

POLITICAL DIRECTIONS FOR SDS

The following is presented as a general direction for SDS. It is not intended to be a basis for exclusion. We do not oppose the adoption of exclusionary principles per se, but we do oppose the attempt to artificially graft-on a set of political principles which do not emerge from the discussion and activities at the membership level. Certainly, any attempt to push this regional meeting into adopting a set of principles newly presented to it, without prior consideration in the chapters -- that is, where the bulk of the SDS members are to be found -- would in fact obstruct the development of real politics in the organization.

I. THE WORKING CLASS

In the stage of advanced monopoly capitalism it is still true that the main contradiction is between capital and wage labor. We see the working class as the major force for revolutionary transformation. American capitalism and its imperialist policies will not be destroyed by being surrounded and overrun by the armies of the Third World rising up to defeat it, nor by tumbling down like a house of cards as the empire disintegrates. Rather, it will be defeated by a united, organized, self-conscious, militant and revolutionary working class -- black, brown and white, female and male, in concert with the struggles of the oppressed peoples around the world. We must aim for the building of such a movement.

The American working class is oppressed and exploited by the same ruling class that directs and controls America's imperialist ventures. That working class, because of its relationship to the means of production, cannot for long remain unaware of its exploited condition. Part of the working class is aware of this already; a much larger section is in the process of developing class consciousness, while others still accept the Establishment myth of a progressive, middle class society. White America is not one, but potentially two nations: oppressors and oppressed.

It is our job as revolutionaries to help develop a class consciousness among the working class -- so that it sees itself in opposition to the bourgeoisie, not merely in occasional economic struggles. It is when the working class moves around issues involving its own exploitation that revolutionaries can successfully point out the need for unity among Whites and blacks in the industrial and colonial proletariat.

Workers, organized as a class, can stop bourgeois society dead in its tracks. But more than that, they can organize society on a new basis, that of revolutionary socialism. In the course of doing so, they will create new instruments of democratic power, just as the workers of Paris created the commune in 1871, the workers of Russia created the Soviets in 1905 and 1917, and the workers of Hungary created the Workers Councils in 1956.

Revolutionary socialists look to the working class because only the struggles of that class can result in a society of freedom, where the people rule themselves and no longer tolerate "condescending saviors." As Marx and Engels said, "Our notion from the beginning was that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself," and further, "We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class to establish democracy."

II. SOCIALISM

It is only by overthrowing the capitalist order that we can begin to structure a society in the interests of the overwhelming majority. In its place we must build a socialist society in which the working class controls the means of production. That means that the working class will directly control the factories and the whole economy and society. As Lenin said in State and Revolution,

The Commune appears to have replaced the smashed state machine "only" by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact, this "only" signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of 'quantity being transformed into quality;' democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (a special force for the suppression of a

particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper.

Worker's control means more than serving the people - it means organizing society so that the working class can serve itself.

III. NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLES

We support the right of self-determination of all oppressed peoples. We support the right of peoples to organize themselves along national lines and to struggle along these lines without waiting for the class struggle to burst into the open. We urge such organization to take place and see it as progressive for three reasons: 1) It throws off the yoke of imperialist exploitation; 2) in doing so it opens the way for socialist revolution; 3) the process of struggling for national liberation is likely to develop into a class struggle and helps give impetus to the class struggle of the working class in the oppressor nation. This is true for blacks and chicanos in this country as it is for third world liberation struggles abroad.

IV. WOMEN'S LIBERATION STRUGGLES

We support the right of women to organize themselves in order to overthrow their oppression, both material and psychological. We see this struggle as essential to the development of human relationships and as a key factor in organizing and giving impetus to the struggle of the working class. We urge women to form their own independent organizations and/or caucuses in order to develop a consciousness of their oppression as women, and to begin to engage in political struggle unimpeded by traditional relationships between men and women.

The independent organization of women will not lead to an anti-male, separatist orientation any more than the independent organization of blacks or chicanos will lead to reactionary cultural nationalism. The key is the outside direction of the organizations. As long as the directions of the organization is anti-capitalist, and as long as the activities around which struggle takes place heightens the consciousness of the class nature of society, the independent organization of women for their own liberation can only add to the general struggle for revolutionary socialism.

V. THE MOVEMENT

Essential to our struggle against the powerful ruling class is the ability of our movement to be flexible and non-dogmatic. Anything else will tend to ossify and shatter the movement and can only serve the interests of the ruling class. This means that the movement must allow for internal criticism and any attempts to impose a line from above such as was done at the SDS National Convention at Chicago. - where the National Office allowed for only panel and plenary discussion on their proposed agenda and argued against having workshops as being "anti-communist" when that proposal was raised from the floor; where the NO opposed independents being on panels; where the two principles of unity were imposed without adequate discussion at the Convention and without any prior discussion at the chapter level - must be resisted. Furthermore, it is only by building a democratic movement, controlled by the working class that we can prepare for a democratic society controlled by the working class.

We recognize that the transition from capitalism to socialism will not be a peaceful one, but will be met with all the force the ruling class can muster. We should aim to isolate the ruling class as much as possible in order to minimize violence, but recognize nonetheless that armed struggle prior to and during the revolution will be necessary, as will the organization of the proletariat as a dictatorship in order to crush the further resistance of the bourgeoisie once a workers' state is established. We therefore defend the right of oppressed peoples to arm themselves and urge them to do so.