves and other black people in the United States a colonized people; a colony within the United States in many ways similar to colonies outside the boundaries of the United States and other European nations" (*The Indivisible Struggle against Racism, Apartheid and Colonialism*, [SNCC position paper delivered at the International Seminar on Apartheid, Lusaka, Republic of Zambia, 24 July–4 August 1967, organized by the United Nations with the cooperation of the Government of the Republic of Zambia], pp. 4–5). It was estimated in August 1967 that SNCC had "a hard core of about 50 full-time staff" (see Thomas O'Neill's article on SNCC in the *Baltimore Sun*, 20 August 1967).

cret), as well as a demand to establish "civilizing committees" in white communities to "humanize the savage beast-like character that runs rampant throughout America." ⁴⁰ When the white delegates capitulated to the ultimatums, the black caucus then insisted on half the votes held by all delegates at the convention. Again the white representatives surrendered, their response characterized as "masochistic" by some delegates. A white liberal delegate described the mood at the convention after the black demands were granted: "Slowly, slowly, it became clear to this group that by giving Blacks 50% of the vote . . . they voted out of existence the mutual respect that could be the only basis for cooperation." ⁴¹ A black delegate explained to the same liberal what, in his estimation, had occurred at the convention.

They ASKED for control and the whites GAVE it to them. I have told you and told you that the black people are finished asking if they can do this and that. What do you think Black Power means? It means POWER! It don't mean no compromises before they got anything to compromise with. A man who compromises his principles ain't worth nothin' to the white liberals; he ain't worth nothin' to the black power; he ain't worth nothin' to the Ku Klux Klan.⁴²

The convention then turned its attention to a proposal to create a third party, a proposal that received but 10 percent of the votes. SDS opposed a third party, because it would operate within the established political structure and did not attract a constituency through nonelectoral organizing. The delegates finally voted for local New Politics electoral activity in 1968 rather than for a national presidential ticket. The division of the races and the demagoguery exhibited by participants at the convention convinced some New Left onlookers that the future of radical politics was bleak and that the National Conference for New Politics was one more example that the movement was degenerating.⁴³

In the fall of 1967 the new radicals concentrated on the Vietnam War rather than on the new working class or the strained relationship between black and white militants. The Resistance had scheduled a national draft card return for 16 October, for which plans had been made almost a year in advance. Coincidentally, the National Mobilization Committee (the same committee that had used the title Spring Mobilization Committee for the 15 April march against the war) had arranged a march and demonstration on 21 October at the Pentagon

in Washington, D.C. Consequently, some areas like Oakland, California (which is adjacent to the University of California at Berkeley), decided to hold a "Stop The Draft Week" running from 16 to 20 October. Many chapters in SDS opposed the mass return of draft cards and the week of disruptions against the war, charging that these actions had originated, were staffed, and carried out by comfortable middle-class students who did not reach the poor, the working class, or nonuniversity communities.

On 16 October, approximately one thousand four hundred university students in about thirty cities returned their draft cards to federal officials. During the remainder of the week, SDS embarked upon its own version of antiwar activity by obstructing Dow Chemical Company agents from recruiting at the University of Wisconsin. The ensuing dispute resulted in a strike and skirmishes with the local police. At Brooklyn College, SDS and the Du Bois Club picketed against Naval Air Corps recruiters, and this resulted in a sit-in and strike at the college.*

SDS remained unenthusiastic about the October mobilization march in Washington, D.C., despite the claims of Jerry Rubin, a co-director of the march, that "We're trying to build a mass revolutionary movement that will be able to assume power."⁴⁴ The SDS position was summarized by Cathy Wilkerson, head of the Washington regional chapter of SDS: "You've got to organize and affect people at the gut level, on issues that directly affect THEM—and marches don't do that. . . . The war is not the only issue and the Mobilization gives people the impression that if the war ended, everything would be dandy."⁴⁵ With the reluctance of government officials to grant a rally and parade permit, thus heightening the possibility of a physical clash between marchers and federal troops, SDS agreed to join the march early in October. On the twenty-first, a huge crowd, estimated at nearly 100,000 people, gathered in front of the Pentagon, and before the day was over thousands of demonstrators occupied the concourse just below the Pentagon. Some participants gained entrance to the building but were quickly ejected as 679 persons were arrested. Elated by the success of the marchers in penetrating the cordon of soldiers,

* The disturbances at Wisconsin and Brooklyn were but two examples of many SDS-inspired demonstrations against war-related activities during this period (see Randy Furst, "Protests Sweep Campuses," *National Guardian*, 4 November 1967, p. 1).

Jerry Rubin promised to take "the anti-war struggle to the streets" and announced the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August 1968 as the next target.⁴⁶ Nine hundred ninety-four draft cards were turned in at the march, but the Attorney General's office refused to accept them. Julius Lester soberly reminded the antiwar militants that although they claimed a "victory" at the Pentagon, it was a victory "mainly because the powerful did not use their power."⁴⁷

Despite SDS's reemphasis on student power, the new working class, and antidraft unions, as 1967 came to a close none of these ideas and programs had sparked a national movement. At a national council meeting held between 6 and 8 October, planning sessions failed to produce concrete programs centered on either local issues or antiimperialism. In a speech on 27 October, Carl Davidson stated that the "possibility of peaceful change in America had died," and observed further that the broad objectives of SDS—the ambition to desanctify legitimate authority, to disrupt and dismantle existing institutions—negated its possibility, concluding bleakly: ". . . The times tell me what we have to do at this time is to destroy."⁴⁸

In an interview at the end of 1967, Gregory Calvert noted with concern the necessity for SDS to sharpen its own revolutionary image. He did not think that students should organize the working class; the working class had to organize itself. Of immediate concern to Calvert and to many others in SDS was the need to disassociate SDS from anyone else's struggle, whether it was "Fidel's struggle, Stokely's struggle, always somebody else's struggle." When asked what this meant in terms of students going off-campus to organize the poor, Calvert replied indecisively, "That's the hard question and I don't have any pat answer to it."⁴⁹

At a National Interim Committee meeting in November and at the national council conclave in December, Carl Davidson proposed that SDS assume a leadership position within the antiwar movement in 1968, reserving ten days in April for disruptive protests culminating in a student strike throughout the country. Aimed at inciting a student reaction that would sever military and corporate ties with the university, the spring offensive was to be called "Ten Days to Shake an Empire." Behind the proposal lay the admission that past programs emphasizing local organizing and permanent resistance had not prospered and that SDS leadership had failed to recognize that for

most SDS members the essence of radicalism was taking part in anti-war marches and demonstrations. It was too late, however, to recoup the past.

Adding to SDS's vulnerability at the end of 1967, the posts of president and vice-president had been eliminated and replaced by a "troika" elected by the national council—the national secretary, the interorganizational secretary, and the internal education secretary. These secretaries headed the national office, which also had a restricted number of other staff personnel. Concurrently, the National Interim Committee, originally conceived as a supervisory body over the national office, was downgraded as "too hierarchical and 'bourgeois'." Hence, the national council was the only body left capable of overseeing and restraining the national office. But by this time individual SDS members, representing no one but themselves, outnumbered chapter delegates at national council meetings.⁵⁰ Therefore, the effectiveness of both the national council and the SDS chapters was destroyed, leaving the national office as the only central SDS unit to face the Progressive Labor party.

Final Convulsions: 1968–1969

1968: The Decline of SDS— Revolutionary Practice without Theory

The new year began with a dispute between the SDS national office * and the Progressive Labor faction within the organization over Calvert's and Davidson's proposal for ten days of antiwar activity in April, which the national office supported. Plans for these "Ten Days to Shake an Empire" were finalized in January at a Student Mobilization Conference sponsored by the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA). To the national office, cooperation with the Student Mobilization Committee (known as "Student Mobe"), sponsor of the proposed demonstrations, would end SDS estrangement from nationwide actions against the war and enable it to improve relations with the news media for propaganda purposes. Calvert promoted this position by stressing the importance of draft resistance in general and direct action against institutions implicated in the war, the tactics to include smearing steer's blood on bank buildings and the corporate headquarters of business concerns involved with the United States military effort in Vietnam.

PL, however, was opposed to the ten-day resistance program and offered as an alternative a "base-building" program aimed at cultivating a worker-student alliance. Although SDS was tentatively moving beyond the university to enlarge its radical constituency by allying with other antiwar groups, PL called for an intensive effort inside the university to "educate" students about the necessity of establishing tactical liaison with laborers connected with the university. Moreover, endeavoring as it was to capture SDS itself, PL did not want to com-

* The term "national office" assumed a dual meaning. On the one hand, it represented the only centralized, full-time SDS leading body. On the other hand, it was used by PL to designate its most active and influential antagonists.

pete with the Trotskyist-oriented Student Mobe. It therefore accused Student Mobe of using SDS's campus strength for its own interests and, although communist-oriented itself, indicted the Student Mobe and the January 1968 conference in Chicago as "thoroughly controlled" by two other communist variants, "YSA and the CP (Communist Party)." ¹

At the same time, many SDS chapters rejected Davidson's and Calvert's proposition for "Ten Days to Shake an Empire" as an attempt by the national office to exert its authority over them. Although decentralization and independence were traditional in SDS, the influx of new members since 1965 had made overall planning extremely difficult and reinforced the autonomy of the chapters. National leadership problems were aggravated by the attitude of new members, who, by and large, were motivated not by strictly political considerations but either by an emotional reaction against the war or by a cultural rejection of social values. Compliance with chapter or national directives was totally voluntary; members did not have to support resolutions or programs, even if the vote in their behalf was unanimous. Furthermore, chapter delegates to the NC meetings or the annual convention had difficulty persuading chapter members to accept decisions made as their representatives. This chaotic state of affairs so exasperated the editorial staff of one New Left periodical that it concluded SDS was not a political party at all but only a "flag of convenience" for radical students wishing to deviate from "the values of actual or surrogate parents." ²

The obsession with independence was not entirely the fault of chapter personnel. Most chapters had originated without the help of national SDS. Subsequently, neither the NC nor the national staff had given the chapters aid in terms of staff, challenging day-by-day programs, or the means to maintain liaison with the national headquarters. In addition, on the chapter level "participatory democracy" had come to mean "doing your own thing" or manipulation by the politically adept. NC meetings were so amorphous that the chapters were not even informed beforehand of the topics to be discussed. Finally, national SDS had not devised the procedural means to ensure that resolutions passed at the yearly convention or at NC meetings would be executed by regional offices or chapters. The regional offices were understaffed and independent enough to balk at implementing national directives.

It was at this time—while SDS was structurally decomposing and being undermined by PL ideologically—that the organization became enamored with the Black Panther party. In 1968, each group having vied to absorb the other, the Panthers supplanted SNCC as the best-known organization of black radicals in the country.

The Black Panther party was officially organized on 15 October 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California. Newton introduced a program comprising ten provisions, including comprehensive welfare benefits for black people, amnesty for all black prisoners, exemption from military service, and a demand for their own national destiny. The name and image of the Panthers were taken from the Lowndes County, Alabama, independent political party. Huey Newton claimed the party would have influence if black people agreed to arm themselves. In addition to being devotees of Mao, the Panthers based their decision making on the Leninist concept of “democratic centralism,” or the acceptance by the lower ranks of decisions made by the hierarchy. The party was virtually unknown outside the San Francisco Bay Area until 2 May 1967, when twenty-six Panthers walked into the California state legislature assembly room in Sacramento holding loaded guns, determined to read a political statement. The party gained in notoriety by following police officers in black districts to see that they behaved “properly”.

On 11 February 1968, Eldridge Cleaver, Panther minister of information, announced the merger of the Panthers and SNCC. Three SNCC members were made officers in the Black Panthers: James Forman, minister of foreign affairs; Stokely Carmichael, prime minister; and H. Rap Brown, minister of justice. The SNCC members involved believed they would handle the political aspects of the Panthers, leaving military matters to the regular Panthers, but disagreements occurred almost immediately. Cleaver described the SNCC-Panther understanding as a “merger,” while Forman insisted it was a coalition or alliance. The SNCC leaders had not obtained the consent of all SNCC members, and by June sufficient opposition toward the alliance had grown within SNCC that it refused to accept the Panthers’ ten-point program. By the end of the summer, SNCC terminated relations with the Panthers, for neither organization was able to control the other. SNCC, however, divided by the dispute over the Panther affair and lacking effective leadership, gradually disappeared, leaving the field open to the Panthers.

Since the advent of Black Power in 1965–66, SNCC had forced SDS to furnish white people with revolutionary doctrine; the results were the theories and programs of student power, draft resistance, and the new working class. SDS members, on the whole unaccustomed to encountering physical danger, lionized people of the Third World, who seemed tougher, more daring, who were poor and lacked a college education. The national office as well as a number of chapters began to support the Black Panther party in 1968 at the expense of programs promoted since 1966, thus adding another source of erosion to the ideological and structural factors corroding SDS.

The NC initiated support for the Panthers by passing a resolution at the December 1967 meeting pledging aid for Huey Newton in his upcoming trial for the alleged murder of a police officer in Oakland, California. In the early spring of 1968 activity in Newton's behalf accelerated. With the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on 4 April, a major psychological barrier to black group violence was lifted; national guard troops occupied black neighborhoods in several cities as riots broke out on the announcement of King's murder. Thenceforth the national office stridently beseeched SDS chapters to denounce the "persecution" of the Panthers and to "free Huey" and other imprisoned Panther leaders; it also called for nationwide protests during the summer, educational campaigns on behalf of the Panthers in high schools and colleges, the contribution of money and medical supplies, the collection of petitions to free Panthers under indictment, the organization of speaking forums centered on the Black Panther party, the formation of new programs based on university "exploitation" of nearby black ghettos, and the adoption of more Black Studies projects.

While national SDS concerned itself with the Black Panthers, an insurrection paralyzed the normal functions at Columbia University and polarized its faculty and student body. On 30 April 1968, approximately one thousand policemen entered the campus and forced student demonstrators out of the buildings they had occupied for a week. In the process of clearing the campus, more than 700 students were arrested and 148 people were injured. The revolt had been instigated by campus SDS, whose policies were governed at the time by members who believed in the politics of confrontation.

SDS was established at Columbia in the fall of 1966 and subsequently concentrated on the draft and war-related activities, occasion-

ally invading university buildings as part of its tactics. At the beginning of March 1968, SDS numbered no more than 150 on campus. On the twenty-first of that month, President Grayson Kirk banned all demonstrations inside university buildings. On 27 March, Mark Rudd, a junior and the newly elected SDS chairman, led SDS in a demonstration against the Institute of Defense Analysis (IDA) inside Low Library in defiance of the president's edict. Consequently, Rudd and five other activists were placed on probation. At the same time, in an action typical of SDS behavior, Rudd staged a "reception" for the colonel in charge of the New York City Selective Service System.

In the middle of his speech a mini-demonstration appeared in the back of the room with a fife and drum, flags, machine guns, and noise-makers. As attention went to the back, a person in the front row stood up and placed a lemon meringue pie in the Colonel's face . . . almost everyone on campus thought this was the best thing SDS had ever done.³

SDS had only a small following at Columbia, but it capitalized on issues that concerned a much larger proportion of the student body. For years, for instance, the university had been buying property for investment purposes in nearby Morningside Heights, and in the process it had dislodged some seven thousand residents, most of whom were black and Puerto Rican. When Columbia proposed to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park, setting aside 15 percent of the space for the residents of the Harlem community, black militants cried racism and SDS had an issue.

SDS had also discovered that a fruitful tactic in protesting the Vietnam War was to attack the IDA, an independent institution that evaluated weapons systems, did other work for the Department of Defense, and was supported by the Columbia Board of Trustees. Another basis of SDS's case against Columbia University was its demand that the six radicals who had led the 27 March protest defying Kirk's rule against indoor demonstrations be exonerated. Mark Rudd, however, indicated that these issues were the means rather than the ends for which the insurrection was launched.

It was an insurrection against the repressive structure of this society; specifically, against racism and imperialism. . . . The essence of the matter is that we are out for social and political revolution,

nothing less. . . . There is no shock value except that of waking people up to the fact there is a revolutionary movement in existence and that we, hundreds of students of an elitist university, are involved in the struggle for liberation. Many liberals still do not understand this struggle, still believe that the real fight is to get a few reforms in the university's structure. . . . In effect, the strike is a protest against the entire society.⁴

On 23 April, SDS announced a rally and a march to Low Library to dramatize those university policies that militants condemned. Finding the library doors locked, the crowd proceeded to the gymnasium site, uprooted protective fences, sustained a few arrests, and returned to campus where they found entrances to Hamilton Hall unguarded and "liberated" it. Black students, members of the Afro-American Society, had joined SDS in capturing Hamilton Hall, marking the first time black and white militants had agreed to work in concert at Columbia.

The occupiers of the hall publicized six demands that the university would have to meet before they would relinquish possession of the facility: (1) disciplinary action against the six radicals stemming from the 27 March disturbance must be dropped; (2) President Kirk would have to lift his ban on demonstrations inside university buildings; (3) construction of the Morningside gymnasium had to cease; (4) disciplinary hearings in the future would have to be open to all and conducted by students and faculty; (5) Columbia University must sever all connections with the IDA; and (6) the students arrested at the construction site must be released with no further charges pressed by the university.

The comity between white and black radicals at Hamilton Hall did not last long. The hall was reinforced by young members of the Harlem community, and the blacks asked Mark Rudd and SDS to vacate the building to the blacks. The white students reluctantly agreed but were able to find their way into Low Library and the offices of President Kirk and Vice-President David Truman. When the police entered the library, all but twelve students fled the executive offices. When the latter were not arrested, they were quickly reinforced, and white militants and other students who had tasted blood infiltrated and occupied other buildings on campus.* Soon, counterdemonstrators, who wished

* The police insisted on clearing both Hamilton Hall and the library. The administration, fearful of repercussions in Harlem if action were taken against the

to keep the university operating, gathered and threatened to retake the buildings by force. As the days passed and positions hardened, Kirk and Truman decided the police should clear the campus, which they did on 30 April, seven days after the first building was taken.

The Columbia rebellion appeared to prove the efficacy of forceful radical tactics at a time when SDS and the New Left were at the nadir of their fortunes, but the ten days of antiwar demonstrations in April were a disappointing failure. Liberal students who had supported SDS since the early 1960s were campaigning for senators Eugene McCarthy or Robert Kennedy, contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination. Until the Columbia insurrection, Senator McCarthy's presidential campaign had replaced SDS as the major political force on campuses throughout the nation.

From the militant's viewpoint, Columbia was a triumph because it regenerated SDS, radicalized SDS members and other participating students, and brought into the open a penchant for violence which until that time had for the most part been expressed verbally. Mark Rudd epitomized this inclination by remarking, "I think everyone should have the right to go and talk to an interviewer, but if the Dow guy comes, fuck him and napalm him."⁵

For young radicals, obscenity was the essence of verbal insolence. Mark Rudd explained, for instance, that the phrase "up against the wall motherfucker" symbolized not just an absence of respect for institutional authority but that social authority no longer existed for radicals using the phrase. In some cases the eagerness to use violent rhetoric reflected a willingness to engage in physical violence, as illustrated by the future violent SDS faction called the Weatherman in 1969 (Mark Rudd became a Weatherman).

The psychological meaning and justification of violence was explained by Dotson Rader, another participant in Columbia events: ". . . In a country whose system emasculates young men, street disorders, seizures of buildings, dislocations, confrontations, the temptings of violence had become rituals of manhood . . . violence was wanted, I hungered for it . . . to prove myself."⁶ The behavior of SDS leaders revealed not only a profound lack of respect for authority—in this case the men in charge of the university—but also a species of manip-

black students in Hamilton Hall, wanted only the library with its white occupants emptied. The police had to take both buildings or none at all, with the result that neither building was retaken until six days later.

ulative tactics used to achieve objectives. As Mark Rudd candidly described it, the tactics particularly concerned the faculty.

We proposed over and over that the faculty join the strike, adopting our six demands and putting itself in opposition to the illegitimate, racist, pro-war administration. . . . Very few "socialist or left-wing scholars" which abound at a "liberal" university like Columbia, are willing to throw in with the lot of some upstart blacks and half crazed nihilist-anarchist students. . . . In a sense, however, our tactics toward the faculty were not all wrong. We did manage to use them as a buffer between us and the administration for six days (the administration was waiting for the results of the faculty mediation, before it called the cops). This may have been crucial.⁷

By shutting down Columbia, activists seemed to prove that student militants and SDS in particular could affect the operations of American educational institutions and that, although unprepared as yet to "take state power," they could have dress rehearsals at the university level. But the members of the SDS national office sought a movement that would transcend the confines of the university. Notwithstanding that black students had summarily expelled white students from Hamilton Hall, for example, some SDS leaders imagined that to have shared a cause and a building for a few hours might mean the beginning of a new black-white alliance. To this end, Carl Davidson, while emphasizing that Columbia exemplified the student power position SDS had been building for the past two years, went on to state that SDS required allies: "young, white, black, and Spanish-speaking working people."⁸

The issue of the relationship between workers and students received more attention in the United States as a result of a short-lived fraternity between students and workers in France during a student revolt in May. The abuses and antiquated conditions in the French university system were notorious, and French universities were overcrowded to a degree unknown in the United States. At Nanterre, where the first protests started, there were evidently neither adequate library facilities nor sports or cultural activities, and students found it quite difficult to get seats at even compulsory lectures.

Another source of irritation among the Left-leaning French students was the scarcity in French universities of young men and women from working-class families. For many students in the social

sciences who passed their final examinations, moreover, there was no lucrative, secure job waiting after graduation. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a young radical leader of the revolt, contended that the cry for reform had caused the rebellion.⁹ Professor Raymond Aron, a well-known French scholar, argued that the revolt had two purposes: the establishment of student power in the universities and the instigation of a national political revolution. Aron maintained that the revolt did not begin spontaneously or with the idea of university reform (which he agreed was necessary); rather, it was entertained and activated by students and teachers to the left of the Communist party.¹⁰

The insurgence was sparked in Nanterre by from 100 to 150 activists and a few hundred supporters, and it spread quickly when the rebellious students marched to Paris after being taken from the Nanterre campus by police. Joining students at the Sorbonne University, they took to the streets where they erected barricades, not to ward off police attacks but to proclaim their domination of the avenues and to challenge the legitimacy of the French government. Between the second and third week of May, tens of thousands of factory workers joined the students, propelled by the French revolutionary tradition as well as by anger over police "brutality" against students. Serious labor disputes had also contributed to the animosity of many workers against the French government. The French student strike ended quickly, in part because of the support withheld from it by the French Communist party but also because of the strength of Charles de Gaulle, president of France. The impact of the student revolt, however, made a lasting impression on many activists in the United States and elsewhere, because for a few days in May, student revolutionaries seriously threatened the social order of a major Western industrial nation.

The new interest in a student-worker alliance fostered by the French revolt resulted in an "international assembly of revolutionary student movements" held at Columbia University from 18 to 23 September 1968. Student radicals from France, England, Germany, Italy, and other Western nations agreed that students should form insurgent alliances with members of the working class, but the conference adjourned before the participants could decide how this objective might be accomplished.¹¹

Also as a result of the French experience, the stock of the Progressive Labor party, advocates of a worker-student alliance within SDS,

ascended, while the national office was placed temporarily on the defensive. Carl Davidson and the editorial staff of *The Movement* expressed this defensiveness while trying to answer questions about how radical university graduates could practically combine their professional work with revolutionary political activity. Davidson acknowledged that there were few "complete or convincing answers."¹² *

The debate between the national office and PL continued at the SDS national convention which convened 9 June at Michigan State University in East Lansing. According to SDS, over five hundred convention delegates represented 35,000 members in three hundred colleges and universities in the United States.** Confusion reigned at the convention—enhanced by the presence of a vociferous, anarchistic "up against the wall" faction—while the national office and PL continued to vie for hegemony. The convention elected Michael Klonsky national secretary, Bernardine Dohrn interorganizational secretary, and Fred Gordon internal education secretary. Despite their dispute with PL, Klonsky and Dohrn classified themselves as "revolutionary Communists," reflecting the overall tendency of SDS to move in that direction.¹³

In floor debate, PL and the national office contended to prove which was the most revolutionary and ideologically best equipped to lead the rest to a revolutionary triumph in the United States. Supporters of the national office argued for a multiissue approach to revolution and added as agents of social upheaval, in addition to the industrial working class, university students and radical youth, black and white, employed or unemployed. The national office argued that the nature of "exploitation" had changed and that issues like compul-

* Though the concept of "radicals in the professions" had not progressed as its proponents wished, some headway had been made. In New York, the Movement for a Democratic Society (MDS), an amalgam of radical city planners and architects, had formed in the winter of 1967. By 1968 the New University Conference (NUC) was founded by a group of teachers and other radicals in the professions. A number of social welfare workers and other professionals were planning to establish a radical organization by the end of 1968.

** Of the 35,000 membership mentioned in the 15 April 1968 issue of *New Left Notes*, probably only 6,000 were dues-paying members. Although the number of New Left activists had increased considerably since 1965, they made up only 2 percent of the six to seven million students in the United States in 1968. Another 8 to 10 percent were very sympathetic to New Left causes and willing to demonstrate on given issues (see Fred Hechinger, "Rise of Radical Left on Campus," *New York Times*, 10 October 1968, p. 39).

sive consumption and meaningless jobs were more germane to potentially radical groups in advanced industrialized nations than the classical economic issue of wages.

PL, on the other hand, introduced a “national student labor action project” (SLAP), essentially a reiteration of its case for a student-worker alliance. The document held that New Left activists were isolated from the majority of students and workers and recommended a union of students and workers to forge a more powerful revolutionary movement. American “imperialism” had arisen from the exploitation of the working class; therefore, a student movement must be part of the revolutionary struggle of working people. SLAP’s program envisioned university students allying with “oppressed” laborers employed by university-controlled hospitals, maintenance plants, housing projects, or administrative departments. Students were urged to aid workers on picket lines with their persons, or with money and clothing. PL advocated that SDS chapters and regional centers should become the real focal points of SLAP and exhorted SDS members to volunteer for summer jobs at factories to acquaint themselves with working people and attempt to influence them.* Although both sides presented their views, the acrimonious debate between them caused questions dealing with structural organization and the role of the working class to be tabled and not brought to a vote.

The convention passed a resolution designed to encourage activists to enter the armed forces to revolutionize military personnel. The measure outlined plans for counseling centers, support for defectors,

* Summer projects enlisting SDS members to work in factories from June through August began in the summer of 1967 and were apparently an “abysmal failure”. Either the students were fired when their political intentions became evident, or they remained silent and accomplished nothing. In 1968, over 350 students, mainly SDS members, found jobs in warehouses, offices, and loading docks. Most returned to school after discovering that their chief obstacle was their own inadequacy. Those who spoke out on the job sought to overcome the white workers’ “racism” and teach them that the workingman and the student faced a “common enemy . . . the imperialist ruling class.” Most workers, however, were preoccupied with pressing personal problems and favorably disposed toward American society, and they gave the students short shrift (see Bruce Detwiler, “SDS Convention: Following the Old Left Back into the Factories,” *The Village Voice*, 27 June 1968, p. 43, and Steering Committee, Chicago Work-In, “Work-In 1968: SDS Goes to the Factories,” in *SDS Work-In 1968: Towards a Working Class-Student Alliance* [Booklet published by SDS, 1608 West Madison, Chicago, Illinois], pp. 7–8).

and social clubs contiguous to military bases that would provide opportunities to indoctrinate soldiers in favor of the revolution. At a press conference just after the convention adjourned, Bernardine Dohrn and Michael Klonsky talked about the groups that SDS (the national office) would cultivate as agents of revolution. They encompassed "uncommitted students, high school students, workers, hippies, the American poor, college trained professionals and American GIs." ¹⁴ But it was easier to identify these groups than to enlist their revolutionary support.

Students, whom SDS particularly counted upon to sustain its efforts, were then either campaigning for the presidential candidacy of Senator Eugene McCarthy or ruining the surprising appeal of Governor George Wallace of Alabama. SDS, however, decided to boycott electioneering, an elitist decision which cost it the comradeship of thousands of university students as well as lost opportunities to influence large sections of the populace. The candidacies of George Wallace and Eugene McCarthy, in fact, hurt the New Left.

George Wallace, by radical assessments, was the only politician expressing concern about "the common man," even though he blamed urban strife on anarchists, demanded more law and order, and accused black families of threatening the jobs of whites and of siphoning their tax dollars through welfare. According to Julius Lester, Wallace understood that the "forgotten man" was not the estranged affluent white or the poor ghetto black but lower-class or lower middle-class whites who were even denied a way to "express their alienation." ¹⁵ In his own way, Wallace was doing what SDS had pledged to do since the *Port Huron Statement*—to go into poor and working-class white communities, provide professional and educational opportunities for these people, and teach them how to organize for their own political wellbeing.

The New Left was also injured by the campaign of Eugene McCarthy, whose flair and articulateness, and whose steadfast opposition to the Vietnam War lured to his candidacy most of the antiwar movement plus numerous other young men and women whose social disaffection made them prospects for radical conversion. SDS labored in vain to persuade students that McCarthy presented no real alternative to Lyndon Johnson and only drained energy away from more extreme measures of defiance. Carl Oglesby believed that McCarthy supporters were frightened by their radical political inclinations and were "em-

playing the McCarthy campaign as a means of making [their own] dissent look respectable and 'legitimate'." ¹⁶ When McCarthy was defeated, many of his backers joined SDS, vindicating Oglesby's judgment.

In California, radical emphasis in the election year was on the Peace and Freedom party,* which had arisen out of the decision of the August 1967 New Politics Convention in Chicago to endorse local electoral activity in the presidential race of 1968. The party platform emphasized a decentralized political structure with community control of local schools, the police, and all public agencies. In fact, the regular police were to be disarmed, disbanded, and supplanted by public safety guardians at the neighborhood level. The nation's economy would be reestablished on a socialist basis.

In March 1968, an alliance between the Peace and Freedom party and the Black Panther party was announced. The former agreed to endorse the Panthers' ten-point program and to help free Huey Newton from jail "by whatever means necessary." There was some apprehension that an arrangement with the Panthers would raise grave problems in organizing whites, and the McCarthy campaign was subsequently blamed for attracting white Left-liberals who might otherwise have welded a lasting coalition between the Panthers and the Peace and Freedom party.

The Peace and Freedom party nominated Eldridge Cleaver as its presidential candidate, and the Black Panther party offered SDS's Carl Oglesby the vice-presidential candidacy. SDS declined, however, realizing that the Panthers were essentially mobilizing white assistance to free Huey Newton. Besides, some SDS members disagreed with the party's electoral style as well as with its coalition of supporters, which included the Independent Socialist clubs and the Communist party. More to the point, the national office wished to construct an alliance with the Panthers on "firmer ground" than the Peace and Freedom party. Bernardine Dohrn expressed the need "to build a fucking white revolutionary mass movement, not a national paper alliance." ¹⁷

In 1968, too, the "Yippies," a synthesis of the political activist and the hippie, competed with Eugene McCarthy and the Peace and Freedom party in distracting attention from SDS. Until the beginning

* The Peace and Freedom movement legally became a party when it acquired more than 66,000 registrations and qualified for independent party status in California. The party also existed in Michigan and New York.

of 1967, the New Left movement was inherently political in terms of purpose, programs, and personal motivations. The human "Be-In" staged in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, off the Haight-Ashbury area, in January 1967 brought another dimension to the movement, for on that occasion the "hippie tribes" gathered together for the first time. The word "hippie" came from the word "hip," used by predominantly black jazz musicians to denote someone who was worldly-wise with a modern or advanced flavor. Hippies were dropouts, primarily from the middle classes, and successors to the Beatniks but distinguished by a new motif—experimentation with psychedelic drugs.

The original hippies called "flower children" who first settled in the Haight-Ashbury should not be confused with politicalized hangers-on who lived on the outskirts of universities and joined, or helped to foment, demonstrations on or near campus. The trouble was that they all looked alike: unkempt, with long, straggly or frizzy hair, dressed in tattered jeans and shirts. The initial group of hippies had renounced both the materialistic culture of their parents and the manipulative politics of SDS and PL. New Left radicals were advised that hippies were indifferent to radical politics, new or old, and related best to Oriental religion, rock music, and sensory experience. Most of the first hippies hoped to change people and society through love rather than through protest or violence. The movement was initially a kind of children's crusade to save America. LSD was supposed to help reorient the mind to a perspective of peace and harmony with one's fellow man.

Despite the exoteric, apolitical character of the hippies, their complete estrangement from the norms of "straight" society placed them in total opposition to that society, a point clearly perceived by some of the politically militant radicals. Mario Savio had discerned their political potential in 1966 and had called for a "coalition between student politicians and hippies," but to no avail.¹⁸ * Jerry Rubin, veteran of the Free Speech movement and the Vietnam Day Committee, also noticed the possibility of a new constituency at the Pentagon

* Opinions differed, of course, concerning the potential political usefulness of the hippies. Neil Robertson, for example, wrote that the hippies were counter-revolutionary and indulged in radical escapism: ". . . They won't get off their asses. For the most part the New Left dismisses the hippie because he refuses to work politically" (Neil Robertson, "Hippies and the New Left," *Journal of the Resistance*, 1968).

march in November 1967 as “flower children” planted daisies in the gun barrels of some of the troops guarding federal buildings.

In February 1968, Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, Paul Krassner, and Ed Sanders announced the formation of the Youth International party (Yippies) as a merger between the free-wheeling hippies and the politically motivated revolutionaries. They planned to hold a “life festival” at the Democratic National Convention in August at Chicago. Rubin, among other political activists, knew that more and more young people were drifting into the hippie scene, and he wanted to capitalize on its potential. By “borrowing” the clothes, style, and attitudes of the hippies to promote a new political party, they were assured of publicity and followers, but they also blurred beyond recognition the hippie vision of a society populated with individuals kindly disposed toward one another. According to Norman Fruchter, an early New Leftist and SDS historian:

. . . The antics of inarticulate negation replaced the attempt to define the value-center of youth-culture and the alternative modes of economic, social and political relationship which were being worked out within youth enclaves. . . . Still, even the antics of inarticulate no-saying were preferable to the later presentation of youth-culture’s value demands as drugs, sex and rock (dope, rock and fucking in the streets). By using youth-culture’s surfaces as values and as challenges, the Yippie leadership reduced the entire content of youth-culture for convenient assimilation by the spectacle, burying the anti-competitive, anti-consumption, communal and humanist ethic at the core of youth culture. . . . The resulting betrayal, in which youth-culture was reduced, on the stage of the spectacle, and therefore in the mass mind of the national audience, to its lowest common-denominator surfaces, was a betrayal chiefly accomplished by the leadership of Yippie, aided by the mechanics of the spectacle.¹⁹

To Yippie leaders, rock music (regarded by the hippies as a wonderful way to remove hostility) became “the most vital revolutionary force on earth.”²⁰ Culture was seen as a battlefield; the significance of running away from home, dropping out, and turning on was political. Abbie Hoffman explained:

What we are for, quite simply, is a total revolution. . . . that old system is dying all around us and we joyously come out in the streets to

dance on its grave. With our free stores, liberated buildings, communes, people's parks, dope, free bodies and our music, we'll build our society in the vacant lots of the old and we'll do it by any means necessary. Right On! ²¹

As for the future Jerry Rubin said:

People are always asking us "What's your program?" I hand them a Mets scorecard. Or I tell them to check the yellow pages. "Our program's there." FUCK PROGRAMS! The goal of revolution is to abolish programs and turn spectators into actors. It's a do-it-yourself revolution, and we'll work out the future as we go.²²

The Yippies' biggest cultural-political happening in 1968 was slated for August in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention, where they were joined by SDSers such as Rennie Davis, Tom Hayden, and antiwar protestors who saw Chicago as a way to score against the Vietnam War. Hayden and Davis agreed that the mammoth demonstration would require skillful planning to avoid giving Lyndon Johnson an opportunity to spotlight the lawlessness of young participants. SDS entered the predemonstration programming reluctantly,* unwilling to give the impression that it was backing away from a confrontation. SDS national and regional officers believed the Chicago affair would take time and energy away from local efforts. Once committed, however, SDS advised the participants to stay in small groups for maneuverability and to avoid head-on battles with the Chicago police.

As part of the preconvention planning, movement centers were tentatively established in churches or at headquarters of friendly political agencies to provide logistical and legal aid during the melee. The National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam was supposed to coordinate activities of the centers, manned by members of individual groups like SDS and The Resistance. Once the police and the activists clashed, however, half the centers were inoperative, leadership on all sides evaporated, and Yippie leaders admitted that their movement had been a press gimmick to lure people to Chicago.

* On 4 March 1968, *New Left Notes* declared that draft resistance was more important than demonstrating at the convention. SDS warned that the Yippies planned to get young people to groove on rock music and dope and then go against "bayonets" unprepared. In the opinion of SDS, this was "manipulation at best."

Their sound truck confiscated and the possibilities for a festival of fun diminishing, the Yippies nevertheless insisted on defending Lincoln Park against the supplications of SDS members to stay mobile and take to the streets. The decision to defend the park, plus efficient crowd-control and security measures by the police, denied the marchers access to preselected targets, including the amphitheater where the Democratic Convention was being held. As the confrontation between police and youth became more violent, the radicals attempted to communicate to the television audience that Chicago was a police state. Three-fourths of the 192 injuries to policemen took place on 28 August, and even more demonstrators were hurt as the violence escalated. Victims of police action claimed that unnecessary force had been used; police countercharged that they had been provoked by obscene epithets, rocks, sticks, bathroom tiles, and even human feces hurled at them. What, precisely, the confrontation meant to the Yippies may be perceived from Abbie Hoffman's words.

I can only relate to Chicago as a personal anarchist, a revolutionary artist. If that sounds egotistical, tough shit. My concept of reality comes from what I see, touch, and feel. The rest, as far as I'm concerned, didn't happen. . . . I am my own leader, I make my own rules. The revolution is wherever my boots hit the ground. If the Left considers this adventurism, fuck 'em, they are a total bureaucratic bore.²³

That the Chicago experience radicalized many young people who participated in the street battles there is no doubt. Chicago taught the SDS "up against the wall" faction that emphasis should now be placed on the street rather than on books or campus. A new class of radicals was supposedly in the process of being molded to combat society in the streets of America—dropouts, working-class youth, and blacks. Social dissent should be expressed by violence against such symbols of authority as the police, banks, etc. Their politics of confrontation was based on spontaneity—the leadership emerging during the action of its own accord—with violence, which supposedly represented the new mood of the nation's youth. Referring to themselves as (among other things) "affinity groups," they claimed that the future of the revolutionary struggle depended on crime in the streets.²⁴

At the national council meeting at the University of Colorado in Boulder from 11 to 13 October, street violence was only one of the

topics discussed by over five hundred SDS members and delegates.* The cardinal question posed at the meeting was what strategy SDS should adopt in relating to the working class. Attention revolved around PL's worker-student alliance proposal (SLAP), which was defeated by a two-to-one margin. A lack of specifics about organizing was cited as the reason for the defeat of the resolution. The national council passed a "Boulder on Boulder" resolution requesting the membership to cooperate in a nationwide college and high school strike on 4–5 November to demonstrate student dissatisfaction with the national elections and the educational process in the United States. Reaction to this initiative was lackadaisical, however, and the educational process was not interrupted at a single high school or college on the fourth or fifth of November.

The "up against the wall" faction at the meeting loudly advocated a violent revolution, but a more moderate attitude emerged from the workshop on draft resistance and the war. SDS members were counseled to enter the service and subvert the armed forces from within rather than fleeing to Canada. Recommendations were made to avoid attacking individual students taking ROTC courses and to move against the institution instead. The national council also passed a resolution aimed at radicalizing high school students by stressing their sexual repression, compulsory course work, the grading system, their susceptibility to the draft, tracking systems, and students' rights. The council urged SDS members to make high school organizing a substantial part of their programs.**

* The SDS National Interim Committee (NIC) met on 14 October, immediately after the national council adjourned, and was chaired alternately by Mike Klonsky, Tim McCarthy, and Bernardine Dohrn. They admitted that chapter representatives attending an assembly of the NC for the first or second time had criticized the council on the grounds that it seemed to be dominated by a policy-making clique formed by members of the national office.

** SDS interest in high school organizing predated the October 1968 national council meeting. The position paper *High School Reform: Toward a Student Movement* by Mark Kleinman in 1965 encouraged the radicalization of high schools by the substitution of faculty-student control (with the accent on the students) for administrative authority. As a consequence of this control, students ranging in age from thirteen to seventeen would have the authority to decide what courses they should take, what activities should be planned for them, and in general how they should conduct themselves. In March 1966, SDS tentatively scheduled a high school newsletter, plus high school classes and conferences to be overseen by SDS. In January 1968, *New Left Notes* reported that the national council had agreed that high school organizing had not developed

Between the SDS national council meetings in October and December, movement members outside the campus pondered certain fundamental issues. Julius Lester, probably the most original New Left writer, warned student activists that despite their rhetoric and ideological concern for the working class, the interests of students and workers were far apart. The worker thought about survival, the cost of milk, taxes, and doctor bills, while the isolated student radical thought about love and political theory. One student radical steeped in community politics agreed with Lester, admitting that students had “no idea of the complexities” and pressures in the lives of average people and romanticized life as radicals as much as they had when they were liberals.²⁵ Carl Davidson agreed that radicals sometimes romanticized the working class, but he also admonished students for frequently feeling superior to the working class.

By the winter of 1968, the internecine war between PL and its opponents had diverted attention from substantive questions and was enfeebling the spirit and administration of SDS. As the December national council meeting at Ann Arbor, Michigan, approached, the enmity between PL and the national office (or “anarchists,” as PL called them) intensified. Contemptuous of baseless guerrilla street action and new working class strategy, PL accused the national office of identifying “doing your own thing” with revolution. The adversaries of PL admitted that certain people from the regional and national offices, or new working class spokesmen—folks from the “motherfucker group”—disagreed with PL but denied a conspiracy. They admitted the excess of some factions but criticized PL for having boycotted the action at the Democratic National Convention. They also argued that PL’s definition of the working class was too narrow and that race and youth should be included in a broader understanding of class struggle.

Enemies of PL were confident that the faction would be resoundingly defeated at the December 26–31 national council meeting at Ann Arbor, attended by nearly one thousand SDSers. To the surprise

commensurate with its potential. Central offices in Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago were planned; by the summer, work on a high school caucus had begun, and conferences were held in Ithaca, New York, Boston, and Madison, Wisconsin. The Boulder NC meeting anticipated naming a full-time high school coordinator operating out of the Los Angeles regional office and temporarily designated the *Los Angeles Free Student* as the official high school organizing newspaper.

of the national office, however, PL's worker-student alliance resolution was passed. PL attributed this to a growing number of SDS members who wished to be serious revolutionaries and who were disenchanted by the antics of the anarchist wing of SDS, maintaining, secondly, that its worker-student alliance offered a persuasive means to escape the isolation of the student movement.

William T. Divale was a government undercover agent who had successfully infiltrated the Communist party, the W.E.B. Du Bois clubs, and SDS before his political sympathies shifted to the side of the movement. A cofounder of an SDS chapter and a delegate at SDS council meetings and conventions, he assessed PL's burgeoning influence as follows:

How then by 1968 were they [PL] able to control UCLA's chapter, and many like it all across the country?

One answer was strategem. PLers never expected to be the majority, nor need they be, to control. They could split an SDS chapter into little pieces, and control the pieces. More often they simply built allies on campus, both inside and outside of SDS. Inside, they were the consummate planners whose programs and confrontations generally worked. And success makes friends. Outside, they had close ties then with the more radical BSUers who preferred Marxism from non-Caucasian Peking rather than from lily-white Moscow. PLers were even able to convince Jewish SDSers that PL's pro-Arab, anti-Zionist, anti-Israel line was really anti-Establishment, not anti-Semitic. . . . So to control an SDS chapter, PLers themselves never needed numerically to add up to a majority. It was enough if their influence, their alliances, their coalitions, and sympathizers did. That was PL's secret weapon in its secret war on SDS.²⁶

Both the Revolutionary Youth movement (RYM) resolution sponsored by the national office and the student-worker alliance resolution sponsored by PL were passed. Their irreconcilability merits closer scrutiny. PL maintained that the national office had deluded SDS into believing that control of the university and a percentage of its graduates through student power would eventually bring about the destruction of the capitalist state. But the university represented only a small section of the state, and even if SDS could seize the universities, it would still not reach police, corporate, or labor power which furnished the university with the funds and authority to exist.

Unsettled by PL's argument and vexed by its own failure to demon-

strate the efficacy of student power, the national office produced a position paper entitled *Toward a Revolutionary Youth Movement*. Granting that the most pressing question facing SDS was how to relate to the working class, the national office disagreed that reliance on the working class was the best way to avoid the isolation of a student movement. The answer was to expand beyond the limits of a student movement by embracing not the industrial working class per se but youth—including young workers and people of color (mainly the Black Panther party). The national office would then lead a youth movement composed of students, dropouts, and young workers: “The struggle of youth is as much a part of the class struggle as a union strike. We ally with workers by waging struggle against a common enemy, not by subjugating our movement patronizingly to every trade union battle.”²⁷

Having paid lip service to the PL working-class approach and to the SDS street fighters who looked to nonuniversity youth to fill their affinity groups, the national office admitted that black liberation was its “primary task.” It sided with the Panthers and against PL in arguing that the fight for black liberation was not only part of the class struggle, since blacks were workers, but was also an anticolonial struggle since the blacks were an “exploited” colony within the United States. In its program, the national office sought to touch all bases, calling on SDS to organize on the campuses of working-class colleges, to attack the university as an arm of the corporate elite, to move into factories, to subvert the armed forces, as well as to toil against “institutional racism.” In an article published at the time of the Ann Arbor national council meeting, Carl Davidson summarized the national office’s position.

Each project or action can last anywhere from six hours to six months, but shall begin as soon as possible after the classroom caucus is established. However, their primary focus and base should not be on the campus, but immersed in the struggles of the black, Spanish-American and working class constituencies in surrounding communities. This is essential. Otherwise, the critical university becomes embroiled in the same abstract intellectualism and elitism inherent in the free university and student power strategies.²⁸

PL retorted by noting that youth subgroups were not all oppressed in the same way: the unpoliticalized hippie dropout, the affluent radical student, and the black worker in Watts had little in common. PL

insisted that the vast majority of people of color in the United States were members of the working class, and it accused the national office of degrading black people by referring to them as colonial serfs rather than as powerful members of the working class. The national office merely patronized blacks by refusing, in deference to their color, to criticize anything they said. PL also condemned the isolated terrorist tactics of street gangs while renewing its belief in orthodox revolutionary violence.

The national council also passed a resolution on women at the December meeting. The resolution demanding women's liberation was motivated by women within SDS who complained of being taken for granted as typists, helpers, and bedmates, without being permitted, as a rule, opportunities to attain positions of power within SDS (Bernardine Dohrn was an exception). Consistent with the national office's interest in subordinating SDS to the Third World, the document stated that "black working-class women were the most oppressed group in society" and insisted that SDS must terminate the practice of male supremacy.²⁹

1969: Death and Transfiguration

In SDS's final months, three major groups saw themselves as revolutionary vanguards in the United States: the national office of SDS; the student-worker alliance of the Progressive Labor party; and the Black Panther party. All outgrowths of a once promising New Left movement exemplified by early SNCC and SDS, these groups resurrected in their own way various aspects of the philosophy, politics, and institutions of the communist Old Left that the New Left had vowed to transcend: the Marxist dependence on class struggle; the Leninist-Maoist reliance on the primacy of the party; and the espousal of violence and suppression through a centralized bureaucratic network. To all this was added an incongruous note: none of the three revolutionary organizations led the constituencies for which they spoke so authoritatively and passionately. The NO, PL, and BPP were essentially general staffs without armies, for neither the nation's students, youth, workers, nor the black community believed in them.*

* Although Eldridge Cleaver continued to believe in the strategic necessity of armed insurrection, Huey Newton realized after the Panthers' constitutional

By January–February 1969 the welfare of SDS, like the welfare of the constituencies it pretended to represent, had been reduced to an afterthought. Little mattered except that the national office and the Panthers should prevail over PL, or vice versa.

The national office and the Progressive Labor party attacked one another on every subject. Bernardine Dohrn and the national office goaded chapters either to establish or to continue working relations with the Panthers and to aid black student unions and Afro-American societies at every opportunity. National office members destined to coalesce into the violent Weatherman faction admired the Panthers' emphasis on armed self-defense * and exhorted members to join Panther-SDS rallies in twenty cities to mark Newton's birthday on 16 February.

At the same time, Progressive Labor increased its criticism of the Black Panthers. Although PL endorsed violent revolution, it stated that the Panthers "ignore working-class demands and concentrate on the question of armed self-defense and conduct themselves in a semi-military fashion." PL and the Panthers each regarded itself as the foremost vanguard and singularly endowed to lead the revolution. Therefore, PL did not spare the Panthers, accusing their chieftains of possessing only a superficial knowledge of Mao's thought and of waging an indiscriminate war against white people while abandoning the black community to direct all their resources toward freeing Huey Newton.³⁰

The contest between the national office and Progressive Labor also revolved around proposed SDS projects for spring 1969. More than 250 SDS members congregated at Princeton University on 1 and 2 February for a conference to discuss tactics for upcoming demonstrations. The national office offered a program designed to combat the

convention in August 1970 that the Black Panther party did not lead the black community but only enjoyed the support of white radicals who were without roots in their own communities. At this point, his faction of the Panthers temporarily laid down their guns to concentrate on establishing goodwill with black people by dispensing free groceries, medical care, clothing, etc.

* Huey Newton asserted that the party should instruct the people how to overthrow the government as follows: "When the masses hear that a gestapo policeman has been executed while sipping coffee at a counter, and the revolutionary executioners fled without being traced, the masses will see the validity of this type of approach to resistance" (Huey Newton, "In Defense of Self-Defense: The Correct Handling of a Revolution," *New Left Notes*, 12 February 1969, p. 6).

"militarization" of American society, urging the conference to broaden its contacts beyond the universities and to recruit working-class youth in high schools by fostering resentment against the draft. High school tracking (the practice of dividing high school students into categories) was denounced, the national office claiming that the majority of high school students from working-class families and black and Puerto Rican youth were placed in vocational rather than academic tracks that predetermined their being ordered into the armed forces. The NO proposal also recommended attacks on the university level against ROTC, military recruiting, and related research. Antiwar organizing among servicemen was listed a priority target. The "militarization" proposal was not adopted as a national SDS program, however, partly because PL contended that it would interfere with antiracist activities and also because other members were skeptical about the program's chances for success.

At the SDS national council meeting in Austin, Texas, 27–30 March, over twelve hundred SDSers assembled in the Catholic Student Center on the outskirts of the University of Texas to witness a temporary national office victory over PL. The occasion was the acceptance of a NO resolution entitled "The Black Panther Party: Toward the Liberation of a Colony". In the document, the national office reiterated its view that the Panthers were "oppressed" members of a colony within the United States and "exploited" as part of the working class. The document established as a criterion for qualifying as an authentic revolutionary the willingness to support revolutionary national colonial movements, including the cause of the Black Panthers, who were depicted as "revolutionary nationalists" who intended to liberate the black colony in the United States by fomenting a socialist revolution here. The NO proclaimed its subservience to black insurrectionists by stating that "the Black Panther Party is not fighting black people's struggles only but is in fact the vanguard in our common struggle against capitalism and imperialism."³¹

Another resolution passed by the national council under the title "The Schools Must Serve the People" endorsed the Panthers' ten-point program and demanded that expulsion, cut systems, dress codes, and military recruitment in high schools and colleges be terminated. The firing of teachers for political reasons must be banned, and as many black and brown people who showed a desire to do so must be admitted to universities without charge. The council passed these resolu-

tions over the strenuous objection of PL, which insisted that the concept of nationalism was detrimental to consolidating the unity of the working class. To PL, allegiance to any entity except the working class, such as one's country or people, was self-serving, capitalistic, and contrary to the precepts of Marxism-Leninism.

The significance of the national office's position at the Austin conference was clear. The NO had jettisoned the theories and programs of student power, antiwar resistance, and the new working class in order to serve the revolutions of Third World people in the United States or abroad. Because of the influence of the Panthers and PL, the NO adopted Stalin, as well as Mao and Che Guevara, as its revolutionary heroes. Above all, the reverence of Stalin symbolized SDS's final political and moral capitulation. This phenomenon was nourished in part by PL's communist militancy and discipline and in part by SDS's isolation from the genuinely democratic and humanitarian influences present in American society.

The new authoritarianism was particularly visible at SDS's last annual convention held from 18 to 22 June at the Chicago Coliseum. Eager to avenge its defeat at Austin, PL had carefully prepared for this convention by rounding up a majority of the eighteen hundred delegates. Its strength was apparent on the first ballot, as PL supporters defeated the followers of the NO by voting to bar all members of the press. The second issue reinforced PL's initial victory. The national office suggested that discussions at the convention be directed from the platform, abolishing the traditional workshops. Spokesmen for the national office argued that it was the responsibility of SDS leaders to "educate" its members, a position affirming the NO's belief in democratic centralism and, even more, its apprehension over PL's visible power at the convention. PL defeated the national office's attempt to manipulate the convention from the podium, though by a narrow margin.

On the second day of the convention, national office leaders like Bernardine Dohrn, Michael Klonsky, and Mark Rudd agreed to subordinate their theoretical differences to crush PL. The tension culminated with the appearance of Black Panther spokesmen from Illinois, who mounted the platform to lead the attack on PL. The Panthers understood that if PL won, many white radicals in SDS would direct their support away from them to other projects. At first the Panthers concentrated on justifying their position on self-determination and na-

tionalism, but their presentations grew increasingly vitriolic. PL members were scourged as "armchair revolutionaries," unfit for a vanguard role; speakers asserted that "the Panthers are the vanguard . . . we've earned it with our blood."³²

On two occasions the Panthers embarrassed the national office and triggered a chorus of catcalls by belittling the burgeoning women's liberation movement in SDS, supported by all members, as "pussy power," contending that the only role women had to play in the revolution was a sexual one. Finally, a Black Panther representative read a statement signed by the Brown Berets and Young Lords (young Chicano and Puerto Rican revolutionary groups) indicting PL for violating the tenets of Marxism-Leninism on nationalism and self-determination. The statement demanded that PL reverse its position or be stigmatized as counterrevolutionary traitors. Accompanied by shouts of "power to the workers" from the worker-student alliance section, Jeff Gordon of PL hurried to the platform to charge the national office with attempting to use the Panthers as a club against PL. Dohrn and Klonsky then declared that they could not remain in an organization with people who rejected self-determination, and Dohrn led a march out of the coliseum.

The next day, the national office and its followers (a minority at the convention) violated the SDS constitution by expelling the Progressive Labor caucus. The national office published a manifesto outlining its revolutionary position and listing the sins of PL:

1. We support the struggles of the black and Latin colonies within the U.S. for national liberation, and we recognize those nations' rights to self-determination (including the right to political secession, if they desire it).
2. We support the struggle for national liberation of the people of South Vietnam, led by the National Liberation Front and the South Vietnamese Provisional Revolutionary Government. We also support the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, led by President Ho Chi Minh, as well as the Democratic Republic of China, the People's Republics of Korea and Albania, and the Republic of Cuba, all waging fierce struggles against U.S. imperialism. We support the right of all peoples to pick up the gun to free themselves from the brutal rule of U.S. imperialism.

The Progressive Labor Party has attacked every revolutionary nationalist struggle of the black and Latin people in the U.S. as being racist and reactionary. For example, they have attacked open admis-

sions, black studies, community control of police and schools, the Black Panther Party and their “breakfast for children” program, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

The Progressive Labor Party has attacked Ho Chi Minh, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the revolutionary government of Cuba—all leaders of the people’s struggles for freedom against U.S. imperialism.

The Progressive Labor Party, because of its positions and practices, is objectively racist, anti-communist, and reactionary. PLP has also in principle and practice refused to join the struggle against male supremacy. It has no place in SDS, an organization of revolutionary youth.

For these reasons, which have manifested themselves in practice all over the country, as well as at this convention, and because the groups we look to around the world for leadership in the fight against U.S. imperialism, including the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets, urge us to do so, SDS feels it is now necessary to rid ourselves of the burden of allowing the politics of the Progressive Labor Party to exist within our organization. Progressive Labor Party members and all people who do not accept the above two principles are no longer members of SDS.³³

With PL and the NO both claiming the title SDS, matters were further complicated by a division of the national office into two subgroups: Revolutionary Youth movement I, or the Weatherman, led by Bernardine Dohrn and Mark Rudd, and Revolutionary Youth movement II, led by Michael Klonsky. The perspective of RYM I was elaborated in the position paper *You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows*. According to this document, the overriding concern of the revolution was the conflict between US “imperialism” and the national liberation struggles being waged against it. The purpose of the revolution was the defeat of US “imperialism” by world communism.

The Weatherman renounced the idea of bringing about such a revolution in the United States alone, solely for and by means of the working class. Instead, white radicals should support the black liberation and international revolutions led by a vanguard composed of blacks, Vietnamese, and other Third World people. A multiplicity of battle—“two, three, many Vietnams”—would sap the strength of the United States as taxes rose, real wages fell, and state services declined. The Weatherman would initially be composed of the young from every class, including working-class youth, rather than adults, because the

young are "most open to a revolutionary movement which sides with third world peoples."

The professed goal of the Weatherman was to revolutionize people around everyday problems. The young in particular were susceptible to the influence of insurrectionists when they found that unskilled jobs were scarce or when they were mistreated in school, in the military, or in the courtroom. The conflict between revolutionary forces and the "pigs," who were the "glue" holding the neighborhood and city together, would take place on a regional and citywide basis. Since the "pigs" were a symbol of the state, Weatherman adherents were advised to emulate the Panthers and form "self-defense" groups against them. The revolutionary youth movement would eventually train cadre and a general staff to prepare for its role as "a division in the international liberation army."³⁴ *

RYM II, led by Michael Klonsky, agreed with Weatherman that the principal revolutionary concern was the defeat of United States "imperialism" by oppressed colonies, including the black "colony" in this country. In other respects, however, they differed, chiefly over the contention by RYM II that the proletariat, rather than blacks or other Third World peoples, would eventually be the leading revolutionary force. While this brought RYM II closer to PL's basic postulate, RYM II criticized PL's "dogmatic" insistence that the movement choose between the working class and Third World peoples.³⁵

Despite RYM II's intention to establish itself as a separate political entity, only RYM I and PL survived the 1969 convention. The Weatherman ran amuck in the streets of Chicago and other American cities in late 1969 and then went underground, emerging from time to time to commit terrorist acts. PL, in addition to maintaining its independent existence under its own name, also continued to masquerade as SDS. Today, what remains of SDS is PL.

The dismemberment of SDS in June 1969 was anticlimactic. Considering the nature of the New Left's transition after 1965, a schism was inevitable. But the self-destruction of SDS leaves two final questions unanswered: what was the legacy of the original New Left, and what did America lose by its metamorphosis?

* By September 1969 it was clear the Weatherman intended to minimize the role of industrial workers and were enlisting young people, and particularly "*Lumpenproletariat*," at schools and hangouts to foment a kind of urban guerrilla warfare.

Survey and Evaluation of the New Left

A “New” Left and Its Successes

Traditionally, the term “Left” designated persons and organizations favoring a socialist over a capitalist society. In practice, however, the term encompasses so many meanings and interpretations that its effect is to confuse rather than to clarify; innumerable groups describe themselves as being Left in spite of irreconcilable divisions on issues among them. C. Wright Mills’ redefinition of the term in 1960 profoundly influenced the men and women who composed SNCC and SDS in the early sixties. Mills believed that the traditional definition was outdated on the grounds that reliance on the working class and the peasantry, the historical agencies for obtaining socialism either gradually or by upheaval, was unrealistic in the United States.

Marx was basically wrong. Look, it is obvious that the proletariat doesn’t make history, no matter how much you want to stretch historical facts. At certain points in history it has been more active than at others, but clearly an elite has made and still makes world history. How anyone can deny this in the face of the modern power state is almost unbelievable. . . . Now in all the overdeveloped societies, with the intricate control of the mass media, it’s up to the intellectuals who have a conscience to do what must be done.¹

Mills, then, defined the Left as a history-making elite imbued with social conscience, but Mills died before he could lay the theoretical foundations for a New Left; SDS made the initial formulative efforts in the *Port Huron Statement*, *America and the New Era*, and numerous other position papers. SNCC did not have the leisure to theorize—its discussions dealt primarily with the daily exigencies of its survival in the South—but its actions provided the model and inspiration for much SDS theorizing on “participatory democracy” and “parallel

structures". Further, by striving to correct conduct, traditions, and laws that it considered prejudicial and by playing a prominent role in the construction of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party, which sought to capture political power for black people in the Deep South, SNCC achieved results. Numbering only 15 in 1961 and 250 by 1965, SNCC—non-violent, politically acute, and resolute—influenced the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Law, the 1965 Voting Rights Bill, the War on Poverty program, and the development of the young white radical movement. Carl Oglesby was correct in observing, "I see SNCC as the Nile Valley of the New Left and I honor SDS to call it part of the delta that SNCC created." ²

SDS was originally unwilling to accept any ideology made available to it by the Old Left, whether social democratic, Leninist, Stalinist, Maoist, or Trotskyite. Thus, although its founders were acquainted with Marx, they rejected his analysis to begin anew. As Al Haber, first president of SDS, explained, "Revolution and the crude Marxian dynamics of the class struggle are rejected or highly modified." ³

Why? First, because the radicals of the 1920s and 1930s had been motivated by a belief that American capitalism had failed to satisfy the material needs of most Americans. The new radicals, on the other hand, acknowledged that the working class and, in fact, most Americans fared well under American capitalism. The New Left therefore rejected the Marxist premise of class struggle for America. Socialism, too, offered little to people convinced that they already possessed at least as much as was being offered. Secondly, socialism was synonymous with that which was practiced in the Soviet Union, with its labor camps and secret police terror, political appurtenances repugnant to the overwhelming majority of Americans. In addition, early SDS and SNCC regarded the ubiquitous Party-controlled bureaucracy as the archfoe of democracy.

The early New Left differed from the Old Left in other respects as well. Dwight Macdonald, speaking for the communist and noncommunist Old Left, observed that the latter did not act directly to solve problems as SNCC and CORE did by going into the Deep South to try to alleviate the plight of blacks, or as Tom Hayden's Newark community union did in attempting to organize poor whites. "We [the Old Left] didn't do those kinds of things." ⁴ Further, although the Old Left boasted both old and young members, senior members were usually in positions of leadership, whereas the New Left generally ex-

pressed suspicion of people over thirty years of age. Organizationally, SNCC and SDS were decentralized in the extreme, permitting a maximum of personal expression that bordered at times on the anarchistic, the antithesis of communism or even democratic socialism. The Old Left was often factional, sectarian, and suspicious, while SNCC and SDS were open organizations willing to accept anyone who would contribute. Finally, the radicals of the thirties had approved of using the political process to seek elective office. SNCC and SDS, the MFDP to the contrary notwithstanding, basically distrusted elective politics.

What made SDS and SNCC a "new" Left? Al Haber described members of the New Left as "non-revolutionary radicals" and said that the early New Left in the United States "retains a basic ideological character, it begins from moral values which are held as absolute." Its reformist nature was implicit in the statement that "no longer is there a complete rejection of the system," since egalitarian values were esteemed, although, Haber contended, "barely realized" by the poor and disenfranchised.⁵ SDS and the New Left arose, then, within a context of reformism and social morality to seek solutions to specific problems in the ambit of American politics. The following excerpt from an important SDS position paper recaptures the essence of the early New Left.

The origins of the New Left are not based on an ideological (class) confrontation but, on the contrary, emanate from a serious commitment to certain features of the dominant American ideology. The denial of civil rights to the black population was the first issue that led to the emergence of the New Left. The exposure of this denial directly contradicted the dominant rhetoric of equal opportunity and democratic rights. The movement that resulted was oriented toward developing programs that included a structural critique of the whole society. The call for integration was the call for the elimination of some apparently irrational features of American capitalism, namely the arms race and the existence of poverty amid affluence. Again the critique and program were oriented toward the elimination of specific problems within the context of a class society.⁶

Thus, the New Left was originally a collection of radical student reformers, principally in SDS and SNCC. In the South, SNCC labored for equal rights, economic advantage, political power, and a

new order for disenfranchised rural black people. In the North, SDS pledged to dispel materialism, complacency, and "unreasoning anti-communism," hoping to substitute respect for the human spirit in place of prevailing social values based on individualism and competition. Its goals included altering American political and educational institutions, controlling corporations, ending defense spending, and, with the proceeds, erasing poverty, terminating bigotry, industrializing emerging nations, and founding a powerful New Left movement throughout the United States. In the final analysis, however, both SNCC and SDS failed to lay the ideological and structural foundations that would enable New Left organizations to succeed them. Before examining the reasons for this failure, some of the achievements of the New Left in general, and of SNCC and SDS in particular, should be noted.

First of all, the New Left propelled tens of thousands of students to the political forefront. Certain New Left experiences, including community organizing, communal living, and others, brought thousands of students from immaturity into adulthood. By championing minorities, the New Left called attention to society's unfulfilled obligation toward the poor, the uneducated, and victims of discrimination. In the process, however, it encouraged government, corporate, and educational policies that now promote the advance of those slighted in the past, in some cases without preparing them to meet contemporary standards of excellence in American institutions. Middle-class white members of the New Left encouraged racial minorities (and women, in later years) to present their case vigorously to the American people, which they have done, at the same time that they caused Americans to doubt the essential substantiality of middle-class life. Ironically, the wave of moral masochism, self-doubt, and defensiveness that marked the reaction of many white liberals to this attack by the New Left has not deterred the brown, black, or white people lacking college educations and earning less than \$10,000 a year from attempting to scale the heights of the middle class themselves.

The New Left inadvertently begat a cultural revolution as well, a movement sustained largely by young people who, while denying society the benefit of their education and services, subsist on government largesse and private funds to drift indefinitely through life. Especially after 1965, the self-involvement of many white, middle-class New Leftists resulted in a new breed of cultural and political radicals rallying to the cry to "do your own thing." After 1965, young men

and women from thirteen to thirty joined the "counterculture" to escape what appeared to them to be an uninspired and unfulfilling future. These ranged from dropouts who "rip-off" (steal) or freeload in order to live, to individuals who spurn middle-class creature comforts and long to be self-sufficient.

Although the counterculture has influenced certain sectors of adult society and has been accepted in some quarters as "chic," it has brought about only superficial changes in adult mores and beliefs; its force is felt most directly among the young. The youth culture has accelerated a trend toward informal religious ceremony and innovative forms of worship and has, in general, devised and forcefully advocated values of its own: a reassertion of self and independence from the pressures, obligations, and entanglements of our modern industrialized society.

The specific achievements of SNCC and SDS within the context of the New Left may be summarized as follows. SNCC succeeded in directing more national legislative attention to the plight of rural southern blacks than any of its predecessors in the field of civil rights. Its activities in the Deep South from 1960 to 1966 composed the most sustained New Left effort outside of opposition to the Vietnam War. It was the first New Left organization to insist on a political existence independent of adult authority and supervision.

SNCC taught white radicals that direct action by young people to advance a popular cause could inspire sympathy throughout the nation. The moral commitment of SNCC members inspired SDS confidence that a comparatively small group could arouse controversy and generate events leading to real change. The prototype for community organizing and participatory democracy, SNCC pioneered the early New Left notion of decentralization, which initially guaranteed full participation by all members. Its example and influence moved SDS to attempt community organizing projects similar to those which SNCC had initiated around voter registration in the South.

SNCC anticipated the solidarity that most members of the New Left would feel for revolutionary people of the Third World after 1965. Its experience and impatience gradually transformed it from an organization originally emphasizing non-violence, reform, and amity with white society into one stressing Black Power and self-sufficiency. To many young black people who did not subscribe to the extremes of Black Power, SNCC's history, and especially the fate of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party at Atlantic City in 1964, revealed

the hypocrisy of many powerful white liberals and encouraged young blacks to attend college, to emphasize their fraternity with other black people, and to acquire the professional skills required to better themselves and others of their race.

SNCC lost momentum after 1965. The imprint of SDS on the New Left predominated through 1969.

SDS's early theoretical formulations convinced many intellectuals that a new, germane, and vibrant Left had arisen in the United States. Various SDS members assailed Americans for not translating personal values into social values that could be institutionalized and perpetuated, an ideal which, although later abandoned by SDS, persists among the young today with perhaps more emotion than scholarship.

The fresh perspective that SDS brought to Leftism was best expressed in a variety of position papers published in the early sixties. The *Port Huron Statement* and *America and the New Era*, for example, advocated total reallocation of federal spending from defense to domestic needs and indicted the Soviet and American bureaucracies alike as comparable threats to individual liberty. In the course of time, SDS became less original and more doctrinaire, the "new working class" theory published in 1967—in 1973, still a guideline for radicals in the professions—being the last position paper exhibiting any vestige of individual thought.

SDS introduced the university as an agency for radical social change, urging student activists to assail *in loco parentis* by a frontal attack on the purpose of the university. Al Haber and Tom Hayden in particular strived to cultivate a critical faculty in students that would cause them to want to reexamine all social precepts. SDS wished to shake students out of their political torpor to enlist them in the New Left, and there is no question that, along with SNCC, it dispelled apathy among portions of the university student body during the sixties. In the process, it radicalized many white middle-class students, convincing them that the socially accepted purpose of the university—the objective pursuit of knowledge—should be replaced with a revolutionary purpose: the reconstitution of the university into an indoctrination center for potential radicals.*

* The word "indoctrinate" is used intentionally in light of efforts by radical teachers at the University of California at Berkeley and elsewhere to "reconstitute" classes along revolutionary or Marxian lines.

With the advent of the student power concept, SDS endorsed the idea, introduced during the Free Speech movement, that student interests, and not concern for the poor, the unemployed, and the disenfranchised, should receive preferential consideration, leaving succeeding generations of students to solve the dilemma of whether social change should be based on issues important to them or to groups existing outside the university sanctuary.

In its relations with the adult community, SDS, through its Economic Research and Action Program (ERAP), tended to encourage the poor directly to influence future programs legislated for their benefit. In this manner, SDS wished to make the poor aware of their potential power and to lead them to demand control of the War on Poverty program. Many aspects of the ERAP experience, both positive and negative, have been incorporated into the Citizens Crusade against Poverty, VISTA, and the Peace Corps.

The Women's Liberation Movement was generated by females within SDS who rebelled against "male supremacy" in that organization and in the New Left movement as a whole. SDS can also take dubious credit for being the vehicle used by the communist Old Left to subvert the New Left movement.

SDS set the precedent, still faithfully observed by many white radicals since 1969, of bolstering the revolutionary objectives of Third World people here and abroad. Its support for the Third World began in 1962 in the *Port Huron Statement* when it advocated abolishing military spending and foreign assistance except for underdeveloped nations. Its support of revolutionary national liberation movements, and especially its role in popularizing dissent against the Vietnam War, significantly contributed to the isolationist trend in the United States.

By utilizing direct action and civil disobedience to advance controversial goals, SNCC and SDS set a precedent that would subsequently be followed by previously quiescent sectors of the public. Today this is the tactic for forceful, public, or strident advocacy of a position, whether the issue is consumerism, environmentalism, or feminism.

Despite these accomplishments, neither SNCC nor SDS brought about a New Left designed to outlast them, a failure more obvious in the case of SDS, which, even during its years of greatest promise, from 1960 to 1964, exhibited traits and attitudes that augured trouble ahead.

Shortcomings and Errors

SDS's undisguised hostility toward middle-class America was one of its fundamental shortcomings. It is not that the middle class did not merit criticism: indeed, certain members of the Left intelligentsia of the fifties had been unrelenting in their assault on its "cultural" inadequacies. This body of critics, however, was condemned by SDS along with all other elements of the middle class, and admonished to concentrate instead on political matters. In the march from reform to revolution the initial irritation that the militants felt toward middle America became more personal and more pronounced, causing them to misread the country's pragmatic temper, to overlook the true wants and needs of the majority,* to overestimate their own potential, and to underestimate the strength and skepticism of the middle class which acts as a ballast to preserve the existing democratic order and poses the most formidable obstacle to revolution.

Instead of controlling its hostility to secure important political objectives, SDS chose to ignore the proven reform potential of the white middle class, accusing it of complacency and resistance to rapid change. It spent less time wooing unionists, liberal power brokers, upper middle class civic and religious leaders, and opinion makers in the media than it did courting the poor and seeking support among fellow students with whom its members felt more comfortable. (This criticism applies only perfunctorily to SNCC, which had little choice in the matter, excluded as it was from just such circles as SDS had access to privately and through allies of the League for Industrial Democracy.) Hence, SDS gave liberal America only a year—between the publication of the *Port Huron Statement* in 1962 and *America and the New Era* in 1963—before it lambasted the Kennedy administration for tokenism and threatened a new insurgency.

SDS would claim that it had learned the true nature of the liberal establishment by the latter's refusal to help SNCC in the South or to undertake costly social welfare programs to right social wrongs. This allusion to SNCC's experience was somewhat misleading. The per-

* The SDS plan to legislate social welfare programs of unprecedented cost with the consequence of much higher tax rates is reminiscent of the ambitions of the English New Left at the end of the 1950s, whose program lost support among many Englishmen when they discovered that the cost of these programs might prevent them from acquiring middle-class conveniences.

sonal and organizational experience and circumstances of SNCC and SDS differed considerably, and when SDS followed SNCC's example or dictates, it often did so prematurely—turning away from the prospect of a liberal-labor coalition, for example, before the full promise of such a coalition was demonstrated. Even so, the ERAP community organizing project was not tantamount to a rupture between SDS and the mainstream in the United States. Marshaling the poor might still have been the means to a national movement linked with SNCC in the South or a means of applying pressure on the liberal-labor nexus to accede to the demands in early SDS position papers.

Had SDS combined the two approaches—working with the poor while widening avenues of persuasion in Washington, D.C., New York, Sacramento, and other capitals dispensing political influence—its programs for radical redress might have anticipated the success of Senator George McGovern in 1972. The difference in the respective programs of SDS and Senator McGovern in his quest for the presidency is one of degree and not of substance. Both wished to curtail defense spending drastically to redirect federal funds to the domestic front. Both considered themselves “antiestablishment” and championed ethnic minorities. Both wished radically to enlarge the public sector, and both were indefinite about how the enormous indebtedness would be paid. Their programs, and the political groups to which each appealed for support, paralleled each other in many instances. SDS, however, was too impatient either to persevere in efforts to work with the progressive elements in the Democratic party or to see its programs through to successful completion. It skipped from university reform to disarmament to community organizing to the Vietnam War within the space of three years and lost its chance to evolve into a genuine New Left due to its self-transformation after 1965.

The concept of participatory democracy, among other SDS political efforts and programs, never achieved its potential. As initially conceived, participatory democracy was used by SNCC to give uneducated blacks the confidence and self-respect to define for themselves the economic and political goals for which they would fight. In a broader sense, the concept represented a reemphasis on self-government at the local level, implying the introduction of direct democracy in certain situations. In this sense, it was intended to turn citizens from political spectators into concerned individuals involved with issues that affected their lives.

Participatory democracy suffered initially from SDS's inability to reconcile its desire for more democratic planning and a radically enlarged public sector of the economy with its fear of bureaucratic encroachment on individual liberties. After 1965, this apprehension dwindled and Carl Oglesby carried the concept to a revolutionary conclusion, writing: "No one bothered to notice in those days [pre-1965] that such a principle, fully understood would lead through draft card burning toward a demand for workers' control of the means of production."⁷

In another curious departure from a strict interpretation of participatory democracy, the *Port Huron Statement* exempted education from local control, contending that it was "too vital a public program to be completely entrusted to the province of the various states and local units"—a troubling departure because the same reasoning could have been applied in the future to limit citizens' rights to participate in any project vital to their own wellbeing. For a time after the publication of the *Port Huron Statement*, SDS used the ideal of participatory democracy to rouse students and adults to assert political rights of participation, but eventually, through misuse and inattention, it became a shibboleth at best, and, at worst, a catch phrase behind which SDS leaders manipulated the membership.

If the term participatory democracy had a double edge, so did the proposal—basic to the New Left—that disarmament, unilateral if necessary, be combined with the complete welfare state. The novelty of this approach lay not merely in social democratic goals and solutions but in the linking of these objectives with a redistribution of federal funds from defense to domestic spending. The proposal was not just an end in itself but a lever to obtain radical economic and political concessions calculated to acquire for the New Left political power of the first magnitude.

. . . Successive demands for change in the allocation of resources can reach a point beyond which the system cannot adapt . . . there are structural limitations on the ability of the system to satisfy the kind of immediate demands on which disadvantaged people can be organized—and when pushed to those limits, the system will be open to fundamental change.⁸

A certain naivete in SDS thinking was apparent as early as the *Port Huron Statement*, especially in the comment: "It becomes evident

that money, instead of dignity of character, remains a pivotal American value." That facile conclusion revealed a basic contempt for most Americans that was not derived from personal experience but resulted in large part from a lack of contact between SDS and a cross section of the American people. Another measure of its naivete was its anticipation in the same statement that a more democratic labor movement would increase local autonomy and cause the salaries of national labor leaders to be reduced along with their electing occasionally to undertake menial shop assignments.

More serious was SDS's contention that US government and union bureaucracies vied with those in the Soviet Union to limit individual freedom and that this country could safely disarm unilaterally while striving to reach a political accord with the Soviet Union. It is true that the organs of governmental bureaucracy have grown to colossal dimensions and that the security provisions of civil service have become so resistant to reform that the individual citizen frequently feels himself to be the servant of the government, rather than the reverse. Therefore, it is not surprising that the founders of the New Left concluded that both the solitary union member and the individual citizen were at a disadvantage in civil encounters with bureaucratic networks.

Nevertheless, SDS demonstrated poor judgment in comparing US officialdom with governmental supremacy in the USSR. In this country, the administrative departments of government and labor are sometimes instruments for wrongdoing, but by and large they are passive instruments. To atomize and subjugate the citizenry is not their primary function, and they are not extensions (as they are in the Soviet Union) of an omnipotent single party which decrees the morality and power of all institutions of state and society. The question of governmental theory, structure, and implementation was crucial to understanding the major differences between the two systems, and SDS did not clarify the distinctions.

Equally damaging to its case for a New Left was SDS's criticism of nuclear deterrence and its willingness to support unilateral disarmament in order to achieve international political comity. In criticizing the doctrine of deterrence, SDS overlooked or disregarded the fact that the ineffectiveness of US deterrence could be proved only if the Soviet Union actually launched a nuclear attack. Prudence and responsibility should have suggested military parity with the Soviet Union instead of disarmament as an incentive for successful diplomatic negotiations with a historically aggressive first-class power.

Despite its shortcomings, however, SDS appeared well on its way to preeminence among young radicals by the end of 1964. It had helped direct national attention to social ills and had exhorted powerful liberals to reform the unions and the Democratic party to consider the adoption of some New Left programs. It had encouraged university students to take an active interest in political affairs and to demand that behavioral ethics be instilled into private and social institutions. It had reminded the country that the Congress was not energetically utilizing two of its most potent prerogatives: power over the purse and power to investigate the bureaucracy to reduce administrative indiscretion and ensure the broadest measure of individual political liberty. SDS had also urged that limitations be set on the growth and sway of corporations and conglomerates. Yet despite its groundbreaking for a New Left, SDS programs of university reform, peace, and community organizing failed to generate the enthusiasm required to install the New Left as a permanent fixture in political and intellectual circles.

ERAP in particular revealed the same lack of political pertinacity that marked SDS's brief attempt to woo national liberal and labor leaders between 1962 and 1963. In ERAP's brief life-span, from the end of 1963 to early 1965, SDS volunteers shrank, on the one hand, from ingratiating themselves with the municipal forces that dispense favors and, on the other, failed to construct the local power bases preliminary to consolidating a national interracial movement of the poor with southern outposts manned by SNCC. There are a number of possible explanations for ERAP's disappointing results. That the poor actually aspired to a materialistic middle-class life may have dispelled the more romantic notions of SDS volunteers. Moreover, an organizer had to be wise in the ways of human nature and avoid being either patronizing or arrogant. He had to be willing to spend years at his task, alternately blandishing and outraging the local power brokers and imparting valuable organizing skills to the community.

SDS volunteers did not stay long enough in these communities to learn whether their labors would succeed or fail. Most lacked the tenacity and commitment to contend with the drug dealers, the ward heelers, the violence and intimidation that were part and parcel of the underbelly of American life. Carl Oglesby once pondered whether middle- and upper-middle-class suburban young people were equal to the kind of organizing he thought necessary to make society radically different, remarking, "Asking the young rebels to make such a move

may be like asking a flower to fly.”⁹ Professor Eugene Genovese, an early New Left adviser, indicted community organizers for their unrealistic expectations and impatience. But he also criticized younger members of SDS who were unwilling to make the same effort, either for compassion or revolution, as ERAP volunteers.

These early [ERAP] strivings have been largely revised for a variety of reasons, among which have been the naivete with which they were originally formulated and the inability of the Now Generation to bear setbacks, defeats and other irritants to the compulsion for instant gratification.¹⁰

The New Left made mistakes during its formative years, but none of them were irreversible. Instead of rectifying them, however, the New Left between 1965 and 1967 underwent a metamorphosis so complete that at its conclusion the original movement had become unrecognizable. In this transformation, the New Left traded reform for revolution and totally repudiated society. It rejected non-violence and exchanged ideological independence for subservience to Marxism-Leninism. By and large, it chose self-interest over its previous commitment to the needs of millions of Americans who lacked the education, skills, contacts, affluence, and opportunities of New Left members.

Signs that such a transformation was imminent were visible in the wake of the Democratic National Convention in August 1964. When the MFDP failed to oust the regular Mississippi delegation in favor of its own delegation, Tom Hayden reviled “the unions, the mainstream civil rights groups, and the Liberal organizations as ‘hollow shells.’”¹¹ As a result of the 1964 convention, the New Left dismissed any further dependence on, or need for, the labor-liberal combine, until then its first choice as a vehicle for achieving far-reaching social change. By forsaking the Democratic party and the labor unions, it precluded any possibility of winning popular support for its programs—a decisive step toward transformation. SNCC contributed by failing to encourage the MFDP to organize on the local and precinct level. Instead, field workers began an exodus out of the South into the obscurity of northern cities.

The Free Speech movement at Berkeley in 1964–65 was an equally important development for the New Left. Ironically many observers saw the FSM as a powerful manifestation of a growing move-

ment rather than as what it was—an important juncture in the transformation of the New Left. Its central issue—deprivation of the political right to disseminate opinion and mobilize recipients in a particular place—was justified. Unfortunately for the future of the movement, however, this specific grievance, together with the impersonal atmosphere at Berkeley, caused many activists suddenly to fancy themselves victims of social injustice or of political manipulation as intolerable as the political and social abuses exercised on rural Mississippi blacks, inhabitants of Appalachia, or the New Jersey slums. Tom Hayden wrote that early members joined the New Left out of sympathy for blacks in the South. The movement flourished because “we were willing to make sacrifices for others,” but this attitude changed to a concern “that our own liberation is at stake as well.”¹²

This conversion to self-interest was first suspected during the white student influx into Mississippi during the summer of 1964 and was more observable at Berkeley under the banner of student political rights on campus. For the first time—during the Mississippi Freedom Summer and then at Berkeley—hundreds of students became involved in what they believed to be a movement “happening.” The sometimes spontaneous and increasingly disruptive features of such mass involvement became a common characteristic of radical youth activities after 1965. After the FSM, many radical university youth saw themselves as members of a new revolutionary constituency rivaling the working class in potential. The FSM revised SDS’s pre-1965 program, which had assured that university students would not be a singular agency for change but only one of a number of radical agencies working in concert. The theories and programs of student power, the new working class, and finally the Weatherman issued in sequence from the newfound but delusive faith in the revolutionary promise of university students, but the narrowness of student concerns that followed contributed to the transformation and ultimate enfeeblement of the New Left. As Paul Potter, president of SDS from 1964 to 1965, asserted, the idea of SDS had been to build an “American New Left rather than a radical campus organization around issues like university reform.”¹³

The kind and number of students swelling the ranks of SDS after Mississippi Summer and the escalation of the Vietnam War significantly contributed to the transformation as well. Especially after the

April march against the war in 1965, SDS was overwhelmed by a wave of new members, the size of which drastically reduced the already dubious efficiency of the national office. These new additions were primarily undergraduates, and (by Carl Davidson's assessment) 85 percent of the membership at the end of 1966 was neither intellectually nor community oriented, whereas SDS members prior to 1965, totaling only a few hundred in all, had been both.* The majority of the new members were distinguished by their cultural and political alienation, ennui, and elitism, buoyed by their self-imposed estrangement and unqualified rejection of every facet of American society. This wholesale renunciation of the social mores and political instincts of the country, the reversion to self, and the poverty of intellectual interest and ethical principles was in stark contrast to the New Left before 1965, which had been marked by intellectual curiosity and an abiding concern for social progress.

Small and unpublicized, SDS had not been fashionable. There was little to attract the average student to live alone with the unemployed in a dingy Cleveland or Newark neighborhood, or to travel on a lonely Mississippi backroad without the security of hundreds of fellow students, federal agents, and national attention, or to write countless tracts and position papers on every conceivable topic, or to develop a persuasive critique and program. But this essentially was the New Left before 1965. When SNCC and SDS captured national attention, however, droves of students, whose expectations, needs, and backgrounds held little in common with their predecessors, flocked to SDS.

Motivations for joining SDS changed when the organization became well known, and many among the thousands who rushed to join after 1965 probably had not received the parental values or intellec-

* Reasons for the conduct of rebellious white middle-class youth after 1965 are legion. They include: focusing on self out of boredom and disappointment with a social reality which contrasts with student expectations; the permissiveness of parents and the child-centered obsession of the middle classes; the paucity of challenging national interests and inspirational leaders; misplaced idealism; the failure of society to transmit traditions and habits that build character and independent judgment; the confusion that exists in the universities as to their purpose and reason for existence; the politicalization of religion and secularization of the laity; unlimited economic growth, urban centralization and the congestion and hostility that it breeds; politicians of both parties who irresponsibly arouse expectations that cannot be foreseeably fulfilled, etc.

tual heritage that inspired early New Left members.* They lacked the qualities required to make the New Left a success, whether working with the poor, political leaders, influential members of the community, or members of university faculties. Mike Miller placed the real problem in the following context:

We need a core of people who will make their life in the building of a Movement, people who are ready to drop out of school, live at \$30–40 a week, and slowly begin to build among the dispossessed. It was, after all, the fact of 80,000 Negroes in Mississippi casting mock election ballots and 800 of them coming to Washington, D.C., for the opening of Congress that led to 148 Congressional votes against the “regular” Democrats from Mississippi and that led to the involvement of much of the liberal organizations.¹⁴

Above all, opposition to the Vietnam War impelled the transformation under way within the New Left. At the 17 April 1965 march against the war, Paul Potter announced that a “massive social movement” encompassing “every organization and individual in the country” would be created out of opposition to the war. This differed significantly from the previous emphasis on the struggle of the poor, black, and powerless in the country. The war enabled the more doctrinaire members to denounce American foreign policy as “imperialistic”. As Richard Flacks explained, the Vietnam War was final proof that the liberal-labor coalition had sacrificed domestic reform for “Imperialistic adventure.”¹⁵

For others, fear of the draft combined with SDS antipathy against the war gradually to persuade members to shift leftward from a position endorsing voluntary conscientious objection (short of the violation of federal laws) to blatant defiance of the nation’s right to recruit young men. In addition, its critical attitude toward the war caused SDS to form closer ties with Third World revolutionaries and national liberation movements, most of which were intensely anti-American. But the initial advocacy by SDS and large portions of the New Left of United States withdrawal from Vietnam struck increasingly responsive chords among the American people, who watched thousands of

* See Kenneth Keniston, *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968) for an account of the backgrounds of radicals who joined the New Left before 1965.

Americans lose their lives in a war inconclusively fought and unpersuasively defended.

Between August and December 1966, SDS decided on a national antiwar program that would complement its decision to stress campus organizing by forming antidraft unions centered at American universities. By resisting the draft, protesting the war, and endeavoring to gain converts within the armed forces, these unions would radicalize the university, end the war, and harass related corporate and government activity. But the ambitions of the Progressive Labor party combined with other internal factors within SDS to thwart the development of this program. SDS erred strategically in concentrating almost exclusively on Vietnam while unable to devise an antiwar program that entirely satisfied either its own membership or the American public.

More significantly, the Communist party and the Young Socialist Alliance—two communist variants—capitalized on SDS's inability to assume national leadership against the war and made their presence felt, first in the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam and then in a succession of other antiwar organizations. This opportunity, plus the eradication of the "antitotalitarian" clause in the SDS constitution, marked the beginning of Old Left influence in SDS. Communist infiltration of SDS accelerated in 1966 when the Progressive Labor party disbanded the May Second movement and urged its members to enter SDS. These events brought Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology into the New Left and led gradually to the movement's adopting a revolutionary-elitist bent.

The inefficient, sometimes chaotic administrative and organizational structure of SDS also promoted elitism and discouraged cohesion between the national staff and the chapters, a major factor in SDS's transformation and eventual disintegration. In the name of participatory democracy, most SDS members were averse to indirect representative government as practiced in the United States, causing it to spurn even those minimal administrative requirements that would have ensured an orderly transaction of business and execution of programs. Instead, the feudal order that evolved militated against efficient leadership and liaison between subunits and the national headquarters, and contributed to the memberships' indifference toward internal political improvement. The absence of enforced parliamentary procedure, personal and group discipline, and mutual respect

caused national council meetings and annual conventions to become vehicles for the ambitions of separate cliques within SDS, with the result that such fundamental questions as whether SDS should adopt a single- or multi-issue approach to radical change were never successfully resolved or systematically translated into programs and actions supported by the entire membership.

Alienation, Revolution, and Insights into the Phenomenon

Being set adrift by black activists after 1965 reinforced the domestic alienation of many white middle-class members of SDS after the transformation. Though SDS had originally envisioned a broad, all-encompassing New Left, much of its work, intentionally or not, had centered on black communities in the North and South. That the acceptance of Black Power induced black militants to oust their white counterparts from their communities reinforced the inclination of white New Leftists to retreat to the university sanctuary and protest the Vietnam War, whose immediate victims were thousands of miles away.

SDS argued in 1965 that it had to opt for revolution because the nation was immoral and undemocratic, corporate liberalism was corrupt beyond redemption, and the Vietnam War supported and intensified every indictment against the United States. Ironically, the idea of revolution in fact attracted not merely disaffected idealists but a great many egoists whose need for self-expression and recognition exceeded their love for mankind. Moreover SDS leaders allowed themselves to forget that historically in the United States reform, not revolution, has achieved social advancement and the measurable improvement of conditions for those in need. For example, since the 1950s the condition of black Americans has steadily improved: the percentage entering the professions and receiving higher education has dramatically increased, and the disparity in income has steadily dwindled. During the same period, the poverty population (families with a total annual income of \$4,000 and below) has been cut in half. Today, whether the issue is aid for the aged, a minimum family assistance plan, retraining of the unemployed, preservation of the environment, minority rights, or delegate accreditation at the Democratic National Convention, the United States is more receptive to amendment than to in-

surrection. When the New Left chose revolution after 1966, it also lost sight of Al Haber's counsel that "the established system is too decentralized, has too strong a control of the means of violence and facilities of organization for revolution either to be organized or to succeed." ¹⁶

Did the moral quality of the movement change after 1965? Some observers reason that if the Vietnam War was immoral, then any opposition to it was moral. This overlooks the fact that the means and cost of opposition must be considered before the moral quality of an action is assessed. Mere opposition—a state of mind or a conforming gesture—is not in itself "moral." An action is not moral merely because the cause it furthers is just; some risk should be assumed on behalf of that cause or some personal sacrifice made to advance it. By this criterion, picketing a Woolworth store in Chicago to end discrimination in the South may be helpful but it is not necessarily moral. Likewise, participating in a rally against the Vietnam War might foster sentiment against the war, but it is not essentially moral. It does not go beyond a normal political activity. On the other hand, sacrificing a year or more of one's life, or the possibility of education or of security and comfort to advance the freedom and well-being of ghetto dwellers *is* moral. Taking a Freedom Ride to Alabama at the risk of a lacerated skull or thirty days in a teeming jail cell is moral in a way in which mere approval of such action is not.

A pall of suspicion clouds the motives of certain students who opposed the war, because for many it was something close to self-interest—namely, a desire to elude the draft. But for David Harris, Tom Rodd, and others to go to jail in support of their antiwar convictions, rather than to benefit from deferment protection or to evade personal or civic responsibility vis-a-vis the draft, was moral. It should be remembered that the bulk of SDS and SNCC members before 1965 made, or were willing to make, this kind of sacrifice for just causes, and to this extent the movement can be said to have demonstrated its morality. But after 1965, self-sacrifice became a rarity, except among the original members of The Resistance and skeleton crews that remained after ERAP projects were jettisoned—i.e., individuals who still wished to make a personal contribution in the pursuit of a socially redemptive idea.

Not only did moral concern for others diminish after 1965, but SNCC, cofounder of the US New Left, gradually disbanded. SNCC

accepted the precepts of Black Power, and its members began to drift away. Some retired to private life or became partisans of the pan-African movement. Others remained in the South to join various government projects aimed at uplifting black communities. The rest migrated North to enlist in black militant groups or to resume their education.

SDS persisted, however, subsequently formulating the theories and programs of student power and the working class. But SDS did not implement these concepts intended to capture the authority held by university administrators and tenured faculty, an effort that was required to produce college graduates dedicated to a revolutionary social order. In practice, the concept of the new working class drew few adherents until the end of the sixties. In many cases, student power meant merely on-campus antiwar sentiment manifested in antidraft unions, campaigns to end ROTC and to terminate defense-related research rather than a concerted effort to obtain real power to influence university affairs. The future of student power and the new working class depended almost entirely on university trained middle-class students, and this concentration on the university curtailed SDS's grand design for a New Left that would encompass all classes, regardless of race, creed, or position. "Powerlessness," the issue expected to rally both students and adults to student power and the new working class, proved uninspiring to people unwilling to abandon their security, livelihood, and social allegiance to enlist in a revolution steeped in Old Left rhetoric and lacking the political power to achieve its objectives.

Even so, the concepts of student power, resistance, and the new working class could have been workable instruments in the struggle for radical alteration in the United States. Had SDS been able to impose a degree of functional order within its organization or to reactivate through the Radical Education Project membership interest in a non-Marxist but revolutionary analysis and solution of social problems, it might have encouraged an effective onslaught on the university system; for the system was vulnerable, as the Columbia University debacle disclosed. The majority of SDS members, however, were undisciplined, unscholarly, obsessed with their own alienation, mesmerized by the Third World, and afraid of the draft. Instead of persevering in a revolution of their own making, they decided to follow the dictates of the PLP or to serve as mercenaries in the army of the Black Panthers, the Viet Cong, or some other battle group of the Third World.

The influence of PLP increased with SDS's estrangement from reality, even from revolutionary reality. From 1966 to 1969, Old Left characteristics began to surface, including political squabbles, cabals, and undemocratic methods. Those who refused to swear allegiance to either the PLP faction or the national office were called "racist" and "revisionist" and ejected from local chapters. With its moral and intellectual identity disintegrating, SDS was incapable of expressing its earlier assurance about where the movement should be headed. Among other failures, it failed to transmit to its new and intractable membership the early philosophy of the New Left.

Having lost its original identity and forward momentum, the difficulty arose of finding an accurate name for the continuing phenomenon of the movement. The personal disorientation, social hostility, and alienation of the post-1965 activists only compounded the difficulty. At this point, in fact, the New Left began to fragment into the kind of infinite division to which multifarious human problems are inevitably susceptible. Some of the new names given to the movement included the New Far Left, the Student Protest movement, the new New Left, and the Anarcho-Nihilists. In an effort to isolate the principal variants in the current movement, some writers combined definitions with descriptions which only added to, or reflected, the current confusion.

The revolutionary student movement . . . constitutes a potpourri of all the major ideological currents of the past century and a half, not all of which one can place on the Left. It might be better, then, if we could think of another name for the new movement—possibly, it might be "The New Emancipation."¹⁷

Some new left people call themselves revolutionary communists or socialists. Others proclaim anarchism their objective. Still others eschew labels, preferring instead to talk about the "liberation" of people from general oppression.¹⁸

The new New Left was built out of what the leaders read from the worst of the Old Left, and it was to be as dogmatic and cliché-ridden as the Old Left ever was.¹⁹

If one characteristic of the post-1965 New Left could be isolated and said to typify the committed radical, it would be contempt for Western scientific-technological civilization, its values, and its social, political, and moral structures—the state, the legal system, existing

political parties, churches, universities, and the moral order. The movement also rejects society's rewards: wealth, status, prestige, and work that is often well paid, if unfulfilling. This attitude applies, however, only to those radicals accustomed to the satisfaction available from these rewards. Affluent and well-stationed radicals must be differentiated from those white, black, and brown people who are radical only to hasten the day when they can partake of the things well-to-do radicals scorn and condemn. The latter, particularly those from among the *nouveau riche*, face an intrafamilial predicament, which one writer has described as

. . . really sad. He's so lonely and unsure, and can't understand why his children have rejected him. . . . They had families but no money, so they want a Better Homes and Gardens house; we had Better Homes and Gardens houses and wanted a family and love. . . . My father belongs to the last of the generations to believe in the Great American promise that material goods shall make you happy, while I belong to the first of the generations which has discovered that not only do material goods not bring heaven on earth, they can turn it into an absolute hell—we've got the money, and found out that the old ideals aren't worth having anymore.²⁰

The truth in this statement is exaggerated. Today's young radicals who search for a new reason to live very often maintain their bank accounts (or sufficient rapport with their parents) to ensure personal comfort or to have the means to escape from their commune or off-campus collective if the atmosphere gets "too heavy" or the life too uncomfortable.

One who declares himself a spiritual exile from society while still continuing to live in that society is essentially a rebel against authority, for those in authority theoretically protect, preserve, and perpetuate society's mores, customs, laws, and values. An antiauthoritarian mood prevails today because the American ideological heritage is neither renewed nor passed on to succeeding generations and because parents, teachers, advisers, and administrators too often abandon traditionally effective roles and shrink from exercising their prerogatives. Equally serious, clear social values and commendable human virtues are not being systematically exemplified by those in public authority.

Observing the disaffection of young white radicals from American society, Eldridge Cleaver, the leader of the international section of the

Black Panther party, has remarked that they will continue to revere Third World national or guerrilla leaders because "the white race has lost its heroes."²¹ Of still greater significance is the tendency of young activists to look to each other, or within themselves, for self-definition and a purpose for living. In the absence of an inspirational social vision or respected authority, for an increasing number of young people subjective criteria for happiness grow increasingly alluring. An explanation and rationalization of self-absorption is found in the condition called "Consciousness III" in Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*.^{*} But Reich's assertion that students (and young adults) of their own accord, without a congenitally tuned moral character, without a devotion to ideals that transcend self, and without objective standards of excellence, will teach in ghetto schools, forge a revolution, or dedicate themselves to the public weal, disregards the lessons taught by the movement over the past decade.²² **

Since 1969 the New Left movement has experienced another transformation as significant as that which occurred during 1965–66. Most recently, the movement has decomposed into numerous, almost autonomous, separate movements, often having little in common with one another except for a strident demand for change *now!* Nevertheless, it still represents a march for extreme social revision. Its members range from peaceful vegetarians delivering their own babies to Eldridge Cleaver demanding that white middle-class radicals cut their hair and don coat and tie to join, and then sabotage, General Motors or local police stations. There are signs that the movement has lost

* Consciousness III is "idealized consciousness" that "starts with self." It is a new awareness that assumes "the absolute worth of every human being" and renounces "the whole concept of excellence and comparative merit." The whole world is the same family, and openness, spontaneity, and experience are the precepts of Consciousness III. "Doing your own thing" is its clarion call; rock music, the new clothing styles, psychedelic drugs, and "hitchhikers smiling at cars approaching" are some of its manifestations (Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America*, pp. 224–265, *passim*).

** It is interesting to note that disciplined revolutionaries like Eldridge Cleaver and Bobby Seale have survived the foundering of the New Left while hedonists like Timothy Leary and Abbie Hoffman no longer command a following. Similarly, groups professing allegiance to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism struggle on equipped with categorical precepts that promise self-fulfillment as part of an irresistible historical force—the Black Panther Party, Weatherman, PLP, Venceremos, and the Revolutionary Union, to mention a few—whereas organizations like the Yippies, which anticipated the permissive philosophy of Consciousness III, have all but disappeared.

support, and there are also indications that the next generation of students will not subscribe to the wholesale disenchantment with American society that characterized its predecessors. The presidential campaign of Senator George McGovern in 1972 demonstrated more vividly than the campaign waged by Senator Eugene McCarthy four years earlier that many American college youth are not so disaffected that they will not energetically support a public figure who seems to embody idealism and promote social innovation.

With SDS in shambles after 1969, the New Left committed a series of errors that contributed to its loss of appeal among university students. Its supreme error, again, was to rely inordinately on the Vietnam War for inspiration, as a source of revolutionary theory, and as its *cause célèbre* since 1965. The movement has diminished in proportion to the gradual diminution of the United States role in Vietnam.

Secondly, through no fault of the New Left, its revolutionary allure has diminished to the extent that issues once unique to the movement have become national issues supported by scores of Americans outside the New Left. The Vietnam War was the prime example, but others can be seen in social and stylistic aspects of the cultural revolution. Similarly, the minority revolt by militant blacks, chicanos, and newly liberated women that evolved from the New Left is now supported and advanced by liberals and members of ethnic communities alike.

Third, the divisiveness of the movement has sapped its vigor and militated against ideological and organizational consolidation. The PLP and the YSA, for example, have continued to harangue about the respective advantages of allying with the workers or coalescing behind national liberation fronts. The YSA bickered with the Black Panther party about the need for community organizing and against empty revolutionary rhetoric (one segment of the Panthers is engaged in community organizing at present). Organizations within the peace movement never settled the dispute concerning whether a single-issue approach concentrating on the war, or a multi-issue one embracing other social ills, was the best way to attack the war and construct an ongoing New Left movement. Eldridge Cleaver kidnapped Timothy Leary, high priest of the Yippies, and kept him a prisoner in Algeria until he admitted that drugs and anarchistic behavior were counterrevolutionary.

The Panthers have split into two warring factions. Huey Newton pledges a return to the black community and a temporary deemphasis

on violence until adult blacks are sufficiently reliant on Panther services to fight for the party against forces of the state. Eldridge Cleaver insists that the time is auspicious for guerrilla warfare waged by an Afro-American army within the United States. The Women's Liberation movement is unable to reach its potential because some of its members insist on the primacy of race or class analysis over the winning of feminist goals.

Students proved no more adept at compromise as four hundred delegates from campuses throughout the nation met in May 1970 during the national student strike against President Richard Nixon's order sending troops into Cambodia. The students convened at Yale University to postulate a more permanent basis for the New Left movement. Most agreed that the war should end immediately, that defense-related research at universities must cease, and that federal and local governments should stop probing and indicting members of the Black Panther party. But the conference failed because the students could agree on nothing else.

The Yippies experienced a similar impasse at their congress in July 1970, achieving unity on only three points: the use of drugs, rock, and public fornication. At the Black Panther party constitutional convention in November, four thousand white radicals briefly merged with black militants in Washington, D.C., but left discouraged as the facilities were inadequate to accommodate the large number of participants and as political squabbles defeated efforts to unify the conferees.

Despite efforts to resolve differences between black and white radicals, racial antagonism continued to vex the movement. In May 1970, four white students were killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State University. A few days later, two black students died at Jackson State College under similar circumstances. A week later, six young blacks were killed by police in a riot in Augusta, Georgia. Eldridge Cleaver accused liberals and radicals of "white racism" for giving the Kent State tragedy wide publicity while virtually ignoring the deaths of the black students, a reenactment of the black reaction to publicity given Schwerner and Goodman but not James Chaney in the aftermath of the murder of three civil rights workers during the 1964 Mississippi Summer.

The addiction to violence exhibited by some groups in the movement also served to disenchant growing numbers of university stu-

dents. Most politicalized students sanctioned the use of verbal violence and employed scurrilous language with gusto, while drawing the line at physical violence. Students who sympathized with the New Left began to have second thoughts when the Weatherman announced at the beginning of the year that 1970 would be the "year of the fork," in grisly commemoration of the murders committed by the Charles Manson "family".

The disillusionment intensified in March 1970 after three members of Weatherman died in a New York townhouse explosion caused by experiments with homemade bombs. In June, a graduate student lost his life when Weatherman devastated a science building on the University of Wisconsin campus with high explosives, a Weatherman spokesman commenting that they could not be responsible for the safety of "pigs". The Black Panther party contributed to the ethos of violence with savage rhetoric and graphic cartoons in its newspaper portraying policemen as "pigs" being killed by black children. In addition, the Panthers prided themselves on pitched battles fought with the police departments of various northern cities.*

The appearance of violence within the counterculture dispelled the myth perpetuated since 1967 that the new lifestyles of the youth culture would produce better men and women. Many of the participants at the 1969 Woodstock Rock Festival in New York felt and expressed a sense of community with their fellows that seemed to anticipate new humanistic values. Later in the year at Altamont, California, this hope was dashed as 400,000 youths, many of them stoned on marijuana and other drugs, sat unaware, unmoved, or helpless as a black man was brutally murdered in front of the stage by Hells Angels hired by the Rolling Stones rock group as bodyguards.

Drug pushers and other criminal elements infiltrated urban hippie havens, driving many of the inhabitants to rural areas and causing them to limit their visions of thoroughgoing cultural revolution to members of their own communities. Even the threat of violence sufficed to minimize student support for movement "happenings". The spring offensive of the May Day Tribe's ** campaign against the Viet-

* The distaste evinced by adult black people toward the Panther emphasis on violence contributed to Huey Newton's decision to deemphasize the use of weapons and concentrate instead on improving community relations.

** A term used to describe a band of antiwar activists more likely to resort to violent confrontation than other members of the antiwar movement.

nam War was a case in point. In April 1971, about 500,000 people assembled in Washington, D.C., to hear speakers condemn American involvement in the war. A month later, the May Day Tribe congregated in the nation's capital for the purpose of cutting off traffic and thereby shutting down the operation of the national government. In contrast to the peaceful antiwar protest in April, less than 50,000 activists came to Washington to attempt the unsuccessful, quasi-violent maneuver.

That student activism has declined since the demise of SDS in 1969 has been attributed by some observers to an increased social sophistication and personal maturity on the part of many university students. A great number of students have learned that domestic and international problems are far more difficult to solve than they had imagined, that there is no such thing as "instant revolution," and, not incidentally, that their own demands can be forthrightly denied by those in authority. Many white students have discovered that it is not easy to bridge the suspicion, or resolve the differences in values and aspirations, that sometimes characterize encounters between black and white students on integrated campuses. Students of all races have learned that to concentrate on radicalism rather than on scholarship is to risk obtaining employment after graduation.

Experimentation with new cultural and professional lifestyles has diverted student energy that might previously have been devoted to New Left politics. Some students have become absorbed with a rural lifestyle stressing self-reliance. Others have traded in Mercedes-Benzes for Volkswagen buses and sojourned in the mountains as a lark. Socially concerned graduate students have entered law and medicine to serve the urban poor or to practice ecological law. In addition, political opportunities for young people are more abundant in the seventies than in the sixties, partially as a result of student activism. Eighteen-year-olds are now permitted to vote, and their staff work for Senator George McGovern was credited for his having staged the most surprising campaign for nomination in American political memory. More and more young adults have sought political office soon after graduation from college, and a few students have run for public office before receiving their diplomas.

These young people have discovered that the political programs and ambitions of the New Left movement did not, for the most part, coincide with the personal anxieties and social concerns of most

Americans. Freeing "political" prisoners, ending defense-related research on campuses, or promoting a high school "Bill of Rights" to release students from administrative authority contributed little to the solution of outstanding public problems. Such objectives did not impede student access to hard drugs, increase employment, reduce taxes, curb the incidence of crime, upgrade the quality of education, or advance the prospect of qualified members of ethnic minorities to acquire better jobs. Perhaps many students who turned away from the New Left felt that the radical confrontation of their generation had run its course and that, at peace with their own social conscience, they could now concentrate on other pursuits without guilt.

On 17 March 1972, William M. Kunstler, radical attorney for the Black Panther party, acknowledged the transformation of the post-1969 New Left in the words, "The Movement is dead—long live the Movement."²³ Politically, the movement, in its several parts, was maintaining a lower profile—relying less on national objectives, such as forcing the government to abandon South Vietnam, and concentrating on building local bases for future movement activity. On the other hand, militant activists at universities continued to intimidate or ostracize professors whose views they opposed, and university administrations were pressured to give students a plurality on committees empowered to review violations of campus codes of conduct.

In urban communities, various radical groups sponsored child-care centers, whose primary function was not to feed and care for the children of working mothers but to indoctrinate them, following the example of the Black Panthers' free breakfast program. Similarly, many New Left activists promoted prison reform, not to eradicate abuses but to facilitate the politicalization of prisoners by disseminating revolutionary literature, encouraging the growth of radical organizations within prisons, and convincing prisoners that they were incarcerated for "political" reasons and not because they had violated the criminal code. The editor of an underground prison newspaper explained that one of the radicals' tasks was "arousing the indignation of the prisoners in order that they might see themselves as the most brutalized and oppressed minority in the world."²⁴

Though the New Left movement became more localized than it had been in the past, its violent aspects, which increasingly repulsed college students after 1969, remained intact. The New Left had been founded on nonviolence and radical reform. As it slowly transformed

itself into a politically, socially, and culturally alienated substratum adrift from the American mainstream, it was inevitable that frustration and desperation would eventually culminate in coercion and violence. A potentially violent mood could be discerned at antiwar rallies staged by the Vietnam Day Committee in 1965–66. This mood heightened at the October 1967 Pentagon demonstrations and became a reality at Columbia University and Chicago in 1968. Violence was finally adopted as the Weatherman strategy in 1969. Of greater moment than organizational violence was the appeal of individual acts of violent anarchism. As explained by a movement veteran: “English majors handling dynamite. They are beyond despair, and death has claimed their vision. For they have understood that to destroy all limits is, in a perverse sense, to be truly free. To destroy is to *feel* free.”²⁵

Some books, like the *Anarchist Cookbook*, pandered to the perversities of violent members of the New Left. This book tempted the reader with an array of do-it-yourself “recipes,” ranging from how to kill a man with a knife—“thrust deep into the kidney, cover the victim’s mouth, slash as you retract, then cut the victim’s throat”—to how to rig a booby trap in a man’s favorite pipe. Disclaiming that it was a “call to action,” the cookbook suggested to the reader that anarchist cooking “achieves liberation, the opposite of alienation. In using and testing the ‘recipes’ the joy is already there.”²⁶

Many men and women in the movement elected neither individual nor group violence but combined revolutionary activity with their professional lives. An example of this was observable in the 1972 version of SDS new working class strategy and radicals in the professions. Many radicals in the teaching profession were organized in the “New University Conference” (NUC), which had become increasingly active since its inception in 1968. Claiming about sixty chapters in 1970, the organization was equally composed of junior faculty and graduate students, with a few senior faculty and other members of the college community. The organization identified itself as follows:

NUC has emerged as one of the first solid adult organizations from the New Left of the 60s. Similar activity is taking place among young radical doctors and health workers, social workers, etc. Many members of NUC were involved in some form in the student Left of the early 60s, but found that they could remain in the student movement

only within very narrow role definitions: one either had to remain in the student culture or become a full time political organizer who related to student organizations. However, there was no organizational form for young adults who wanted to balance both a radical approach to the institutions in which they were located (by radical teaching, curriculum, democratic struggles for control, etc.) with political activism outside their work—community struggles against imperialism, racism, sexual inequality and capitalist economic organization. NUC people hold that both aspects of radical life are crucial to the development of a mature revolutionary movement in the United States.²⁷

The prevailing creed of many NUC members was Marxist revolutionary socialism. A NUC document entitled "Open Up the Schools," published in 1971, formulated the organization's goals. In NUC's view, the university is an arm of the capitalist system, and its purpose is to provide society with skilled professionals, teachers, technicians, and leaders to ensure its continuance. The purpose of the NUC was to undermine and eventually revolutionize the present educational system * to incapacitate the prevailing order by denying it educated citizens willing to support social and governmental institutions, and instead to indoctrinate students for radical purposes. Militant teachers of the NUC hoped to accomplish these goals by abolishing course requirements, vocational training, the grading system, teaching objectivity, and administrative authority. In this way, the radical teacher would become the focal point of authority and direction in high schools and universities.**

Many of the post-1969 New Left groups believe their most promising strategy for the future lie in electoral politics practiced at the local level. Radicals' success in Berkeley, California, could serve as a

* This view of the university as an arm of the capitalist system, or the military-industrial complex, began with SDS position papers in 1960-62 and was introduced in the Free Speech movement at Berkeley in 1964-65.

** In July 1972 the NUC announced its termination as a national organization. Exemplifying the divisiveness of the entire New Left movement, NUC spokesmen attributed the dissolution of the organization to irreconcilable differences between members who adhered to Marxist-Leninist precepts and others who preferred "a mass organization with the broadest possible left constituency" (S.T., "New University Conference Folds," *Guardian*, 5 July 1972, p. 3). Radicals in the teaching profession continue to organize but primarily within local geographic areas where they still promote the perspective and philosophy that characterized the NUC.

prototype for similar endeavors in other parts of the country. In 1971 the New Left was represented in Berkeley by the "April Coalition," a slate of candidates running for seats on the city council in the April election of that year.* Some of the proposals suggested by the coalition have been recommended by conservatives and liberals alike. They included deemphasizing the use of automobiles within city limits while providing alternative systems of transportation, such as minibuses, etc. The coalition also endorsed an expanded park system for neighborhood use, as well as increased services for the elderly.

The bulk of its recommendations, however, were more controversial, such as the proposal for community control of the police department. This was aimed not only at correcting "abuses"—compelling the department to take the crime of rape more seriously, for example, and to improve its treatment of minority groups (women, blacks, chicanos, and homosexuals)—but it had political objectives as well. Spokesmen for the coalition stated that "in the absence of community control, the police will be sent to disrupt the existence of radical organizations. . . . Until we are organized and unified around community control we are helpless to preserve the profound cultural and political experiments taking place here."²⁸ Other disputed proposals recommended by the April Coalition included that the city council should support the ten-point program of the Black Panther party and self-determination for Third World people, that students should be permitted to teach in schools to demonstrate their equality with adults and to promote "child power," and that homosexuals should be allowed actively to participate in child-care centers.²⁹

With the announcement that Bobby Seale, chairman of the Black Panther party, would run for mayor of Oakland ** in 1973, the prospect of an interracial movement of minorities forming in northern California to accomplish radical economic and political objectives became a possibility. This development has focused national attention on radical coalitions in Oakland, Berkeley, and elsewhere to deter-

* Three members of the coalition were elected in April 1971 to the Berkeley City Council. The council is composed of nine members including the mayor and vice mayor. In the period from April 1971 to April 1973, disagreements grew among Coalition members and they no longer present an united front. In the 1973 Berkeley election only one new radical was elected to the Council.

** Oakland, a city adjacent to Berkeley, is second in size only to San Francisco in the Bay Area. In a runoff election held in May 1973 Bobby Seale lost decisively to Mayor John H. Reading, but pledged to continue his political activities.

mine whether the chief interest of such coalitions is residential control of the community or the acquisition of political power on behalf of an elitist vanguard of the new revolutionary Left.

The New Left movement currently features activists in and out of elective politics and encompasses an array of ego-freaks, anarchists, and radical professionals. But whether the movement is unified or diverse, its future depends on the support given or withheld it by university students. Short of another Vietnam War, it is unlikely that another national organization like SDS will prosper. Unlike the fifties, however, the youth of the seventies are aware of social and political problems and can be inspired to take the political offensive. To achieve a new revolutionary order in the United States, the New Left must lead or control this offensive.

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