

A black and white photograph of a street scene. In the foreground, a man in a light-colored shirt and dark pants stands with his hands on his hips, looking towards the right. Behind him, two other men are walking away from the camera. To the left, a white car is parked. In the background, there is a building with a sign that says "WASH" and a brick wall on the right side. The overall scene suggests an urban environment.

DON'T MOURN

Don't Mourn

ORGANIZE

Organize

SDS guide to community organizing

published by
THE MOVEMENT PRESS
May 1968

printed by
Students for a Democratic Society
at the sds print shop

available from
The Movement Press
449 14th Street
San Francisco, California 94103

Students for a Democratic Society
1608 West Madison Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612

DON'T MOURN -- ORGANIZE!

PHOTOS BY TODD GITLIN, NANCI HOLLANDER, BILL VANDERCOOK AND UNKNOWNNS



This pamphlet is a collection of several articles about organizing. **WE'VE GOT TO REACH OUR OWN PEOPLE** was printed in *The Movement* of November 1967. It was written by a group of young white organizers some of whom have since moved into various cities to begin organizing along the lines suggested in the article.

TAKE A STEP INTO AMERICA, published in the December 1967 *Movement*, was written by a group of JOIN organizers as a response to **WE'VE GOT TO REACH OUR OWN PEOPLE**. Drawing from the JOIN experience, it calls for an organizing perspective wider than that of draft resistance which is the primary focus of **WE'VE GOT TO REACH OUR OWN PEOPLE**. The authors are: Junebug Boykin, Diane Fager, Mike James, Bob Lawson, Tom Livingston, Tom Malear, Bobby McGinnis, Virgil Reed, Mike Sharon and Youngblood.

E.R.A.P. AND HOW IT GREW is a detailed history of the conception and evolution of E.R.A.P, organizing projects, of which JOIN and N-CUP are the best known. It was written by Richie Rothstein, one of the early JOIN organizers.

POOR WHITE RESPONSE TO BLACK REBELLION, by Mike James and Bob Lawson of JOIN, was printed in *The Movement* of August 1967 during the summer uprisings. It talks about the different responses of poor whites to ghetto uprisings depending on how these actions are interpreted to them.

LEARN THE LESSONS OF U.S. HISTORY by Noel Ignatin of LADO in Chicago further explores the relationship of blacks and whites and emphasizes that racism must be an issue in any white organizing. It was printed in *The Movement* of February 1968.

WE'VE GOT TO REACH OUR OWN	page 2
TAKE A STEP INTO AMERICA	page 10
E.R.A.P. AND HOW IT GREW	page 18
POOR WHITE RESPONSE TO BLACK REBELLION	page 28
LEARN THE LESSONS OF U. S. HISTORY	page 32



WE'VE GOT TO REACH OUR OWN PEOPLE

There is a movement now in this country that it makes sense to describe as a resistance. What a year ago was merely a slogan has begun to take shape at induction centers, in the corners of small offices, in the character and style of increasing amounts of anti-war work and the consciousness of growing numbers of people that they can create a real opposition to the Johnson Regime. There is still a great deal of confusion and groping. The resistance exists at the fringe -- on the edge of the student movement and the university community, at the margin of the poor and decaying communities where the offices and apartments of most of the resisters are to be found.

This article outlines a program of resistance; it seeks to clarify objectives and describe a way in which part of the resistance can root itself in poor white and lower paid working class communities; it attempts to suggest the urgency, need and potential for establishing those roots now.

WE CHOOSE RESISTANCE

Much of the anti-war movement, regardless of rhetoric, seems predicated on the assumption that existing power is legitimate and that the regular channels of political opposition are sufficient to end the war. For that reason it has concentrated on proving that there is substantial, growing public sentiment against the war (through large demonstrations, petitions, newspaper ads, referenda, etc.) and it has done this quite effectively. Its method has concentrated on anti-war propaganda and education and symbolic appeals to power. Even the most militant, civil disobedience advocates have generally directed their energy toward a Gandhian confrontation with and appeal to power.

We are convinced that power throughout this society is illegitimate and will continue to be basically unresponsive to public opinion and normal political pressure. That conviction FORCES us to a conception of resistance -- an effort to impede and disrupt the functioning of

the military/political machinery wherever it is local and vulnerable. We join a resistance movement out of no great optimism about its capacity to end the war; indeed we call this a resistance, not a revolution, because entrenched power is too strong to be broken. At best a resistance can delay and harass, strengthening the internal conflicts that make the war costly, aiding marginally the Vietnamese whose prosecution of the war is the most critical determinant of its outcome; at best a resistance sets seeds throughout the country of a movement aimed directly at imperialism and domestic exploitation.

What we do believe, however, is that the resistance can draw together those people who seek real power to deflect the war. We believe that a resistance can draw together people who are sufficiently detached from the integrative social mechanisms of this country so that they could never participate in a propaganda/symbolic-confrontation - oriented movement. In this sense, we think the resistance can make available to many people who are now denied it, a credible (believable, possible) form of opposition to the war.

WORKING CLASS & POOR

It is here that the war hits hardest. It is young men from these communities who do most of the dying in Vietnam and it was their fathers and brothers who did most of the dying in Korea. It is their unions that will be suppressed in the name of the war effort, their wage gains that will be erased by war inflation, their checks that will feel hardest the squeeze of a war tax. And it is also the token programs of relief, job training, school improvement, and rent supplement that will be cut off in their communities because of the war.

But it is here that the anti-war movement has had least experience and least success. Paradoxically, the people most brutalized by material and social exploitation, the people pushed unceasingly through the processing of school, military and job seem unmoved by the anti-war effort. Partly this is explained by the massive, unthinking, unchallenged racism and patriotism (anti-communism) which these communities share with the rest of white America and which must be broken if a movement is to succeed. But more important, we feel that these are exactly the communities that will not be reached by the symbolic, propaganda tactics of the current sense of REAL GAIN, a sense that political activity represents more than the demonstration of disaffection. It is in these communities that a resistance makes most sense.

Because grievances are so deep, so much a part of the marginal economic and social web of people's lives, the movement of opposition, once triggered

could be very powerful. We choose to work here because people do have a deep sense of exploitation that can lead them to identify not only with their own struggle, but with oppressed people everywhere. It makes sense to talk in these communities about the need and right of self-defense and self-preservation and to speak of democracy as the unadorned right of people to make the most important decisions about their lives. There is little of the legalism and formalism that can paralyze other sectors of the society, but rather a profound but segmented anger that can be kindled and united by the existence of a credible opposition to the war.

WE CHOOSE THE DRAFT

The draft and the war are issues now, everywhere. There is no need to manufacture them or convince people of their importance; the conviction is implanted twenty times a day by television, radio, papers, conversations and the visible signs of war inflation and pressure -- not the least of which is the caskets rolling back into the community from Vietnam. Unlike some of the other things community projects have tried to work on, there is no need to produce "consciousness" about this issue.

We want to focus on the draft because it is the MOST IMPORTANT AND MOST TANGIBLE manifestation of the war in most people's lives. Hardly anyone exists in a lower class working community who does not have friends or close relatives who are in the army or threatened by it. Coming into the community with a program that will help people deal with this problem, that will keep themselves or their friends or their children or their loved ones out of the damned war, cuts through to the very heart of the issue. It is a way of fighting back, a method of self-defense, and it makes the oppor-

tunity for opposition credible and compelling.

Unlike many issues, the draft is important enough so that people will take a stand and accept the risks that that implies. It is only when an issue or movement is so important that the good average American will take a stand against his neighbor or his bowling team or the men he drinks with or works next to that you have a chance for a significant social movement. Revolutions always tear communities apart. It is that tearing that represents the splitting of the social fabric which has held people in belligerent allegiance to their country in spite of their disaffection. Very few of the issues we have organized around have been that powerful. This one is.

And although opposition to the war will divide a community in very important ways, it will unite it in others. There are few issues that will unify a marginal community across its fractured status and economic lines. For example, the antagonisms between workers and welfare recipients frequently keeps them from working together. But the draft cuts across those lines. It can bring the welfare mother, worker, parent, young person into one cause and into a common sense of themselves and their position as opponents.

The clarity of this issue and its importance, can strengthen the opposition to other institutions when they are used to suppress it. When the school expels students for forming a high school draft resistance league, the general anger of the community about the school has a foundation and anchor that the abstractness of the "school problem" may have prevented from forming before.

PRESERVATION

Finally, however, there is one reason that over-rides all others in making us

attempt a community based draft resistance movement. That simply is the preservation of the movement. Because the movement is in danger. The war in Vietnam, despite its gravity is neither the last act or a costinous feature of this society. It will end eventually; and eventually could be soon. If the movement it has generated is to live beyond it, two things must happen. First, large sections of that movement must become rooted deeply, not simply in communities, but in the lives and difficulties of people. Second, it must get far enough beyond the symbolism of protest to convince ITSELF (the people in it) that it can effectively combat and resist power.

We think the effort to make a base for the movement in people's lives and in its capacity to bring tangible, real gain to those people must become the programmatic focus for large numbers of people. We must begin to develop an edge, a sharpness, a clarity about our direction that can combat the current tone of political indecisiveness that is so strong inside the anti-war movement and the overwhelming sense of dissolution that will follow the end of the war.

We do not claim the insight of orthodoxy about this program. We do not feel compelled to urge everyone to drop what they are doing and join our ranks. There is a richness and a life to the anti-war movement that laughs at orthodoxy and that we respect despite disagreement. What we do feel is that a focus is needed that can unify some of the divergent strands of the movement around a political and programmatic perspective and that can place that perspective in communities where it can grow and endure beyond today's horrible, but preliminary skirmish against human suffering.

For that we need many people. Not just people to join this program; but people throughout the movement who will look at their work from this perspective

-- the simply crying need of the movement to sink roots, to seek real confrontations with power -- and to endure -- to survive -- to live.

COMMUNITY BASED DRAFT RESISTANCE

Draft resistance is growing. The momentum the peace movement gained this summer has turned more and more towards draft resistance. "It is the one anti-war organization that really pulled together." "It is the one issue around the war that really touches people personally and desperately."

On the other hand, draft resistance groups have very different reasons for existing, and are now moving in several different directions. Some had their start in moral pacifist protest, some in a tendency towards direct violent confrontation with the establishment, some again in a longer range perspective of building a movement for social change.

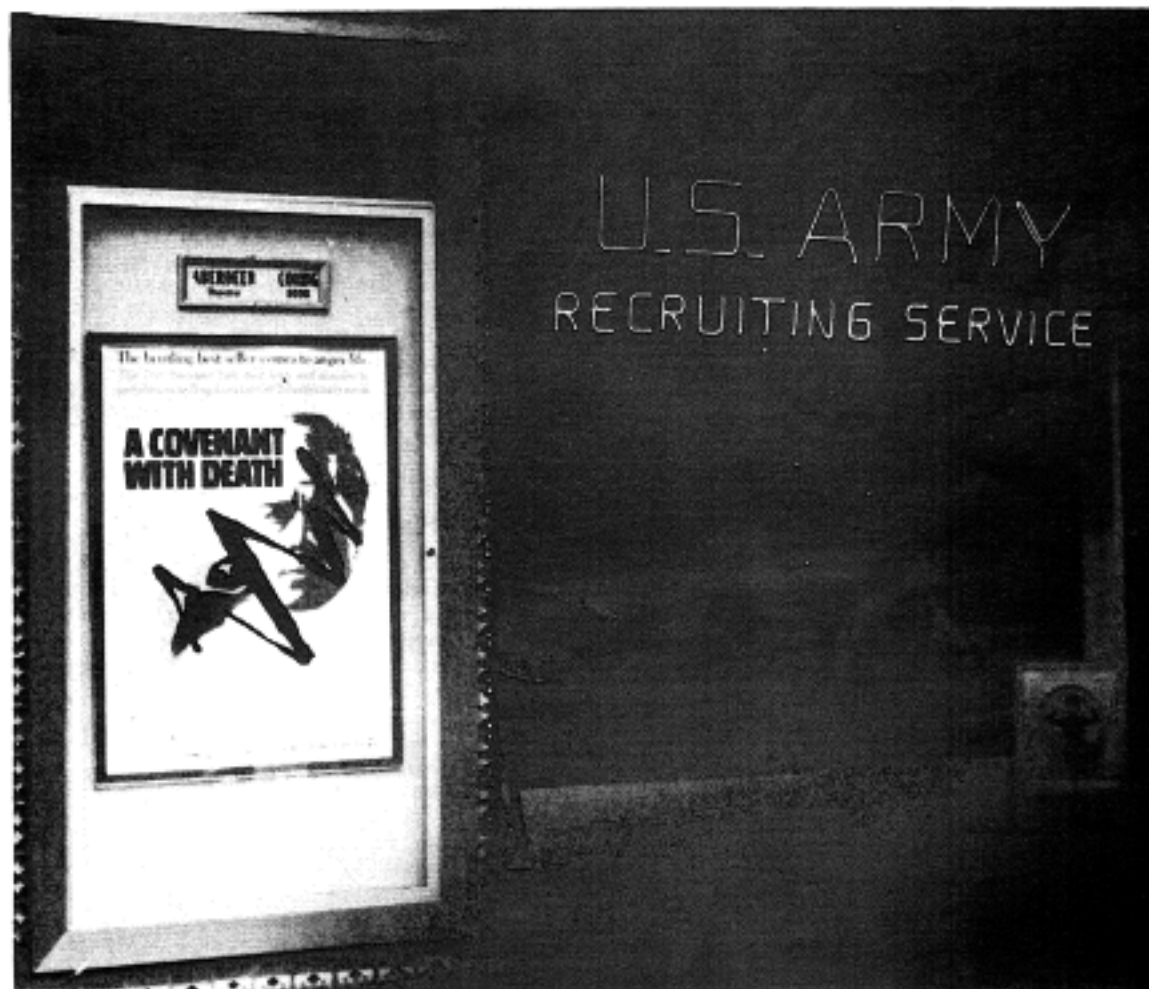
But the Vietnamese struggle for liberation continues, and the political repression of some in this country, the economic regimentation of others and the political powerlessness of many also continues. We have choices to make and a responsibility for our political actions.

Neither the skills or techniques of counselling, or the tactics of induction center demonstrations are talked about here. A direction for draft resistance is presented and a discussion of possible techniques is set out.

DISAFFECTED AREAS

Draft resistance can grow faster and more strongly in sectors of the population which are already disaffected with the war and with the political machinery

local and national. Think of black and ethnic communities, like Puerto Rican, Polish, American Indian, German,





Portugese. Think also of lower class white working class communities: less than half of these communities vote because they don't believe political leaders will do anything for them, they are generally against the war, and they are the ones primarily who are getting drafted.

On the other hand, none of these communities are particularly open to ordinary, large organization funded, top down peace propoganda programs. They have to be approached by people who settle into their own communities, are familiar with and militant about their community problems and who gain respect and credentials in their community.

These are the people who are run powerless through this society -- through the schools, the army and the jobs -- and these are the people who can form a base of power to resist the war machine. Draft resistance is the way to reach them because the draft is touching almost every one of their families. They got a reason to fight the draft. Let's talk about getting them the chance.

STUDENTS

Who are you? Some of you have roots in communities where draft resistance centers could be started, but a great many of you are students, or at least without those roots in potentially insurgent communities. Some of you are already involved in draft resistance work in student areas and don't feel you have the time or the manpower to try to reach into the community. Why should you? Haven't you got you own job to do.

Students are most often the troops of the movement, but they are not all the people. A significant resistance to the war and to the unrepresentative political machine which directs it must be based not only among students but among working people. A real resistance must last to fight against the next war like

Vietnam which the government involves us in, and to last it must have a base among people who have their own reasons for defending themselves against an oppressive social system. Since students are very often the ones with the time and background development that allows them to develop opposition to and organization against the establishment, they must be the ones to bring agitation and organization to Americans who don't have that time or background.

A lot of us have believed that these poor and working class communities are filled with super-patriots. They ARE filled with people who have fought in Korea, and with families who have lost men in Korea. Some of them support the war, and the government, blindly. But more of them know it is not being fought for them or for freedom or for our national security. They will be quick to learn what the Vietnamese people are really fighting for, and they will be quick to defend themselves and their sons against the draft. They have not been vocal against the war, because they have not had the time. They have not had the time in their whole lives. -- They were busy being processed, meeting responsibilities and making a living.

UNION PROGRAM

What follows here is a program for setting up community based draft resistance unions. It is hoped that you will move in that direction. On the other hand, many student based groups or organizers, just do not have the time or in some cases the experience to work in the community full time. In that case it makes sense to talk about a "flying" group that, during the course of its work, tries various ways of reaching out into potentially insurgent communities. In some cases, people can be found to establish community draft unions, and

In other cases enough contact can be made, enough information gathered, to follow up when organizers are available.

ORGANIZING DRAFT UNIONS

Pick the neighborhood for some good reason. Maybe you know some good, sympathetic people there who know their way around. Look for areas where a peace referendum was optimistic, where there is a ROOTED neighborhood peace group, where there are welfare rights organizations, where there is a fight with the political machine, where there have been rent strikes, where there may be an urban renewal issue or an issue of control of the schools, the hospitals or the police.

Check on the listings of men who are 1-a in the city. The draft board won't give out their addresses and if you can't trace them down then you can send them a letter through the draft board; they are required by law to forward mail to men with 1-a classifications. If you make contact with one in an insurgent neighborhood and if he wants to refuse induction or refuse to fight in Vietnam, ask him for permission to get his neighborhood out to support him. **BUT GET HIM TO DO THE WORK.** Start a leaflet campaign and a petition of support for his refusal in the neighborhood.

It is not necessary to get a storefront, if you can't afford one. Even a pair of rooms on the second floor is good enough, if you clean them up and make them look decent. Try to get the neighborhood kids to help you fix up the place. They are your base: tell them what you are there for.

LEAFLET

Leaflet the surrounding blocks, the churches, schools, community centers,

bars and barbershops, asking for permission to set up a draft information center. You should make a strong statement against the war to let people know where you stand from the first. You can say that Draft Information Centers are springing up over the country and that you, like others, want to get people to stand up in their own defense against an unjust war which is not in the American people's interest. You want to know if the people want a draft information center here. Ask them to come and tell you.

Circulate a petition getting signatures that support your right to be in the neighborhood: the right of the people to learn about alternatives to the draft and the right of people to resist the draft. Get your own views out. You'll get responses. You may have to try two or three different blocks before you get one where you can settle in with the support of enough people.

Be careful about language: if there are Puerto Ricans or Mexicans in the neighborhood, be sure to have leaflets and petitions written in Spanish.

Get to know ministers, priests, grade-school and high-school teachers. Try to set up chances to speak about the draft and/or the war.

Leaflet high-schools and trade schools. If you can find people help set up multi-issue groups in the high schools, help with "underground" high school papers. It is important to work with students you get to know, if you can, and not from the outside or from the top: the name of this movement is insurgent.

RESISTANCE CENTER

Try to make the Draft Resistance Center into a place where high school people hang around in the afternoon. We need IMAGINATION. Put speakers outside and play some good sounds. Do some skits

that people can understand. Let high-school students use the office for things they want to do: it is their union as much as it is yours. Hang newspaper pictures up, headlines, articles. Have literature on other things beside the draft which you think will develop a political consciousness and which will interest people.

Try to get into community life. Talk to people at the laundry-mats, bars, bowling alleys. Take care of babies for mothers. Try to get people to come into the center and have a cup of coffee. We're getting past the point where we can just collect like-minded people. We have to MOVE people, and to do that you got to spend the time to get to know them. In so far as you are defying the state you may want protection, and the people are the only protection you got. You better be tight with them.

Begin to get involved in other issues of community control. If you fight along side with people when they are trying to control their own lives and get what they need, they will listen to what you have to say. Draft Resistance takes on a legitimacy when it is linked to, say, community control of the schools or rent strikes. Also try to interest people you have counseled or supported at the induction center in other community fights.

Find out where the men in the community work -- ask them? -- and leaflet at their plants or shops. Talk about the war as well as the draft in the leaflet. Try to get community people to leaflet with you.

NEWSLETTER

Put out a newsletter to your community which talks not only about your own fights, but gives information about draft resistance in other parts of the country. Give it out door-to-door and distribute it at shopping centers, schools,

etc. People have to know that they are not alone in the country. They have to know that THEIR PEOPLE all over are standing up against an unfair government.

It is important to participate in peace groups and to help to set them up. Talk to them about draft resistance and draft counseling; they'll want to know the facts. They may be your strongest support group, and may give you money, materials or access to reproduction facilities. Also ethnic groups like the "Polish American Center" should be contacted; send them literature and speak to them if possible; use what tight non-establishment groups already exist.

Besides demonstrations at the induction center, try other things. If there is a demonstration against the war put out your own leaflet explaining why the Draft Resistance Union is against the war and why and how it is fighting the draft. Put out your own leaflet, explaining your own reason for support, in demonstrations of other kinds; welfare, housing, against a mayor, for a police control board, in support of black political prisoners. Anything to let people know that you are on the side of the people and to let them know that draft resistance is a legitimate and necessary way of defending yourself.

If you are good at skits, try to spring one up by surprise in a public place, like a subway station or a supermarket. Pass out leaflets, talk to people, and disappear.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Draft Resistance Unions have found it important everywhere to set up support groups among lawyers, doctors, labor union staff people, and other professionals. They can help with property bond, with legal services, with publicity contacts and with money. It has been worthwhile to spend a lot of time with each individual

in the support group, explaining your perspective and activities in order to get a stronger commitment from them. A lot of men and women who have drifted away from the old left are anxious to help new left groups. They are part of your security, don't forget them. If it is possible to get someone, a lawyer or the like, to organize that group with you, do it.

Organize adults to keep the young men in the neighborhood from enlisting or acquiescing to the draft. Another's group, a group of veterans, a group of workers -- any of these will be good at convincing young men not to go, and probably better than someone nearly their own age; they can speak from experience.

Organize young women in a group to keep young men from going and to support those men who refuse. Young women can break through a lot of the "Be a man" propaganda which lures young guys into the army. In organizing this kind of a group you want to find and help develop someone who will see themselves as an organizer, and give him or her as much of the responsibility for the group as possible. Your purpose is to spread INTR to the neighborhood.

FUND RAISING

Middle-class, professional support groups can provide some money, so can peace groups. Fundraising letters should include newsletters, sample leaflets, etc. Try to get monthly pledges. There are usually organizations around like Vietnam Summer to give a little seed money, but don't count on that. If the Draft Resistance Union is going to have a real base in the community, it must be supported mostly by the community. Don't be afraid to ask poor or working people for money: it's their fight they've got to pay as much as they can. People are more suspicious of organizations that exist

with no visible means of local support than of people who ask them for money to keep going. If you do a good job, you'll get supported. But you should also think about trying to support yourself by having some members of the union take jobs and bring home paychecks. Working will also give you both roots and credibility in the community.

GROUP STRUCTURE

Draft resistance groups, especially in the community, should see themselves as trying to get enough community people involved as organizers that some of the original organizers can set up another union in another community. Therefore, it is important that the group be run so that everyone gets experience in running meetings (rotating chairman), making decisions about demonstrations, doing door-to-door work, etc. Leadership always develops, but new people must be constantly trained to take over the duties and roles of leadership.

Since the draft resistance group is an attempt to reach into the community, it must be run so that new community people can have an equal share in making decisions and coming up with ideas. On the other hand, you do have a political point of view and it is important sometimes to just throw some people out of the group. Use your judgement; groups have been nearly destroyed by going too far in either direction.

You are a serious resister: don't vote on issues, discuss them until you can agree. All the pain of long meetings amounts to a group which knows itself well, holds together with a serious, human spirit, and any member of which can step into a role of responsibility if someone else leaves. Fight for that kind of group, because people will want to join with it; there are not many things in this country like that. Stand by each

other.

A lot of groups already formed have problems with keeping people involved. Partly that is because some of them are not in the community with the people they contact and so lose track of them, and partly it is due to a lack of organization and ideas for action. Set up functions for everyone; apportion responsibilities. Keep people on the streets reaching people, if they have nothing else to do. Don't let your people hang around the office getting frustrated and tired with each other. Organizers should organize.

If a draft resistance union is effective, it may come up against some police and legal repression. One way to avoid some of this is to plan for what leadership that does develop to leave the forefront of the project, openly at least, as soon as there are others who can do their work. They can go on to set up other groups in other communities, or they can move into other kinds of organizing -- say around control of the schools -- and work for the union quietly. Police repression is often directed at the individuals in the spotlight; if they keep disappearing and new people keep turning up as the leaders, the spokesmen on picket lines, etc., the police will have a harder time.

COMMUNITY UNIONS

Let's be straight. What's got to be done is to get the people in this country who neither support nor confront the government's misuse of power, MOVING. To do that we've got to find issues on the local level, in the community, around which people can demand control of what the political machine, or a minority of landlords and businessmen now control. If Draft Resistance Unions establish themselves genuinely in the community and find the people there who will confront the government's use of poor and working people in the war, it may be possible to form a community union which will

try to take local power.

The war in Vietnam will be over some day. There may be a lapse before the next one the government gets us into. We've got to be building the kind of multi-issue local control unions which will last and grow through that lapse, or the American people will never have a chance to run their own country; or we will have to start from nothing again to build a resistance to the next war.

While the war continues, conditions in poor and working class communities are getting tighter. Groceries for a family are costing \$25 a week instead of \$19. Credit is getting tighter. Old credit liens still have to be paid, the rent has to be paid and babies are still being born. Wages are not going up but taxes are, to pay for the war. While the war continues less and less money will go into urban programs, or poverty programs and grievances at the local level will grow louder. We've got to organize now while people are feeling the pressure of a useless and tyrannical war and knowing their own anger. We've got to get people in motion. Draft centers, in the community, can provide the beginning focus for that motion.

TALKING TO PEOPLE

Even men and women who are not part of the Labor Union movement or who do not remember its struggle to organize are close to the rhetoric of 'self-defense'. "Working people organized into unions because they were being used by bosses and companies over which they had no kind of control. They organized to get a share in that control and they got it. They also get their self-respect and a way of defending themselves." Those same men and women will respond to draft resistance if it is put to them with that same rhetoric. "We are joining together to defend ourselves and keep ourselves from being used in

a war which we don't want and which we don't think ought to be fought. -- Dying is too much for the company to ask of us." "We have a Draft Resistance UNION."

It doesn't make sense not to use our own revolutionary tradition. People with only high-school educations remember more about it than most college students. "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary..." "This country was founded on the principle that sometimes it becomes necessary for a people to resist the laws of its government because that government does not and cannot be made to represent the will and beliefs of the people. We believe this is such a time. We refuse to go..."

How many times have you heard someone say that "there never was an honest politician"? Let's consider the possibility that they mean it. People being cynical about political leaders, about voting, are just bitching. But when you link that kind of talk to an act of resistance; support of someone who refuses to go, it goes past just complaining. The same thing goes for talk about "The working man gets the raw deal, the rich man gets the easy life and don't do nothin' for it." Well, it's a rich man's war and poor and working, black and white people are getting drafted to fight it.

Nobody has said that most of the people who work for a living -- who are dependent on a weekly or bi-weekly paycheck -- are against the war. Some are and some are not at all. But the ones who are against the war are tied in all sorts of human, life-style ways to the ones who are not, to the super-patriots. Propaganda about the war is not splitting off a militant resistance to the war, but campaigns against the draft ARE. The draft is an immediate issue; a man has to act, his supporters have to decide.

Finally, we got to give people the sense that other people LIKE THEM

in other parts of the country, are beginning to move. People moving on a local level don't find out about people moving on local levels in other parts of the country, unless they burn up the city. Part of our job is to build up a network of communications, initially between local draft centers, so that people feel that their people have stopped bitching and started moving.

THE LAST THING

Anybody who has tried to organize in the U.S. knows that anti-communism is the strongest force holding a people alienated from their government in support of that government. We can begin to break through the anti-communism if we begin to talk in our literature about the way people live in Cuba and North Vietnam, in Eastern European countries and in all over the new revolutionary third world countries. We don't have to defend Chinese communism, or any other communism; we simply have to bring people to a consciousness of the particular way people live in the countries Americans have been taught to hate. We have to discuss, say, Cuban institutions for choosing leaders and directing the economy and decide whether that amounts to tyranny. It is a tyranny we are fighting against, and if there turns out not be a tyranny in Cuba, or China, then we don't have to hate those countries.

But again, education doesn't mean anything if we are not involved in real struggles. The war against the Vietnamese people continues. Our government is using and murdering our own people **WE'VE GOT TO REACH OUR OWN PEOPLE.**



TAKE A STEP INTO AMERICA

The Movement of Nov. 1967 carried a plan of action for white resistance written by a group of young white organizers. They intend to move into poor and working class white neighborhoods in a number of cities across the country, using the draft as an initial issue to build draft resistance groups and as a door opener to build a radical base in the community that is multi-issue in nature.

As a group of organizers presently working with Southern whites in Chicago and Cincinnati, we found "We've Got to Reach Our Own People: A Plan for White Resistance" encouraging. We welcome others who believe that the movement must reach white workers. We welcome those whose radical work will not remain confined to the student community where too many "radicals" often unconsciously believe what liberal America has told us — "poor and working white people are the enemy." However, on the basis of our experiences, and out of a firm belief that people must learn from movement history (does everybody have to make the same mistakes?), we take this opportunity to put forward some serious criticisms we have of "We've Got To Reach Our Own People." Furthermore, we hope that by talking about our experiences living and working in poor and working class Southern neighborhoods, others will get some glimpse of what a neighborhood is about, and give serious thought to where, other than the campus, they might work effectively as radicals.

A Neighborhood Is A Complicated Place

. . . the great iron stones of cities, people are drawn inward within their little shells of rooms, and are to be seen in their wondrous and pitiful actions through the surfaces of their lighted windows by thousands, by millions, little golden aquariums, in chairs, reading, setting tables, sewing, playing cards, not talking, talking, laughing inaudibly, mixing drinks, at radio dials, eating in shirt sleeves, carefully dressed, courting, teasing, loving, seducing, undressing, leaving the room empty in its empty light, alone and writing a letter urgently, in couples married, in separate chairs, in family parties, in gay parties, preparing for bed, preparing for sleep; and none can care, beyond that room;

and none can be cared for, by any beyond that room; and it is small wonder they are drawn together so cowardly close, . . .

James Agee,

LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN

The authors talk of establishing roots in working class communities now, so that the people there will "be approached by people who settle into their own communities, are familiar and militant about their community problems, and who gain respect and credentials in their community." This is an important and proper motivation, yet the would-be-organizer must understand that sinking roots is extremely difficult and slow, filled with the problems of people of DIFFERENT CULTURES AND AT THIS TIME DIFFERENT INTERESTS AND MOTIVATIONS checking each other out, growing together and learning to understand and live with differences. People who come out of the

radical-student-hip culture will not shed easily (even though they may desire to do so) some of what must be shed or purged if they hope to become close and deeply involved BOTH POLITICALLY AND PERSONALLY with people in poor and working class neighborhoods.

It is not just a decision of sinking roots, but one of learning, changing, teaching and being taught, and growing together with people in a community. There is good and bad in both the culture most students come from and that of the people they hope to work with. Things in both must be purged, things of both cultures learned by those from the other, and new life styles developed as people take root in each other, in an idea, developing together as radicals and as organizers. Regis Debray talks of bourgeois intellectuals, workers and peasants growing together, with extreme difficulty, in the guerilla band. It's a good point, one to be strived for, yet difficult and clearly not easily achieved, EVEN IN CUBA. Debray projects his own hopes and concerns; they are good.

People who are serious about helping a radical movement to grow among non-white collar white Americans will learn that organizing is very different from social work school courses, OEO training manuals, Alinsky speeches, articles about the movement in radical newspapers, and the important but naive prospectuses of both the early Economic Research and Action Projects and the recent "We've Got To Reach Our People."

Organizing is in part a slow, filled with personal hurts, learning and hardening process of making contacts, developing



relationships, and building overlapping networks or spiderwebs of many contacts and relationships. It is coming aware of, understanding and knowing of people known in every bar on the Avenue; guys who know most people on most corners, key hustlers in many scenes; the matriarch in a group of buildings on a block; steady workers as well as work-for-awhile-hustle-for-awhile people; first shift workers and second and third shift workers (they're very different); on-my-own people and those who are deeply involved and dependent on relationships with people of three or four extended families; young guys into cars; those into music; and those into pool halls and small-time hustles; teenagers that run with the guys and those that are into steady chick scenes; what all night restaurants of blue vinyl that catch a hodge-podge of comers on main thoroughfares are all about, as well as those restaurants with steamed windows, single brand music jukeboxes, and home-cooked-specialties where customer, waitress and owner all know one another, and if you don't, it at least reminds you of the place you hung out in your home town.

Students as Organizers

People leaving the radical student movement to make this important step will not, by and large, be able to conceal their backgrounds. NOR SHOULD THEY. Yet to be effective they can and must minimize certain traits that make it easy for new acquaintances in the neighborhood to write the organizer off as a kook or hippy (a label bestowed for many ways of being different other than just hair style or clothes). There will be many things in common, many pleasures, hardships and achievements shared between the "radical organizer" and the radicalized or organized, but it will not happen overnight. Eager radicals moving into a neighbor-

hood, anxious to share ideas and see them grow, will experience, perhaps many times, something like drinking with someone in a bar, or talking on a corner or in a kitchen, picking up and "preaching" on something said about cops or the war, only suddenly to find himself or herself being bid good-bye because they were too far out, came on too strong too quickly, hadn't been around long enough, or didn't have legitimacy. Legitimacy won't come from 4-6 or 8 years of college, superior knowledge, conceptualization or awareness; it won't come from "hey, I'm for you, don't you understand how you're being messed over?", but from how you handle yourself, and, for a long time, who the hell you know. Very simply, it takes time, care, thinking, re-thinking, and a lot of feeling silly, ignorant, lonely, isolated, and self-conscious to grow into a community and have a whole lot of people know you and trust you.

Those who intend to leave the radical student community at this time or in the near future must deal with the fact that their concerns and style have developed in a social, political, economic and cultural scene very different from the one they will face in the neighborhoods they select to live and work in. The authors of "We've Got To Reach Our People" define resistance as "an effort to impede and disrupt the functioning of the military/political machinery wherever it is local and vulnerable." Resistance, defined this way, is a political concept, with an associated style that is carried over from the student political scene WHICH THEY ARE LEAVING. A poor or working class neighborhood IS A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE FROM A UNIVERSITY. The would-be organizer will be forced to learn that good! Resistance may not be the best organizing approach at North Texas State while it might be at San Francisco State; a good organizer gets a feel for the place he is working and thinks seriously about

how to move there, learning as he makes mistakes. The same is true for the neighborhoods the authors intend to work in. They have not done their living-in research, are (by the sound of their article) not sensitive to the dynamics of the places they intend to live and work. It should be noted that NO WHERE IN THEIR PIECE DO THEY SPEAK OF LEARNING FROM THE PEOPLE THEY HOPE TO WORK WITH.

Build Consciousness, Confidence and Leadership

The writers of "We've Got To Reach Our Own People" state: "We join a resistance movement out of no great optimism about its capacity to end the war; indeed we call this a resistance, not a revolution, because entrenched power is too strong to be broken." We think radicals can be far more positive, planting seeds for a time when we don't have to talk of just impeding, but of moving toward power.

We believe that right now, in 1967 America (and let's not forget where the hell we are), the key issue is not resistance ("because entrenched power is too strong to be broken"), but the development of consciousness, confidence and leadership, and that, once again, is slow and difficult when you are working with people who are not radical intellectuals with 4-6-8 years of college like most of those who wrote the draft resistance proposal. We sight Adolfo Gilly quoting a guerilla leader in Guatemala: "our greatest problem is not the strength and arms of our enemies — though it be vast, but our need to create in our own ranks a team of activities and leaders — workers, students, peasants — who will understand the situation thoroughly and how best to take advantage of it; who will see clearly the relationship of forces, who will under-

stand the nature of our tasks and will attack them with boldness . . . Our principal task now is to organize and develop confidence," (Monthly Review, May 1965). To us that means developing friendships, trust, educating, exposing, asking questions; in short, going through slow changes with people.

Real Issues

America, how it works and messes people up in this country and all over the world, outrages us sometimes to a point where rats and roaches seem silly. But housing problems, welfare, food prices, and cops are the kind of things most people in poor and working class neighborhoods know and must deal with everyday of their lives, even though some don't like to admit it or talk about it. Some of these who are hardest to reach — "I ain't got no problems" — are the most solid members or organizers ONCE THEY'VE BEEN ORGANIZED). These issues we mention are hardly revolutionary, but what does it mean to be a revolutionary in this country? We don't have revolutionaries in this country, but we have some radicals building for a time when we can become revolutionaries.

Cops, the draft, welfare, credit, schools, housing, urban renewal, food prices, etc. are the kinds of issues that poor and working class people feel. That doesn't mean people are ready to rise up around ANY OF THEM. We have found that people willing to come together in a common struggle under any particular issue are a prize taken only after long hours, days, and weeks of battling years of conditioning by church, state and home. We work around these issues because people are aware of them and can, though not easily, become involved in working to solve them. To do so in their self interest. We work with people around such issues because they are educational; they help

people to learn, to grow, and make connections between issues — rats and roaches to urban renewal, or cops, the draft and the war to U.S. imperialism. People who become involved around these issues begin to understand them in relation to other issues that affect them or people they know. People move from saying "you complain about everything" to an understanding that "the whole damn thing is rotten." Those who develop a sophisticated understanding and assume leadership will be much more able to understand and deal with the situation of their own people as objective conditions change, and by working around these issues they help to influence conditions by articulating for others just what it is that's behind the rat race.

Being Organized

Let's get it straight: all of us understand U.S. imperialism and we hate it. Those of us who didn't learn about it while sitting on the terrace at Berkeley drinking coffee and discussing the morning coups reported in the 2½ daily New York Times learned about it because we were organized. WE WERE ORGANIZED AROUND MANY THINGS TALKED ABOUT BY RADICAL ORGANIZERS, both former students and those who never went to college. THESE WERE THE THINGS WE HAD EXPERIENCED ALL OF OUR LIVES. We have always paid high rent for crummy or small furnished apartments — and now we know it. We have always paid more for food than people in the suburbs — and now we know why. We have sisters, brothers, friends who are married and work in factories, putting in overtime to make gyp payments on plastic covered couches and gold tinted table lamps. We have all worked in low paying non-union factories. We have dealt with brutal cops all our lives (not just in recent demonstrations), and we are de-

veloping the confidence, understanding, and strategy among ourselves and others in our neighborhoods to deal with them. We have spent time in reformatories, jails and penitentiaries — two, three, four years, not summer vacations.

About two years ago guys in the neighborhood started to learn about JOIN, because it helped some people we knew: people on welfare, guys screwed by the day labor hiring halls, people evicted illegally, people needing a lawyer, guys who needed bond money. It was an OK thing; it helped poor people (although we didn't think of ourselves as poor — like poor people are winos on Wilson Avenue) but it was different and something to do. Once in awhile we'd read JOIN's newsletter that was under the door, or in a restaurant, or that was handed out on the street (and we would take reluctantly, ESPECIALLY IF WE WERE IN A GROUP). Now there is an 8 page newspaper, 10,000 copies distributed door to door. The Firing Line was two years in developing, not because of cost, but because that was HOW LONG IT TOOK FOR THE ORGANIZATION TO DEVELOP AND FOR PEOPLE TO BE ORGANIZED TO RUN IT.)

Young Guys

In the spring of 1966 young guys started to become a part of JOIN. There were a couple of guys who we'd seen around the neighborhood for awhile who started coming around the Friendship House (a now defunct, church-run recreation hall) with guys we knew. We talked, drank, played guitars. We talked about a thing called the movement, about bad buildings, cops, the war, black people, the draft; we talked about stuff that was happening round the country. These guys were organizers, like some of us are now.

In the summer 250 Southern guys marched on the police station, telling the cops, the neighborhood and the press that southern

white guys got treated as bad by the cops as Negroes and Puerto Ricans. We learned later that the march resulted in 75 cops being either fired permanently or transferred out of the district. Things slowed down for awhile around the cops — WE HADN'T ORGANIZED WELL ENOUGH. In the spring of 1967 we opened a recreation hall. It lasted awhile, we made some mistakes and eventually closed it because we ran out of money. We're trying to open another hall now. (see The Movement, June 1967).

In the winter of 1967 two of us went to the JOIN school all day Fridays along with 12 other people who were active in JOIN. We learned about urban renewal, taxes, the city machine, the educational system, the press, the war in Vietnam, AND PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT AROUND THE WORLD. We saw movies on labor (The Inheritance, etc.), some SNCC films on voter registration, Viva Zapata, Salt of the Earth, Grapes of Wrath, etc. There's a new session of the school with 10 people. Junebug is the teacher.

Indigenous Organizers

Two years ago we hung on corners, talking about chicks and faggots and cars and music; drinking and taking pills; sometimes hustling (pool, winos, queers), sometimes working in factories for awhile. Now when we meet guys in the neighborhood or MAKE CONTACT AGAIN with someone we know, we talk about a lot of the stuff we used to talk about, but we also talk about urban renewal, cops, the war, Cuba. It's important to realize that even though it isn't easy to hip neighborhood guys to all this stuff, it's easier for guys from the neighborhood or from the South to do it than for organizers who aren't from the neighborhood. That's because we know the guys better, know what they're about, and they know us and we're more trusted.

We talk about the draft. Sometimes

someone we've talked to about stuff will come around if he thinks he's getting drafted, but a lot of guys don't seem too up tight about it until they get the word. Guys have a lot of ways to stay out. Some join the Navy to avoid the Army. Others aren't registered, or didn't tell their board when they moved north. Some guys have deferments because they got a wife and kid, or support their mother, or because they've got a police record. A few of the guys we talked to about cops, the war and the draft, who ended up going in when they got drafted, are now AWOL. In general we get to know guys and they know what we're about. They come when they need you, whether it be cops, draft, or bond money. That's one reason we want to open the hall again, to get neighborhood guys together and doing stuff.

The Draft Vs Multi-Issue Organizing

The authors of "We Have To Reach Our Own People" believe that at the best the draft issue can scatter seeds across the country which will provide a foundation for a movement against foreign and domestic imperialism. But the draft, while offering a good opportunity to reach high school students before they are draft age, is strategically a weak issue, especially when used as the key element for moving into a community.

We have learned from organizing efforts against urban renewal around the country these past few years that, when the opposition was in a position to establish a time table which you had to work against or organize around, or when the opposition was in a much stronger position to take initiative action, our backs were necessarily against the wall. Urban renewal is a defensive issue; we had to organize a resistance against domestic imperialism.

The draft is a similar type of issue.

When we organized against urban renewal we always were faced with grant deadlines and meeting deadlines which we had to rush to meet. In the case of the draft the national government can take initiative action to alter the rules of the game we must play. Thus Congress held on to 2-S deferments in the face of certain massive protest from students disaffected over losing their class privilege. The effect of that action was to reduce the total effect (possible threat) of the student anti-draft movement. We could have seriously hurt the war effort if the lottery bill had passed; now we are nuisances to the government.

It is reasonable to expect that when the resistance gains greater momentum that the national government will try another move like setting up a national service: "everybody's doing for his country; if you don't like the war then join the Peace Corps." These moves by the government don't destroy our movement, but they disrupt its momentum more effectively than we can now disrupt the government's ability to carry on the war.

Furthermore, there are other issues around the war which could be tried in poor and working class communities. The organizing required to move people on such issues would be difficult, but people are talking about digging deep roots in communities. The authors mention some of these issues — union suppression in a war effort, loss of wage gains with inflation, the war tax, loss of (token) government sponsored community development funds — but don't deal with them as issues to build around.

So, multi-issue organizing not only argues that you can reach more people in a community, for it is more in line with the reality of a community, but also that single issue movements, in addition to the danger of becoming only a service, are more vulnerable to manipulation by the government.

Where Should Radicals Work?

The writers of "We've Got To Reach Our Own People" are understandably vague in their discussions of ethnicity and class. All of us in the movement — activists, organizers, and researchers (e.g., economists, anthropologists) must give a lot of thought to where working class America is located, and what it is — culturally, socially, politically and economically. For example, the authors use the terms "poor whites," "working class whites," "lower working class whites," "low paid whites," "poor and working class whites," and "lower class white working class communities." OK, what are the differences in terms of culture, job, habits, interests, sense of self as a group, aspirations, attitudes, etc.? What do these differences mean in terms of where radicals select to live and work? We must learn about them through some research, and mostly through work, discussion and self criticism.

At a time when we have only a limited number of activists making the break with the student movement, we think it is important to give a lot of thought of what whites, what ethnic groups we work with. Poles, Italians, Portuguese, Germans, Greeks? Does it make a difference? We would like to suggest that radicals start to learn about, and begin to live and work with people making up a group characterized by what we are temporarily referring to as "BASICALLY RURAL, COUNTRY AND WESTERN WHITE AMERICAN CULTURE."

What we are talking about are NON-WHITE COLLAR WORKERS (poor, transitional and working class whites) who are NOT OF EUROPEAN ETHNIC GROUP BACKGROUNDS. We are talking about a large portion of the South's 40 million white people, people who work in places like Durham, Birmingham, Memphis,



Chattanooga, Nashville and Lawrenceburg; people in the Appalachian and Border cities: Asheville, Knoxville, Wheeling, Beckley, Huntington, Charleston, Evansville, Indianapolis, Youngstown, Cincinnati, St. Louis, people in Northern cities that have concentrations of people with the culture we're talking about; cities like Detroit, Benton Harbor, Flint, Cleveland, Columbus, Hammond and Chicago; mid and southwestern cities like Kansas City, Topeka, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Omaha, Wichita, Houston and Dallas; and it includes working people on the coast with kin who came west with grapes of wrath, people who now live in Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Stockton, San Jose, Fremont, Oakland, Richmond and Sacramento.

We are not talking about an ethnic group in the sense that Negroes, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans are ethnic groups. People of this group are not economically homogeneous. However, we think the kind of people we're talking about make up a distinguishable sub-culture in America, that is articulated (and in turn shaped) by Nashville (country and western music center of the world). People in this cultural group tend to work in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, or in service industries. Large concentrations of them are located in cities. We think that when the overwhelming majority of the population lives in urban areas there is little political mileage in organizing creeks and hollows. So, when we say rural, we don't mean that's where people live now.

Discover America

Too many student radicals have a poor idea of what America is about. It's not their fault; mental pictures of the country are products of the distorting mass media. Cities like San Francisco and New York, the communication and culture centers of the country, appear hip, sophisticated and very middle class to residents and

visitors alike, yet are, in fact, overwhelmingly working class cities. Student radicals must realize that cross country jaunts, digging truck stops, a past summer spent on a ranch, digging Bonnie and Clyde, and the reading of Kerouac's ON THE ROAD, Ginsburg's "Witchita, Vor-tex, Sutra," or Tom Wolf's CANDY COLORED TANGERINE FLAKE-STREAM LINE BABY are not enough to give someone an understanding of people in this country. Probably 90% of those in the student movement have been reared, schooled and still spend 99% of their time in a middle class setting, even if it is now garnished with "groovy things."

The time has come for serious radicals to give serious attention to the people we speak of, basically with anglo-saxon protestants, the working class that is not in the European immigrant ethnic group bag. We sense it is probably the largest group of white people in the country, and the one from which the largest number of draftees are drawn. See, too many good radical kids, reared in liberal America, were falsely influenced by Amos 'n Andy — what about the Beverly Hillbillies? "Hillbillies," "white trash," "oakies," "shit kicker," "crackers," "red necks," and "ridge runners" aren't the gaunt (or even fat) characters out of a Hatfield and McCoy cartoon, singing purer versions of something the New Lost City Ramblers "preserved." They're a different trip, very large, with an essence and thrust in the society. Radicals should deal with it.

The people we speak of are not vicious racists: "There is a conventional notion that the Southern racial crisis is caused and prolonged by 'white trash' — an isolated and declining remnant in our society. We are told that rational men are attempting, within the framework of due process, to educate these minority elements to a more progressive social outlook. But this picture is shattered everyday by events in the

Black Belt. There the murderers of civil rights workers again and again include men like Byron de la Beckwith, the respected downtown businessman who shot Medgar Evers in the back. They are middle class and enjoy the broad support of their local communities."

Tom Hayden, "The Politics of 'The Movement'" in THE RADICAL PAPERS. Race is a problem, but let's blame it on capitalism and the failure of white radicals to organize among poor and working whites. We believe among whites of a rural background there is a populist consciousness that may be a factor in overcoming racism — IF ORGANIZERS ARE PRESENT. An organizer is also a teacher, and good teachers help people discover the truth.

New Projects: The Cincinnati View

We know that an organizer must operate from a position of trust with the people he or she is trying to organize. We cannot define trust or explain exactly how one gains it, but we think a certain mode of operation can help the organizer gain the trust of a community. Based on this premise, we are trying out the following model.

Rather than moving a project (office, large group of people, etc.) into a neighborhood, we think a small number of people should move into a city. These organizers should make contacts with the radical/peace/liberal people in the city, but should try to isolate themselves from these already organized folks. (From them we learned a lot about the city, regarding concentrations of hillbillies, industrial area, the power structure). Then, in order to understand the community they are going to organize, the organizers should submerge themselves in that community — the life style and culture should be understood. Besides gaining understanding,

submergence helps the organizer move freely and relate realistically to the people. The reason for a small number of organizers and the isolation from a familiar circle of friends is two-fold: 1. so a student culture is not brought into the community, for it is alienating for neighborhood people, and keeps organizers from immersing themselves in the community; and 2. the isolation and loneliness will drive the organizers into the community for friendship and fun.

One of the friendship networks important for organizers to tie into, is locating a place of work where people from the neighborhood work or frequent. For instance, men and women could work in factories where neighborhood people work; women could become waitresses in local cafes or retail clerks in local stores; men could work at the local gas station. Other places to tap into friendship networks, are your building, block, bars, pool halls, cafes, laundromats, service stations, small stores, etc. An organizer should be straight about his political views (though be careful about over organizing — giving someone a copy of the Movement, GUERRILLA WARFARE, and Ramparts all at once); it will be easier if the organizer understands the community and they trust him — someone who lives in the same place, works a similar job and has mutual friends can't be all that bad or kooky.

The Courses of Action

By building these types of relationships with people two courses of action will probably open up. Since "issues" — bad housing, police brutality, credit cheating, the draft — are daily occurrences in poor and working class communities, THE ORGANIZERS GROUP OF FRIENDS COULD BECOME THE NUCLEUS of a solid organization that begins to have actions in the neighborhood. Or if this doesn't occur, after the organizers are well estab-

lished and have some base in the community (6-12 mos.), they COULD BEGIN FORMALLY ORGANIZING — setting up an office, going door to door, passing out leaflets, having actions.

In either case the organization would grow out of a deep understanding of the community and the organizers would have some legitimacy within the community. (Contrast this with 10 students descending on a community, passing out leaflets about urban renewal or the draft). This way a solid radical vanguard could be built in and of that community. This group would deal with issues vital to that community thus creating the radicalizing experiences necessary for people to become radicals. It is important that organizers don't usurp roles that should belong to the organized, that the organization doesn't become the organizer's organization rather than the community's. Example. The JOIN theater group might be tight for a month or more; then a steady member becomes absent; skits could be performed if other organizers were used, but that deters them from their work and doesn't help in the effort to reach new people. Because the organization that would develop from either of these courses of action would be of and by people in the community IT WOULD BE MORE SOLID — BASED ON PERSONAL TRUST AND COMMITMENT — AND MORE RADICAL — BECAUSE OF THE INDEPTH ORGANIZING THAT PRECEDED THE ORGANIZATION — than one set up by a larger group of organizers who had little understanding of the community.

In choosing a neighborhood, people should use the library for census tracts, chamber of commerce reports, etc. We visited neighborhoods at night (because that's when people are on the streets). We looked for the following things: Southerners, housing conditions, amount of street life at night, the sense of community, amount of employment in the area

(preferably a large amount), amount of transiency (largely hearsay). As we narrowed down our choices we began going into bars and cafes checking the jukeboxes for country and western music and the types of music (we were interested in workers rather than wins). We made a choice — more an educated guess — on what would be the best community to organize in. Although we think we made the "right" choice, we are consciously remaining mobile in case we don't think this is that good an area.

It Isn't So Bad

Our experiences in southern neighborhoods in urban centers suggests that we can organize people into a radical community union. Our analysis of the country tells us that we must begin, somehow, reaching more poor and working whites if we are to build a powerful radical movement. So, we urge other radicals to TAKE A STEP INTO AMERICA — IT ISN'T SO BAD. Confront white America; give poor and working people an alternative to Wallace, Reagan and Kennedy; build for the revolution — it's out there!

STOP POLICE
BRUTALITY

POLICE
PROTECTION



E.R.A.P. AND HOW IT GREW

When SDS set up its Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) two days after the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, it was with a clear notion of how indigenous democratic organizations of the poor and the unemployed would contribute to major social change in America and the world.

SDS still believed in the possibility of change within the framework of the formally representative institutions of American government. ERAP's goal was to goose those institutions a bit; to set up currents in American political life which would reverse the corruption of established liberal and trade-union forces. These forces, with pressure and inspiration from ERAP and other "new insurgencies", would demand that resources be transferred from the cold war arms race to the creation of a decentralized, democratic, inter-racial welfare state at home.

Those of us involved in ERAP at that time have come a long way since. We no longer focus on the arms expenditures of what we then regarded as an "equal blame" cold war—Vietnam and the Dominican Republic unmasked for us what now seems an obvious aggressive economic imperialism. We are now enemies of welfare-state capitalism, with little faith or desire that the liberal-labor forces which might father such a system be strengthened vis-a-vis their corporatist and reactionary allies. We view these forces—and the system they might have espoused—as being incompatible with a non-interventionist world policy and as no more than a manipulative fraud perpetrated upon the dignity and humane aspirations of the American people.

This last conclusion we owe in large measure to four years of ERAP experience. In a healthy pragmatic style we tested an optimistic hypothesis about the limits of American pluralism. But after ERAP's first year and a half, when these conclusions began to become clear, we had no organizational structure for formulating and implementing subsequent hypotheses about America and building a movement to revolutionize it.

II

The hypothesis of "new insurgencies" on which ERAP was originally based was set out in "America and the New Era", a document adopted as policy by the 1963 SDS national convention.

This document assumed many of the arguments of two other 1963 statements. One, The Triple Revolution, was promulgated that winter by a coalition of liberals and radicals (including some SDS leaders). It argued that the "cybernation revolution", resulting in previously unimagined employment and leisure time; the "weaponry revolution", which threatened to obliterate the world after wasting resources worth billions of dollars; and the "human rights revolution", encompassing both Third World liberation movements and the domestic civil-rights movement, were all inter-related. Only by a curtailment of the arms race could funds become available for construction of equalitarian societies at home and abroad; only by a recognition of new opportunities presented by automation could America meet the demands of its civil-rights movement. Equal opportunity was

meaningless in a shrinking job market; the racial problem could not be dealt with unless obsolete economic arrangements were replaced. (Today's "guaranteed annual income" movement is the project of those who still accept the essentials of the Triple Revolution argument.)

The second analysis was contained in the papers of the Nyack Conference, held only a few days after the SDS adoption of America and the New Era. Ray Brown, an economist now teaching at Swarthmore, predicted that even if new job opportunities were increased at twice the 1963 rate, by 1970 unemployment would be about 13%—and astronomically higher for the young and non-white. "None of the present or proposed (Kennedy Administration) programs," Brown concluded, "amounts to more than economic tokenism." (The Nyack Conference led directly to the establishment of an organizing project among unemployed Hazard, Kentucky coal miners, a project which affiliated with ERAP when it was created some months later.)

America and the New Era added to these analyses a condemnation of the "corporatist" make-up of the Kennedy Administration and of the anti-democratic managerial solutions which it proposed. SDS described the "dilemma of labor and liberal forces" as a tendency to identify with this managerialism and a loss of the American populist tradition:

Organized liberalism, however, must take at least part of the credit for America's political stalemate. A style of politics which emphasizes cocktail part-

les and seminars rather than protest marches, local reform movements, and independent bases of power cannot achieve leverage with respect to an establishment-oriented administration and a fundamentally reactionary Congressional oligarchy.

SDS felt that within these liberal organizations (below the "middle levels of leadership") there were still people who would support more militant action and more far-reaching solutions than those proposed by the liberal leadership in bed with Kennedy. In part, rank-and-file sentiment would be galvanized by the obviously worsening economic crisis.

But just as important, the populist impulse in labor and organizations of liberalism can be reinforced by the emergence of new popular movements.... It...seems likely that popular upsurge in many communities... could provide a stimulus which would move labor to become an important center of power and leadership.... A democratic insurgency could (also) provide for many (middle-class) people a revived and inspiring vision of a humane society order—a vision that might stir them out of privatism.

Consequently, one of the chief goals of ERAP was to galvanize the quiescent populists in the ranks of labor and liberalism. The organization of the poor was, at least in part, a political public-relations maneuver designed to speak to the imagination of stable America. The first two actions of JOIN (Jobs or Income Now), the original ERAP project in Chicago, was to sell apples, a symbol of Depression unemployment. JOIN

members, recruited at an Unemployment Compensation center, sold apples first in Chicago's Loop, the center of white-collar lower-middle-class employment; and second outside a Pete Seeger concert where JOIN could be expected to reach the membership of most of the liberal organizations we were trying to galvanize.

Joe Chabot, the first ERAP organizer in Chicago, spent much of his time speaking to trade-unionists and other liberals about JOIN's activity. Fund raising was, of course, a chief motive, but the political purpose was not overlooked. A JOIN advisory committee, made up largely of Leftist trade-union staff members, was put together. The chief achievement, however, was the commitment of the United Packinghouse Workers Union to set up a recruiting office next to a South Side unemployment compensation center while Chabot established an office next to a North Side center.

Richard Flacks, writing the prospectus for the Chicago ERAP project, expressed this purpose by proposing that

leafleting and sales of apples at plant gates on pay-day will be an effective way of reminding employed workers of threats to their own job security, of arousing interest in JOIN, and of raising money. This effort will be considerably enhanced if local union leaders and shop stewards visibly assist the JOIN workers.

Flacks went on to argue that the JOIN advisory committee

can become a kind of representative body of those forces and groups within the city which can be mobilized for effective political action. Thus, the members of this group, although

acting as individuals, become centers of initiative within their own organizations and institutions. In this way, a city-wide political movement for full employment and a better Chicago may develop.... JOIN by itself cannot mobilize sufficient power to achieve social change; only a new alignment of forces in Chicago can bring this about.

Flacks was overly optimistic about the power of JOIN's example to create success for solitary Leftists who had been struggling for years to fire their labor unions with a new commitment to popular struggle. Rank-and-file assistance for plant-gate apple sales never materialized; and the JOIN advisory committee was disbanded after a year—partly because of lack of interest, but partly also because the new Vietnam peace movement was beginning to absorb some of the advisory committee members' energies.

Nonetheless, speaking truth to liberals remained a key part of ERAP organizers' program. JOIN organizers never turned down speaking engagements before liberal or church organizations (fund raising was a key, but not the sole, rationale), and made frequent attempts to involve liberals in JOIN's program—collecting clothing in the suburbs for a JOIN Christmas party, inviting the Fellowship of Reconciliation membership to do a door-to-door survey with JOIN members, accepting the most inefficient part-time volunteer arrangements from students who did not yet have a campus movement with which they could become active.

In many cases, the students who did short-term tours of duty on ERAP staffs returned to their campuses to lead university reform and Vietnam protest movements. They were, as a result of their contact with ERAP, "reinforced

in their populist impulses". The democratic, "participatory" tone of all ERAP projects has, in this respect, contributed to the emergence of a new popular movement (SNCC veterans returning to campus were, in the same fashion, much more important). But with respect to the labor movement and liberal-membership organizations, no such success could be claimed. Before too long, the attitude of most ERAP organizers toward the organizations of labor and the liberal middle class changed from one of hope to one of the deepest hostility and contempt.

In one respect, ERAP projects and rhetoric had a very deep impact on labor and liberal organizations. It is certainly true that the new liberal-labor programs of community development and "community action projects" were influenced very heavily by SDS and ERAP. The rhetoric of participatory democracy (in ERAP, "let the people decide") has transformed the War on Poverty, the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty, the Peace Corps, and the curricula of some of the major academic social-work schools. ERAP organizers are still quoted and used by VISTA, for example, for highly-paid consultant work, which ERAP organizers occasionally undertake both for the money and for the opportunity to reach VISTA volunteers who might, unlike their superiors, take the rhetoric seriously.

Thus, one of the lasting results of ERAP might have been to provide liberalism with a more sophisticated rhetoric of co-optation. This may not be an insignificant or negative achievement. Historically, one of the dangers for the American ruling class involved in the use of democratic rhetoric is that the ruled sometimes decide to take that rhetoric seriously. The Declaration of Independence, the Versailles Peace Conference, and the Atlantic Charter are but the three most obvious examples.

Nonetheless, the provision of liberalism





with a new rhetoric of co-optation was never a conscious goal of ERAP organizers. The use of ERAP rhetoric by the United Auto Workers elite in the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty is a far cry from the galvanization of the UAW rank and file to mass protest.

III

In addition to an effort as missionary to liberal-labor forces, the achievement of actual social change was a second goal of early ERAP. America and the New Era made a special point of this:

...by concentrating attention on domestic problems, and by demanding the concentration of resources on their solution, the poor and dispossessed of the United States (and every other country) could force a cessation of the arms race. The objective meaning of their demands for goods and social services would be to make continued support for massive military programs untenable.

The creation of a series of short-run social reforms was one of the priorities to be used by ERAP director Rennie Davis in choosing localities for projects, according to a resolution of the December 1963 SDS national council.

When it soon became obvious that full employment could not become such a short-range reform achieved by ERAP, a new conception of organizing projects began to develop. At first, ERAP organizers defensively described this approach as GROIN—"garbage removal or income now". But by the end of 1964, the GROIN approach was unanimous—even the Chicago project changed its name to JOIN Community Union and moved its office from next to the unemployment center to the poorest of

the Chicago North Side neighborhoods.

The issues shifted from national full employment to more local issues—Welfare administration, housing conditions, local city housekeeping issues. The original rationale was soon lost, however, as ERAP found local political structures to be so rigid that not even petty reforms, completely unthreatening to the national economic structure and distribution of resources, could be won. A film, *The Troublemakers*, details the tragic story of the Newark ERAP project's inability even to win a traffic light at a dangerous intersection. Although ERAP projects developed a facility for winning specific Welfare (public aid) grievance cases and for forcing, by rent strike, an occasional landlord to fix up, in all ten ERAP projects only two concessions were gained from the "power structure". In Cleveland, a free-lunch program was granted to the children of aid recipients who attended public school; and in Newark, a locally-elected war-on-poverty board was able to appropriate some funds for a recreation center.

ERAP organizers soon began to look at local issues as an opportunity for better education rather than for substantive reform which would begin to chip away at the defense budget and reinforce the ERAP organization with a reputation for success. Rennie Davis, in proposing a program for JOIN in October 1964, stated that an essential ingredient was a demand which would probably be denied by local officials, but which those officials clearly could meet if they so desired. Such a demand *will involve people in experiences which develop a new understanding of the society which denies them opportunities and rights, and which will open possibilities for more insurgent activity in the future.*

JOIN adopted the suggestion. It took an informal survey of its community and established that a day-care center and public spot-labor hiring agency were

the two most apparent needs. JOIN proposed these to the local war-on-poverty office and picketed that office in their behalf. Neither have been granted to this day.

IV

The third area of ERAP objectives concerned our relationship to the civil-rights movement, in which we had all worked. For it had become clear, as a result of the experiences of some SDS leaders within the Northern Student Movement, that the role of white radicals could no longer be as organizers in black communities and in black organizations—the fact that most ERAP projects were eventually placed in such communities was not originally intended: the site of the Newark project, for example, was believed to have been inhabited much more by working-class whites than was in fact the case.

In the long run, ERAP's purpose grew out of a concern that the objectives of the civil-rights movement would be frustrated by working-class white reaction. In part, thereof, our goal was to form organizations in white communities which could counter the backlash ("civilizing committees", in the recent words of the NCPN convention). But also in part, 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.

In an influential paper written in the spring of 1964—*An Inter-racial Movement of the Poor?*—Tom Hayden and Carl Wittman surveyed the civil-rights movements' lack of substantive achievement and the backlash mood developing

in the white community. Hayden and Wittman categorized four types of civil-rights demands: demands to eliminate segregation (but "the lower class Negro prefers improved schools over integrated schools, and generally improved living conditions over integrated living conditions"); demands which symbolically assert Negro dignity but neither achieve change nor alienate whites very much; demands which are specifically racial, do not achieve very much, and potentially alienate large numbers of whites (such as a demand to replace white workers with black ones in a situation of chronic unemployment); and finally, demands for political and economic changes of substantial benefit to Negroes and white poor.

Hayden and Wittman clearly favored the fourth type, and argued for the organization of poor whites as well as blacks to make such demands:

The alternative (to an inter-racial movement) is more likely to be fascism than freedom. We are not convinced that violent conflict between Negroes and lower-class whites will force the American establishment to even make significant concessions, much less dissolve itself. The Establishment might merely ignore the trouble and leave it to the local police, or it might use troops to enforce order. In either case, poor Negroes and poor whites will continue to struggle against each other instead of against the power structure that properly deserves their malice.

The feared violence was not, of course, the then-unpredicted mass violence of the black community against ghetto institutions, the then-common violence of working-class whites against Negroes

moving into new communities or attending previously all-white schools. The mass organization of whites around issues of their own oppression, ERAP hoped, would help blunt that violence.

And our hopes were that this organization of poor whites would have a second effect in the short run. It was hoped that the organization of poor whites would influence the program of the activist civil-rights movement, particularly SNCC, NSM, and to some extent CORE.

It seemed clear to SDS that the civil-rights movement was erring in not focusing on economic issues. The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom made the connection between racial oppression and national economic crisis explicit. But the targets of SNCC, for example, still remained primarily symbolic: the integration of lunch counters, movie theaters, and so on.

ERAP would make its radical economic analysis of American problems available to the civil-rights movement in two forms: first, by focusing attention on economic targets and by organizing the poor around economic issues: unemployment, housing, welfare, poverty. But second, it was felt that the organization of the white poor would of itself be a step forward in the Movement's radical consciousness: 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. Rent strikers' demands could not be met by non-economic integrationist concessions.

It seems clear in retrospect that ERAP played a significant (though not by any means the sole) role in the subsequent re-direction of the civil-rights movement. In particular, ERAP's emphasis on urban organization around issues of poverty played a part in influencing the program

development of CORE and SNCC since 1963. Much more important, of course, was the civil-rights movement's own dynamic, which, inspired by its own failures, created an economically-oriented Black Power movement which swept over and past whatever marginal influence ERAP might have had. But ERAP's role was complementary and, in this respect, should be considered a success.

Not nearly so successful was ERAP's attempt to produce massive white alliances in the struggle against white reaction. We clearly demonstrated that racism could be overcome by poor whites genuinely in motion around their own demands. JOIN in Chicago worked closely with black community groups elsewhere in the city, and the indigenous JOIN leadership, while Southern, was clearly committed to the abolition of racism as a political goal. JOIN rent strikes were co-ordinated with rent strikes in black communities; co-ordinated demonstrations of black and white Welfare recipients occurred more than once at public aid offices.

But the desperately slow pace with which JOIN grew, the inability of ERAP ultimately to commit itself to more than a few white communities, and a national war economy which temporarily reserved poverty for the black masses belied the earlier promises of white allies.

V

By the winter of 1965, ERAP organizers found themselves at a difficult juncture. The three major original purposes of ERAP—the inspiration of mass protest from the ranks of labor and liberalism; the achievement of specific, though minor, concessions to social reform; and the addition of significant numbers of poor whites to the ranks of the movement for Negro freedom—had been abandoned by most ERAP organizers. JOIN organizers, of course, retained the

third.

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. Certainly these are conclusions now shared by most of the "New Left".

The more significant question is: What new hypotheses replaced the old in the minds of ERAP organizers, and what effect did these new hypotheses have on the structure of those ERAP projects which continued to exist?

The question is revealingly difficult, because the shift from old premises to new was barely conscious and hardly ever discussed. But by the winter of 1965, if you asked most ERAP organizers what they were about, they would simply have answered: "building a movement".

There would have been little ideological disagreement about what this movement would do, once built. SDS people were rapidly coming to the conclusion that their movement must be one that could end racist exploitation and imperialism, collectivize economic decision-making, and democratize and decentralize every political, economic, and social institution in America.

These goals, however, were long-run—and quite appropriately not a problem of concern to ERAP organizers. The short-run problems of beginning to build a movement which could some day achieve the power and skill to organize society in a humane, collective, decentralist, and democratic fashion were much more difficult.

The short-run problems were these: how to develop leadership in a genuine, non-manipulative fashion; how to balance the Movement's needs to create leadership, awaken the country's (or the community's) sense of crisis, polarize

by conflict, or create institutions of local control which give people a living vision of the democracy to be; and how to choose the issues around which any of these tasks could be attempted.

Because ERAP organizers had no idea of how to make such decisions, the ERAP structure dissolved in the spring of 1965. The rationale for dissolution was that deciding whether a given project should attempt to emphasize rent strikes or leadership-training classes, community newspapers or democratic day-care centers, community issues or the War in Vietnam, depended too much on specific local information which organizers from other projects could not hope to have. In fact, however, nobody had any experience in making such decisions even within a project; and not since March 1965 had any two ERAP organizing staffs sat down together to evaluate and discuss their work.

VI

It was probably true that a national organization of half a dozen local organizing staffs could not be a forum for working out such difficult problems of movement-building. Those local ERAP staffs which continued to survive had to look to the future for the eventual creation of regional unions of organizers which could enable individual projects to deal with these decisions. But in the three years that we have thus far awaited such regional organizations, organizing projects have floundered and achieved, at best, unanticipated success.

One characteristic of projects in the last three years has been a regular re-evaluation and shifting of direction. JOIN, for example, engaged in a rent-strike campaign which had the potential of developing new institutions of local democratic control (tenant councils) through tenant-landlord collective-bargaining agreements won

after the most dramatic conflicts. But instead of seeing the implementation of these agreements through, and instead of nurturing the tenant councils into genuine democratic bodies, JOIN organizers adopted new organizing priorities soon after the rent-strike movement had begun. They began to emphasize ideological training for the handful of potential leaders in JOIN, the creation of a newspaper to increase community consciousness of conflict, and the development of democratic block clubs. The rent-strike campaign was abandoned.

Around any given activity, there would also be uncertainty about organizing purposes. Was Welfare-grievance activity undertaken to maximize the number of public-aid recipients in order to expose (and, in part, obligate) these recipients to a radical, inter-racial anti-war organization? Or was its purpose to develop a core of recipient leadership skilled in the administration of a democratic group or in the processing of grievances for other recipients? Since the development of such an indigenous leadership group could only proceed very slowly, it was in conflict with the first purpose, which permitted staff officers themselves to handle a large number of grievances rapidly and efficiently.

A third purpose might be to dramatize actual conflict at Welfare offices—getting in public fights with case-workers, belittling the offices' authority, picketing and screaming in front of public-aid headquarters. Such tactics, through newspaper publicity or the impact they made on recipients who were present, might prepare fertile ground for future organizing and consciousness; but it also might sometimes conflict with the efficient handling of grievances or the quiet development of indigenous recipient leadership.





Because ERAP organizers were generally confused about the meaning of these alternatives, they often shifted their emphasis from one to another, and then back again. The result was a failure to accomplish any of the possible movement-building purposes; if one was accomplished, it was usually inadvertent.

Lack of clarity about tactical alternatives was only one reason for the constant shift of direction on the part of community-organizing projects. Another was frustration. If rent-strike and tenant-council organizing was difficult and frustrating, it was always possible to develop a political rationale for abandoning it. It was decided, for example, that the ideological training of potential leadership was more essential at this time to the building of a movement (which is what we were chiefly about) than the development of conflict-stimulated tenant councils.

A good political analysis could always be made for such a shift—complete with showing how the shift remedied the historical errors of the Movement since the Nineteenth Century. But soon frustration with the new direction would give birth to another equally cogent political rationale—and yet another direction would be embarked upon.

If organizing staffs had been responsible to any group of organizers larger than themselves, such shifts would have become much more difficult. For example, if the JOIN staff had been responsible to the radical movement in Chicago (or earlier, to ERAP) for the development of tenant councils in Uptown, a change in that responsibility would have required a more detached and delaying debate within the Chicago movement (or ERAP). But in the absence of such an organizational context, political programs could change as quickly and irresponsibly as the whims of the organizers. And since the success of any program—whether leadership training program or rent-strike

development program or massive Welfare grievance campaign—takes longer than the development of an organizer's frustration, often no program was given a chance to succeed.

Finally, a third reason for the constant shift in organizing priorities was the fact that, in the absence of a broader Movement structure from which organizers could take direction, each organizing project had to bear the burden of history on its shoulders. Even when the perception of new political imperatives was not the product of frustration, such perception had to result in new directions, leaving unfinished business behind. A project could not decide that a given task was important without itself dropping everything else to effect that task. Thus, if JOIN was involved in the training of Welfare-recipient leadership and suddenly decided that it was politically important to focus public attention on the arbitrariness of case-workers, it could not propose that a different organizing not propose that a different organizing project assume responsibility for attention-getting Welfare demonstrations while JOIN continued in the quiet task of creating indigenous leadership. In the absence of any multi-project structure, a division of political labor was inconceivable. Any project had to sacrifice its on-going activities to whatever was the highest priority of the moment. With each project responsible only to itself, not to focus on the highest priority for the Movement as a whole was to betray the historical task of building that movement.

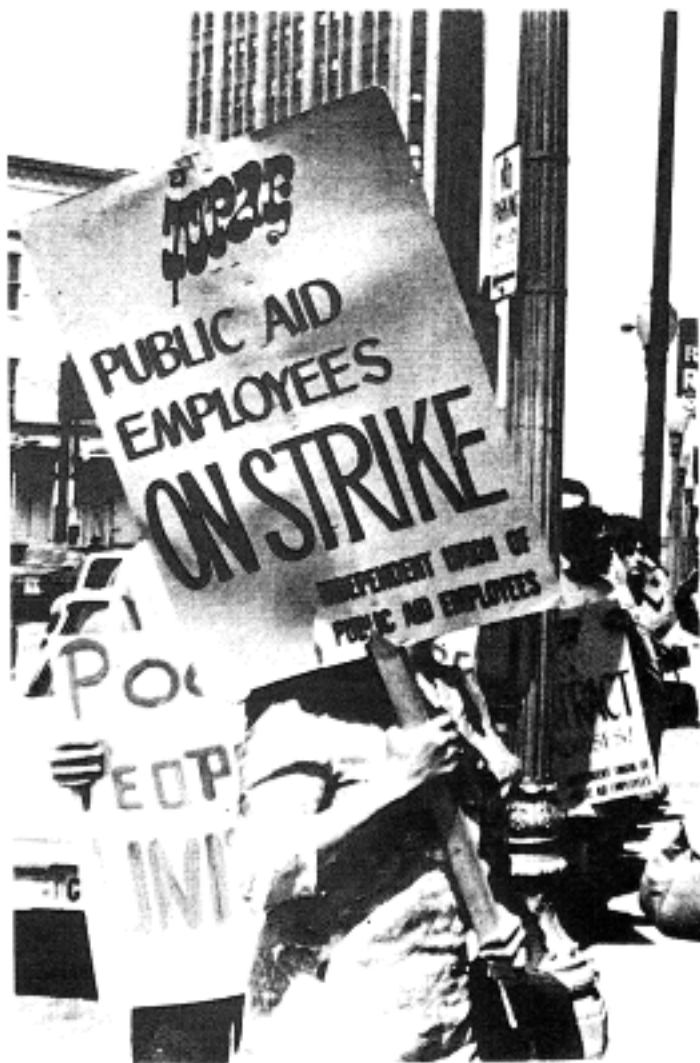
A corollary of this problem was the impossibility of experimental work. How could a project experiment with factory organizing, or consumer organizing, or draft-resistance organizing, in such a context? Experiments produce information for organizers, not necessarily mass movements. But in the absence of a broader structure, with the burden of

movement-building borne entirely by each project, experiments could not be risked. Each organizer judged his own worth and value by the extent to which he built a section of that movement. If a project experimented with draft resistance, failed, and was run out of a community, to whom could the organizers give the benefit of their experience? From whom could they hear: "You are worthy in our eyes; you have done us an invaluable service in providing us with knowledge about the possibility of working-class draft resistance." In the absence of a mandate from such a group, experiments are much too risky.

One crucial problem encountered by ERAP projects with which this paper has not dealt is the problem of dealing with personality differences on organizing staffs in a humane, firm, and political manner. A structure which the Movement will soon have to develop in addition to the structures indicated by this paper is an appropriate technique of criticism and self-criticism.

The ERAP structure was set up to test particular hypotheses about American society. When these hypotheses were abandoned, the structure suffered a similar fate. It probably could not have dealt with the new problems that organizers committed to building a revolutionary movement faced. If structure should follow function, then the demise of ERAP was as it should be.

But new problems demand new forms; Movement organizers in many kinds of work—community-organizing, professional-organizing—have faced similar problems in the last three years. It would be surprising and tragic if new Movement structures (probably on a regional basis) were not developed to deal with these new problems.





POOR WHITE RESPONSE TO BLACK REBELLION

A question put to us frequently in the past year, and over and over during the past few weeks, is where do the people in your neighborhood stand on the black rebellions? Are they ready? Which way will they go?

The question is a difficult one, and the JOIN staff cannot agree on an answer. We do not have concrete answers, but will relate some thoughts that may have bearing on the present activities and program of radicals, as well as where whites who call themselves radicals see themselves working in the next few years.

The basic assumption of the people who started JOIN, and the people working here, is that the real problems of America are Capitalism and Racism. We believe that poor people, whether they be black, white, Spanish or Indian, have a similar relationship to the dominant society and are exploited by it. Let there be no question in anyone's mind; we are well aware that black people--whether they be poor, working or even middle class--are the most exploited group in this country, but there are other groups whose position in the society might allow them to become part of a radical force. Much depends on the actions of radicals, objective conditions, and developments over the next few years. Implicit in what we say is that radical organizers in a poor white community can make a difference as to how whites view not only the actions of black people, but also their own conditions and future.

We have learned that Southern whites, dealing with issues similar to those black people confront (welfare, police brutality, housing, etc) understand the racial and

"riot" questions. As Todd Gitlin of JOIN has said, "Among the poor whites, in varying degrees, there may not be class consciousness in the traditional sense; but there is certainly a populist consciousness--of 'little people' vs. 'big people', poor against rich--which may be compelling enough to overpower even Southern-white racism." The longest active and most sophisticated community people, many people involved in one of JOIN's current organizing activities, and the most involved young guys understand why Negroes rebel and most of them identify with the riots, or at least understand them well enough to defend black people's actions.

This is not to say that the majority of Southern people in Uptown identify with, support, or are even favorable to the ghetto riots sweeping the country. The responses vary to Detroit, Newark, and the Chicago westside outbreak of a year ago. People's opinions seem to be related to the amount of contact and involvement with JOIN, although there are some unexplainable exceptions. (Some people who seem to be around for awhile, disappear, and then come back, have different opinions at different times). A young Southern hustler who is very close to us at times ("I know what you're about and I'm for it -- I just got a different angle") has told us on occasion: "I know niggers are OK, I just don't like 'em much, and I been taught that all my life." More recently he said: "well I just don't like 'em moving into my neighborhood." (relate this to real estate practices milking the area before urban renewal does its dirty work). He will add that he hates cops,

and if anything were to break out in the neighborhood he'd be in on the fighting. Another lady said "I may not like niggers, but if they came up here fighting cops, we'd have to fight with 'em."

OTHER RESPONSES

Other responses on the rebellions range from, "we got to fight those niggers." to a solid understanding of riots, and a feeling that it could happen too, for much the same reasons. It is difficult to say which way the neighborhood is weighted. However, in recent weeks, because of considerable talking going on between some organizers and young guys on corners, many of those who were bad on the race question in relation to rebellions, have moved from fighting niggers to fighting cops. There is a very real possibility that there will be a rebellion against the police. The precautionary activities of the police indicate that they are well aware of that possibility too. The scary thing is that a basically good revolt could be perverted into a classic race riot. On the other hand, if there is a riot it could be multi-racial. Our job as organizers is to try to explain black rebellions, not as race riots, but as class wars. Hopefully, that explanation will carry enough weight to make any riot here be against the real oppressors rather than the "niggers."

We would therefore like to pose two models of white response to Negro rebellions. In Detroit we have been told by contacts, and have seen in the press, that many whites were involved not only in looting, but also in fighting cops. A good



number of these whites were "hillbillies." Reports need to be checked, and research done, but we have heard that one of every ten arrested was white, and that Clifton Pryor (Southern) was white and that he was the second sniper killed. A black Detroit lady was quoted in the Chicago Sun Times saying: "This wasn't no Negro riot--it was an all of 'em riot." Good. This is the way exploited whites (and in some cases, blacks) must understand what is going on.

Now take Providence, R.I. On the night of August 1st, there was some semblance of rebellion in the black community, but whites (and they weren't southern), attacked them, screaming white power. Bad.

Which model will the press pick up? We think the latter. The press will also continue to foster the racial side of the rebellions, and not the class aspects. It is for radicals to get the true story to the public.

THE TRUE STORY

Now it must be remembered that many whites are isolated from black people. They are isolated from the black people who rebel, and their only contact is through the racist mass media. (Examples: "Hey, you hear that those guys in Detroit is coming to Chicago?" "No man. . . Who said that?" "The guy on the T.V." "You believe everything you hear or read?") Therefore, a community newspaper, basically oriented, as JOIN's THE FIRING LINE is - toward southerners, which is tied to organizing efforts, can and must take an educational line on the rebellions, and serve as an important tool in exposing the real enemy and not just Capitalism's whipping boy--the Negro. As Bobby Dylan said: "The Negro's name is held in vain and the poor white remains on the caboose of the train, he's just a pawn in the politicians' game." It's a good educational line, and it works when applied over and over, but it also means that radical

organizers must be present. Unfortunately --STILL--that is happening in very few places in the country.

BLACKS CUT OFF

Now we would like to think that some radical black organizers agree with what we have said. Unfortunately, hardly any whites are working in their own communities to build radical constituencies of poor and working whites that can relate to, and be related to by, blacks. Hence black people must increasingly orient themselves to the third world. This could be changed if a radical base can be built among poor and working whites. Right now though, let us just say it hurts our organizing efforts everytime we hear Stokely or Rap Brown talk about black power and fail to give it a class tone--such as "black people, Spanish people and poor whites are exploited by the same ogre." Yet white radicals give these black leaders no alternative. And failure to do so may cut off black leaders and foster the latent feeling among most "white radicals" that the whites, particularly poor whites, are "the enemy" (Even when that latent feeling, the result of growing up in liberal America--contradicts their analysis.)

We will close by saying that so-called white radicals, by their refusal to undertake serious organizing efforts in the poor white ghettos of America's cities, and in Appalachia and the South, are helping to kill the potential for a radical movement in America. They may be helping to make more real the genocide of black people. We have been trying to set an example of where some whites can work as radicals for several years. That example, in terms of style of organizing (community union model) has spoken to many black people, but not yet to whites. We will continue, but unless others start to move (into other areas of Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati, Appalachia, etc., etc.) we will be isolated and eventually crushed,

or just wither away.

If whites, who call themselves radicals, do not feel they can organize, they should then begin to build guerilla forces (white black panther parties for self defense). Whites must begin to move, to act now so that black people will not be isolated and crushed, and so a radical movement can begin to develop in America.





LEARN THE LESSONS OF U.S. HISTORY

Many white radicals have begun to talk about the need to organize working class whites. As one active movement figure put it, "We now see that the people we used to refer to as 'working class fascists' are the very ones we have to reach."

As we all know a large share of the credit for this new attention on the part of white radicals belongs to SNCC. Of course, even before SNCC took its stand on black power, there were some people, such as SCEF and JOIN, who felt that the main task for white radicals was organizing other whites. But SNCC, by telling its white supporters that their role should be organizing whites for the black people to form coalitions with, pushed thousands of people into a new awareness.

In my opinion, this new awareness is healthy.

However, along with this new and correct realization has come the baggage of old, unchallenged and incorrect concepts which, if allowed to prevail, will certainly undo any positive work in this field.

Among many radicals who have begun to tackle seriously the task of organizing working class whites there is an approach which shows that we - the movement as a whole - have failed to learn the lessons of U.S. history, and specifically the lessons of past experiences in large movements of downtrodden whites.

The approach I am criticizing I would summarize as follows; find the issues which immediately affect the people we are trying to reach, and which they feel most keenly. Organize around these issues and, as the people are drawn more into struggle in their own interest, they will come to see, with our help, who are their friends and enemies. Specifically, coalitions between poor white and black will develop from each fighting for his own "self-interest" and coming to see that there is a common enemy, the rich white man.

I think there is no need to cite documents for the above, as everyone involved will recognize it as a fair summary of a very popular approach.

I don't think it can succeed.

What is the greatest barrier to the

development of working class consciousness and solidarity in the U.S.? White supremacist thinking, both now and in the past.

White supremacist thinking, while it is part of a mind-set, is not a pure question of ideology. It has real roots in the practice of white supremacy, the general oppression of blacks by whites.

The Al Capones who run this country have made a deal with the labor officials and, through them, with the totality of white working people. The terms of the deal, which was a long time in the working out, are simply these; you white workers support us in our enslavement of the non-white majority of the earth's population, and we will reward you with a monopoly of skilled jobs, education and health facilities superior to those of the non-whites, the opportunity to occasionally promote one of your number out of the laboring class, social privileges and a whole series of privileges befitting your white skin.

Thus, while the ordinary white workers are severely exploited, they are also privileged. White supremacy is a deal

between the exploiters and a part of the exploited, at the expense of the rest of the exploited - in fact, the original sweet-heart agreement!

Some may argue that it can't be called a deal, since most of those participating on either side are not conscious of where they fit in, that it is more accurate to consider white supremacy as the simple and determined result of the operation of certain blind laws, as something institutionalized, beyond the control, right now, of any sector of the people involved in its workings.

Those who argue thus should consider the following question; if the bosses are always screaming about high labor costs, why don't they simply hire the cheapest labor there is, namely black and brown labor? The reason is that, for the bosses, the few cents an hour they would save in wages would be far outweighed by the growth in working class solidarity that would follow if all workers were on exactly the same footing. (For information on how the color line was erected in a single industry, in this case the cotton mill industry in the South, for the purpose of buying off the poor whites, see W. J. Cash's classic "The Mind of the South" or Broadus Mitchell's "The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South".)

Certainly, national oppression goes hand-in-hand with imperialism, but that is not to say that it is an institution, or that it should in any sense be considered too deeply entrenched to be challenged. White supremacy exists simply because sufficient numbers of white people, including white workers, have not been rallied to fight it - black people have

never stopped fighting it. And the reason why white workers have not fought white supremacy, have in fact acquiesced in and cooperated with it, is that they enjoy their privileged status.

No Self-Interest Coalitions

Now, my point of disagreement with the approach I summarized earlier is this: I don't believe it is possible to build coalitions of black and white on the basis of the self-interest of each, if the self-interest of the whites means the maintenance of white supremacy and the white-skin privilege.

I would state, from my own experience as a worker and my travels among workers, that there are very few white workers who would object to having the Negroes "brought up to our level." Most white workers would be pleased if all the black people had a decent job and a place to live, as good as the whites' anyhow.

But if there are not enough jobs to go around, then the great majority of white workers are quite willing to invoke their privilege and say "me first", thus making them active partners in the exclusion and oppression of the black people.

Under the system of private profit, all workers compete in the sale of their labor power; yet their general tendency is to unite. However, because the competition between black and white workers is not an equal one, but is weighted by the white-skin privilege, white workers have generally preferred to unite with the boss to maintain their privileges rather than unite with the black people to destroy all privilege.

And this is the rub for our movement. History shows that whenever masses of white poor have been radicalized and brought into struggle, the power structure has been able to hold out the crumb of the white-skin privilege, breaking any developing coalition and struggle.

Why Others Failed

The defeat of the great struggles of the labor movement, which began after the depression of 1873 and reached their climax in the railroad strike of 1877, can be traced to the failure of American labor, as a whole, to join with black labor in the South to preserve the democratic advances of the Reconstruction Era. In his great work, "Black Reconstruction", Du Bois put forward ideas which should make us all think long and hard. On page 353 he wrote, "The South, after the war, presented the greatest opportunity for a real national labor movement which the nation ever saw or is likely to see for many decades. Yet the labor movement, with but few exceptions, never realized the situation. It never had the intelligence or knowledge, as a whole, to see in black slavery and Reconstruction the kernel and meaning of the labor movement in the United States."

The defeat of Populism was due to its tendency to compromise with, and ultimately capitulate to white supremacist pressure to "abandon the Negro" (See Woodward biography of Tom Watson on this subject.)

The halting of the labor movement's advances at the end of the 1930's, and its reversal and defeat in the years after World War II, was due to the same failure to challenge white supremacy. If anyone doubts this, let him consider why the CIO, after having organized U.S. Steel, GM and GE by 1940, paused on the brink of the South and turned back, permitting itself to be co-opted by the Roosevelt Administration.

In the three great eras of struggle I have cited, probably the three greatest in post-Civil War history, in the final analysis the matter came down to this: the power structure was able to solve its problems with the white workers "within the family", by offering them privileges.

By accepting these privileges, the white workers turned their back not merely on their black brothers, but on the class struggle, and renounced their right to a say in their destiny.

Of course the acceptance of privilege and the maintenance of white supremacy was not in the interest of either white or black workers! The result of the overturning of Reconstruction and the defeat of Populism is the impoverished South of today. The result of the CIO's wrong turn in 1940 is the deteriorating conditions of labor and the oleomargarine unions which dominate in every industry.

The ending of white supremacy does not pose the slightest peril to the real interests of the white workers, but to their fancied interests, their counterfeit interests, their white-skin privileges.

Renouncing Privilege

Once again the signs point to an upturn in the militancy of the American workers, including the whites. And once again the white workers will be faced with a choice: unite with the black people for our common interests, including the defeat of white supremacy and the repudiation of the white-skin privilege; or unite with the boss to maintain them.

Solidarity between black and white requires more from the white than a willingness to "help the Negroes up if it doesn't lower us any." It requires a willingness to renounce our privileges, precisely to "lower ourselves" in order that we can all rise up together. If anyone says that it will be difficult to get the whites to renounce their privileges, I readily concede the difficulty - whoever said it would be easy to make a revolution? But is anyone thinks it is possible to skip this renunciation and to build coalitions between blacks and whites who want to maintain their privileges, I will point to 1877, 1904 and 1940, and say that if this

task is not tackled and achieved, we will see the same thing over again: the crisis comes, conditions worsen, the working people are radicalized, and then-defeat, because the white-skin privilege and its vile ideology were not specifically, directly, consistently and courageously denounced and renounced, in words and in deeds.

Tactics

Now, what does all this mean for our tactics? I have some suggestions:

- (1) in all our work we should bring the question of white supremacy to the fore. Thus in opposing the Viet Nam war, we should especially expose it as a racist, white supremacist war, an extension of U.S. genocidal policies toward Indians and Afro-Americans.
- (2) we should discover and take advantage of every opportunity to point out to white workers the nature of the white supremacist deal and show them how it operates against them by tying them to their enemy, the bosses.
- (3) for my third suggestion, I can do no better than to quote a memo written in June 1966 by Anne Braden to the Southern Student Organizing Committee:

"Now, the pendulum seems to be swinging the other way, and more and more white people are deciding they must reach the white Southerner . . .

"I am glad they are deciding this.

"What I disagree with is the concept that they will organize these poor white Southerners completely apart from the Negro movement -- and figure that somewhere down the road, maybe several years hence, maybe they'll get together in some sort of coalition.

"I don't think it can work that way. . .



Blacks Organize Whites

"Again to be specific, if you are going to engage in a project (rural or urban) to organize poor white people, I can see how it might be desirable (and it may happen whether you think it is desirable or not) for Negroes to be organizing the black people in that community into an independent organization. But when you go to and organize the white people I think you have to say to them in front, from the very word go, that if they are going to be effective and solve their problems they are going to have to team up with those black people over there and find terms that are acceptable to the black people to do it on, and I think you should go to these white people with teams of black and white organizers working together.

"White people may not be able to work in organizing Negro communities and may be should not -- for all the reasons stated recently . . . But I think black organizers are urgently needed to work in white communities.

"In other words, I am saying that I think you have to confront the white Southerner you are trying to reach with this whole question of racism and what it has done to him from the very beginning.

"Some may say this is impossible -- it will frighten him off and you'll never get to him. I am not saying it will be easy. We will fail many times. But I think we must begin trying in the beginning because I think if you wait it will get harder as time goes on and not easier.

"In fact, if you begin to organize groups of white people without tackling this issue in a very concrete way, I think the problem is much greater than that you will just be wasting your time. I think you may be creating a Frankenstein. . .

"As I understand it, Saul Alinsky had this experience in Chicago. He organized Negroes on the Southside -- and he organized the Back-of-the-Yards movement which was all white and poor and very oppressed. The Back-of-the-Yards movement became very strong and effective in fighting its own oppression -- but later it was the backbone of a movement to keep Negroes out of that part of Chicago . . .

"What I am saying is that we must try to avoid such mistakes by beginning in the very beginning to try to convince white people that their interest lies in teaming up with Negroes -- even if the Negroes want and are forming their own organizations. And if we hope to convince them, we must confront them with the issue as we start -- because it will get harder as people get more organized, stronger in their own organization, more solidified, etc."

I think Ann Braden's suggestions for Southern organizing apply with equal force throughout the country.

- (4) we should find and put forward slogans and issues which make concrete the repudiation of privilege, and which are tied in as closely as possible with building unity and winning real benefits. For example, in a shop which is not organized, instead of trying to organize a union around the demand of straight seniority (an obvious white-skin privilege, since it was the boss who decided whom to hire first), we should try to rally the workers around a demand like the following: a contract provision that at no time in a layoff could a greater proportion of Negroes be included than their proportion in the plant. Another provision might be that workers in the most dangerous, dirtiest departments (usually Negroes) receive a special seniority bonus. I think

these demands would appeal to the sense of fair play of working men and women.

Like SDS Draft Position

An excellent example of the practical application of my thesis is the SDS position on the draft, of opposing the draft and, at the same time, denouncing the II-S student deferment as a racial (and class) privilege whose only purpose is to divide the anti-war movement, and not merely denouncing it, but calling upon all students to renounce it. I don't want to attribute the totality of my views to SDS; I merely applaud their stand as the only honest one under the circumstances.

I don't claim to have the best tactical solutions to the problem I raise, but I do say that if all of us in the movement don't find ways to win the white workers to repudiate their white-skin privileges and oppose white supremacy, then we might as well, as one of my friends says, "piss on the fire and summon the hounds," because the hunt is over.

At this point the main thing, in my opinion, is to create a wide-spread awareness among white working people of the nature of the white supremacist deal. I am confident that the American working class, which gave birth to May Day and International Women's Day, which developed and creatively applied the tactics of the sit-in strike, roving pickets and the slow-down, will be able to come up with plenty of ways to repudiate a deal once they have decided it is in their interest to do so.

Too Moralistic?

In discussing my thesis with movement people, I have sometimes encountered the objection that my approach is a moralistic rather than a materialistic one, that it relies on idealism rather than "self-

interest". To this I answer as follows:

- (1) The "moralistic" John Brown made a far greater contribution to the struggle of labor than all of the sophisticated "Marxists" in the pre-Civil War labor movement (and there were some, even then) who shied away from directly opposing chattel slavery because, they felt, "the workers wouldn't go along."
- (2) As a worker I resent the prejudice, common among student radicals, that the workers can only be moved by narrow economic considerations while they, the students, are radicals for reasons of idealism. I point to the thousands and thousands of white workers who marched off to war for the Union singing, "As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free." And I would predict that the next few years will show that the great acts of heroism on the part of the working people will be called forth not by demands for a nickel an hour but by the "idealistic", "moralistic" slogans of the solidarity and humanity of labor.
- (3) the repudiation of the white-skin privilege is in the interests, both short and long range, of the white workers, and the only problem is to help them (and some of our radicals) see it.

"Working Class" & "Poor"

Just one more point. I notice that I use the terms "working class" and "poor" in a somewhat inter-changeable manner, which might offend some people who seem to regard them as two separate, non-overlapping categories. In this regard, perhaps I might be permitted to cite personal experience. As recently as six years ago, I was running a turret lathe in a sweatshop for \$1.15 per hour. Today, I am more highly skilled and better paid:

I make \$3.65 per hour. (According to the government, that is almost enough to maintain a family of four, exactly what I have, at what they call a "minimum adequate" standard of living.) Between the two extremes I have had various spells of unemployment, with and without compensation. Judging by certain developments within the economic sphere, such as the British devaluation of the pound and the U.S. unfavorable balance of payments, I fully expect, within the next few years, to be glad to work again for \$1.15 an hour, if I can get it. While I can clearly see the difference between a bad job and one that's not so bad, and between an unemployed worker and an employed one, I can't see a difference between working class and poor, except, perhaps, that there are other people besides workers who are poor.

