

INSTITUTE ON ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL ACTION, to be held on June 7 through 14 sponsored by the Economic Research and Action Project of The Students for a Democratic Society.

### Background of the Institute

At the present time there is an increasing number of young people who are moving toward serious engagement with the problems of America's poor and dispossessed. This awakening of social consciousness was sparked largely by widespread student concern with the civil rights movement and the rapid realization by many who participated in that movement that the root of many Negro grievances was mass impoverishment, incarceration in the slums, and the absence of jobs. Thus there has been a noticeable shift of concern among students from the problem of racial inequality per se to the more general problem of chronic and pervasive poverty in the midst of abundance.

This student concern converges with an increasing tendency for hitherto inarticulate groups within the society to forcefully express demands for an end to the conditions of poverty. This upsurge of the poor is, of course, most manifest among Negroes, but there are signs of restlessness among white unemployed and poor as well, particularly in such places as the mining areas of Eastern Kentucky.

The revolts in America's Harlems and Hazards are of course uncoordinated, stimulated by local conditions, and led largely by local people. The chief problem which they face seems to be this: neither the revolts themselves, nor the response of the political system seems capable of meeting the needs of the people involved.

The movements to which we refer are inadequate because, of necessity, they are organized around particular problems, and the demands which they make are partial demands--for alleviation of slum conditions, or for

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better education, or for jobs, or for better welfare programs. Few of the local movements have as yet encompassed the full range of demands of their constituents, nor have they been able to develop a political program with which their constituents could identify themselves on a sustained basis, and which would lead to sustained social change.

### The Summer Projects

This summer, Students for a Democratic Society, through its Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) will initiate organizing efforts in several northern and border state communities, Chicago, Cleveland, Boston, Newark, Chester, Philadelphia, Hazard, Louisville, and Baltimore. These local efforts are designed to develop new forms of social action organization among the "voiceless poor"--efforts which can go beyond the single-issue temporary protest movement. The attempt will be made to see if the following organizational steps are possible now:

- 1) The organization of white unemployed and poor. Can forms of action similar to the Negro protest movements develop among the white dispossessed? Can movements for jobs or improved living conditions become interracial?
- 2) Can people involved in single-issue protest actions see their common needs and goals? Can the perception of common interests lead to the formation of political action organizations which encompass the full range of needs of the deprived community?
- 3) Can research and analysis be integrated with such insurgent political organization so that meaningful political progress can develop in the community? Can such programs be "meaningful" to the people in the community while at the same time be sufficiently radical so that they cannot be "used" by those who now wield power in the community?
- 4) Can political education and indigenous cultural activity be integrated into the activity of the developing political organization? In other words, can developing organization provide not only a means for mobilizing the political energies of the people, but also provide a means for increasing people's understanding of the social system and a place for cultural expression and development?

- 5) Can local organizations and protest movements move toward the achievement of a grass-roots political coalition capable of challenging the established power structure of the city?
- 6) Can present attempts to make the "invisible poor" visible provide a way to make that visibility permanent--that is, can the newly articulate poor achieve a permanent voice in the political arena.

These are the kinds of issues which the local research and action projects will be exploring in their work this summer. The attempt, generally speaking, will be to bring students, on a volunteer or subsistence basis, into certain communities as full-time staff people in an organizing and research effort. In each case the project staff will be working with local civil rights, trade union or other people who have been active in community organization in the locale.

#### The Nature of the Institute

Such an effort will require some intensive training of the people involved. In order to achieve this, an institute for project staffs is planned for early June. Approximately 100 students will be brought together in a camp situation for eight days. Three kinds of educational experience will be involved:

- 1) Reading and discussion of basic material on the American economy, politics and social change. Much of this reading will be assigned in advance; the Institute will provide time for seminar discussions of this material. A major focus of this will be to provide a common, basic grounding in the facts and issues of the American political economy, and a common language for discussing these, and a sense of the unanswered questions and areas of controversy which now exist. Seminar leaders and resource people will include graduate students, young faculty, labor education and similar types who share the SDS orientation to these issues.
- 2) Training sessions in the practice of organizing. Workshops, lectures, role-playing sessions, etc. will be used to get at the practical problems in building community organizing. Staff here will be several highly experienced people from labor, civil rights and other social action backgrounds.
- 3) Planning sessions for the city projects. Considerable time will be spent in careful planning of the work of the local projects.

Each participant will be supplied with kits of material on the statistics, political history, industrial layout and the studies and literature of the community in which he will be working. Key people from the community will participate in workgroup sessions with the students who plan to work with them.

Training and planning sessions will also be held with those students whose primary emphasis will be on research, although all participants will get a common background in both research and organizing skills.

Participants will be selected on the basis of applications for summer work which are now being received. Some opportunity for selection of applicants, initial orientation and meeting of summer staffs will take place at the conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan on April 10-12.

For additional information and applications for the June Training Institute: ERAP / 1100 East Washington, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Estimated Budget for the June Training Institute

Board, lodging and use of campsite:	\$4000	(\$4/day for 8 days)
Literature and other materials*	750	
Transportation subsidies	500	
Director (6 weeks@ \$40)	240	(includes advanced planning)
Staff and resource people		
travel	1500	(estimating 15 people)
honoraria	250	(to be kept at a minimum)
Phone, postage	500	
	Total	\$7500

\* Includes complete sets of SDS working papers on economic issues, relevant books and pamphlets, kits for local projects, etc.