

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014

September 8, 1977

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a copy of an article, "Guardian Clubs to be organized," from the September 7 Guardian. The article describes the decision to set up clubs "within the next two months" in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. An additional five as yet unspecified cities will be added to this list. These clubs will, according to the article, be sponsoring forums and engaging in other public activities.

In cities where these clubs are being set up, we have an opportunity to engage activists around these clubs in discussions about perspectives for building a revolutionary party, and to explore the possibilities of collaboration in some actions. We ought to be present at their forums, sell them subscriptions to the Militant, urge them to support our candidates for office, and so on.

The national office would like to get reports from the branches and locals on the public activities of these Guardian Clubs in their cities and on any activities we carry out in relation to them.

Comradely,



Larry Seigle  
SWP National Office

By IRWIN SILBER  
and JACK A. SMITH

The Guardian is going ahead with its plan to build a national network of Guardian Clubs.

This idea was first projected in the final section of the Guardian's party-building supplement last June. Since that time extensive discussions have been held in the various Guardian Bureaus, with members of the Guardian Sustainer system and with other close friends. Many readers have written in with their ideas. The Guardian staff and Coordinating Committee have evaluated these discussions and the responses.

We are now convinced that a base of support for the creation of Guardian Clubs exists. Therefore, we are prepared to put before Guardian readers and supporters—and our movement as a whole—a concrete plan for building a network of Clubs based upon a common set of ideological principles and unified organizationally by its connections with this newspaper. Recognizing the difficulties of such a task, the Guardian is proceeding carefully and by stages with modest goals established for the initial phases. As each goal is achieved, the organizational process will expand.

We believe that the success of this plan to build Guardian Clubs will make a significant contribution to the party-building process by:

1. Helping to train hundreds of Marxist-Leninist cadres in some of the fundamental theoretical and practical tasks facing the communist movement.

2. Developing and projecting before our movement a general political line that can unite Marxist-Leninists.

3. Improving the quality and widening the influence of the one national Marxist-Leninist newspaper which has played a leading role in combatting modern revisionism and "left" dogmatism. Our stated objective for the future is to "broaden and deepen" the content and style of the Guardian—"broadening" by taking up the broad spectrum of questions confronting the U.S. working class and oppressed nationalities and "deepening" by bringing to bear a more precise and scientific application of Marxism-Leninism to all of these questions.

4. Building a material base for the support and growth of this newspaper.

5. Helping to overcome the spirit of localism, small circle mentality and narrow organizational outlook that continues to characterize virtually the entire antirevisionist left.

6. Playing a role in and influencing the course of development of various immediate struggles arising out of the economic and political crisis of U.S. imperialism.

The decision to proceed with building the Guardian Clubs is not arrived at lightly. For the Guardian, it means a major commitment of resources—cadre, finances, organization,

time—in order for this undertaking to succeed. The obstacles are great. Many people remain to be convinced. The general sectarianism of our movement is such that a certain spirit of competitiveness between organizations is bound to manifest itself. The vastly uneven political development of our movement tends to hold back its ability to face common theoretical and practical tasks in a mature fashion.

Nevertheless, there are many signs to indicate that these difficulties can be overcome and that a new spirit is beginning to develop in our movement.

The starting point, of course, is unity of political purpose. Without an appropriate level of political unity, there can be no common discipline, no willingness to submerge the part to the whole, no spirit of mutual confidence.

In our party-building supplement we placed before the movement 29 principles of unity which, in our opinion, can help lay the foundation for the political line of a new communist party. Originally we thought that these 29 principles would be the basis for the political unity of Guardian Clubs. However, as a result of the discussions of the past few months, we now believe that these principles in their entirety represent a level of political unity that still remains to be achieved in our movement.

We have, therefore, concentrated the political essence of those principles in 10 points which provide the basis for the political unity of Guardian Clubs. These 10 points appear on the opposite page.

On the basis of these 10 points, we propose to establish Guardian Clubs in 10 different cities over the course of the next year. Within the next two months, we plan to organize Clubs in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. In these cities there already exists a core of leading cadre who can take responsibility for initiating a local Guardian Club. We are holding discussions with readers and Guardian Sustainers in a number of other cities and will determine the exact location of the five additional cities in a short time.

Now, let us take up some of the concrete questions associated with the structure and activities of Guardian Clubs.

#### WHAT WILL GUARDIAN CLUBS DO?

The activity of Guardian Clubs will fall into three main areas.

1. **Organized study and discussion of Marxist-Leninist theory and contemporary political questions.** The study of Marxist-Leninist theory should develop in the context of a critique of modern revisionism. This is the fundamental ideological preparation for party-building, since it is the consolidation of revisionism in the Communist Party of the U.S. which has made the task of building a new party the central concern of Marxist-Leninists today. Of particular importance

will be: fundamentals of Marxist political economy, Marxist-Leninist theory of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin's analysis of imperialism and the Leninist conception of the revolutionary party.

Clubs will also take up theoretical work around certain present-day questions, such as the nature and current state of the U.S. working class, international strategic aims of imperialism, the relation between national liberation struggles and class struggles in the capitalist countries, the national question in the U.S., women's emancipation and the modern women's movement, etc.

At the beginning, the Guardian will prepare study guides around these questions. In time, some of the Clubs may be able to develop their own study guides—and possibly position papers on certain theoretical questions—which in turn would be passed on to the other Clubs in the network for their use and debate.

Another form of ideological activity will be the holding of public forums and debates on particular questions—so that Guardian Clubs will become a center for left ideological activity in those areas where they are established.

2. **Supporting and building the Guardian.** This will be the chief form of practical activity for the Clubs. Particularly important are circulation, news gathering and fund raising.

To say that "Guardian-building" is a major form of practical activity is a political judgment that today this newspaper plays a unique role in our movement and that the process of expanding its influence and securing its material base is in the interest of all genuine Marxist-Leninist forces in our movement today. Building wide support for the Guardian helps to overcome localism in our movement—precisely because it is a national newspaper basing itself on Marxism-Leninism. It also helps to overcome narrow organizational sectarianism, for if our movement can unite in support of a newspaper serving the entire left—despite political differences over one or another question—this will reflect a new level of political maturity in our ranks.

We are convinced that the potential for doubling the Guardian's present circulation of approximately 25,000 already exists—but that it will take an organized effort by people throughout the country who are motivated politically to do so. In terms of news gathering, it is already apparent how much better a newspaper the Guardian has become, how much more nationally representative, since the development of Guardian Bureaus. Guardian Clubs operating in areas where bureaus do not presently exist will further broaden and deepen the paper's news coverage. And finally fund raising is a special task these days, since the relative handful of large contributors who at one time helped support the Guardian have become even

wer in number. This means that only a broadly based network of supporters (our sustainer program proves this) can help make up the financial deficit which is built to the operation of a radical newspaper.

**3. Local political action.** We do not see Guardian Clubs replacing existing mass organizations or trying to develop a strategic concept—as a party would—for fusing Marxism-Leninism with the working-class movement. But there are a number of areas which immediate questions take on an urgency to which all Marxist-Leninists should respond. Among these are solidarity with national liberation struggles (particularly southern Africa today), affirmative action, racism, women's rights, strike support, environmental issues, antiwar issues and others. Guardian Clubs should be prepared to play some role in supporting and developing these activities in their communities as an appropriate supplement to their other tasks.

#### OUR MONTH WORKPLAN

During the first four months, each Guardian Club will be guided by the following workplan:

Theoretical work will focus on Marxist-Leninist works and on a study of the Guardian's party-building supplement. In addition, the Club would aim to hold one public meeting or forum on some political topic of broad interest in the initial months.

Guardian-building work will aim at developing a program to increase Guardian circulation in the local area. This will include investigation into current outlets, establishment of new outlets, distribution at local events, development of bundle agents, subscription drives and local promotional activity based upon news stories of interest to particular groups. The Club would also undertake to organize one fund-raising event for the Guardian during this period—house-party, cultural program or other activity.

In the area of local political work, the Club would develop one project or mass activity during this period. All members would be expected to participate to one degree or another. In our view, this focus should be around the question of the liberation struggle in southern Africa. Clubs would either join existing local coalitions and help advance their activity on the basis of the Guardian's general political line, or would help initiate such a coalition where none exists. The Guardian will supply Clubs with more detailed recommendations.

#### STRUCTURE OF GUARDIAN CLUBS

In the first stage of organization, Club size will be limited to between six and 25 people. The six represents a bare minimum for handling the principal functions of a Club. The 25 represents a maximum for the time being since it will take some time to develop the experience and organizational forms adequate to handle a larger number of members. As a result, not everyone who wants to join a Guardian Club will necessarily be able to in the beginning. After gaining some practical experience, it is expected that membership in the Clubs would be allowed to expand. Also the number of Clubs would be increased.

Criteria for membership will be based on (1) agreement with the 10 points of unity; (2) an explicit commitment to Club activity including attending membership meetings, participating in study and taking some responsibility in the Club's outreach activity; (3) a history of political activism that has demonstrated a long-term commitment to revolutionary politics and an avoidance of factionalism and sectarianism. Special attention will be paid to people with a good history of Marxist theoretical and/or mass work, workers, national minorities and women. In particular, Guardian Sustainers will be encouraged to become Club members.

During the first year at least, Clubs will operate on the basis of a fairly centralized structure with most of the guidance coming directly from the Guardian. The Guardian will select the initial leading cadre, appoint regional coordinators, issue the charters for each Club and have the final say on membership, activities and program. We consider this absolutely necessary in the beginning stages of the organization of Clubs to insure they get off on the right foot. In time, the various Clubs will assume greater organizational responsibilities.

The Clubs will not be democratic-centralist

organizations. They will not take it upon themselves to direct their members' activities in other organizations to which they may already belong nor is it expected that all political disagreements will be contained within the internal structure of the Club. At the same time, the Clubs will protect their organizational integrity and internal security in appropriate fashion.

In time, as the Clubs grow and consolidate, the democratic aspects of the structure will be strengthened. A greater degree of local authority will develop and the Clubs will have a greater say in the determination of leadership within the network. At all times, members will be free to speak, write, criticize, etc., within the general political guidelines of the Clubs.

Systematic communications between each Club and the Guardian will be established. A newsletter will be published for Club members.

During this initial period, William Ryan of the Guardian staff will function as acting Clubs coordinator and the Guardian Coordinating Committee (our highest elected body) will take ultimate political responsibility for the Clubs.

The existing Guardian Bureaus are located in cities where the Clubs will be established. These bureaus will become the Guardian Bureau subcommittee of their respective Clubs. Those present bureau members who want to become Club members will be given special consideration in view of their past activity. People will be permitted to work with the Guardian Bureau even if they are not members of the Club—as will others be able to work with other Guardian projects even if they are not Club members.

#### THE CLUBS AND OTHER GROUPS

Guardian Clubs want to establish open and mutually supportive relations with all genuine Marxist-Leninist, anti-imperialist and progressive people's organizations. They will join in coalitions and representatives will not engage in factional activities directed against such organizations. In all coalition work, Guardian Clubs will represent the Guardian's general political line as appropriate to the concrete circumstances of work and the requirements of principled coalition activity.

It is entirely possible that some members of democratic centralist organizations may want to join local Guardian Clubs on the basis of agreement with the 10 points of unity and a desire to build the Guardian. Such people must make their affiliation known to the Club leadership, for security and other reasons. In this regard we trust that fraternal Marxist-Leninist groups will respect the organizational integrity of the Guardian Clubs and that members of other organizations participating in Clubs will do

so as individuals.

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

During our discussions with Guardian Sustainers and others, some people have raised objections to the word "Club," claiming that it sounds too "tame" and suggests a lack of seriousness.

We disagree. The word "Club" has a degree of modesty to it and this is important. For while the long-range political significance of Guardian Clubs can be important, our initial effort is still relatively small. Our entire plan of development for the first year is deliberately pegged to a modest scale. We must learn to walk before we can leap.

We cannot substitute by way of a title for experience, structure, organization and

history that does not yet exist.

The Guardian has many pluses. They are bound up with the nearly 30-year history of this newspaper, the great historical strengths of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete experiences of our own movement. But these have yet to be particularized to this immediate task of creating a national network of Guardian Clubs.

When Guardian Clubs have been in existence for a while and have become a known and measurable political force, it will be time enough to evaluate the appropriateness of the word "Club." For the present, the word is appropriate to our level of development.

The success of Guardian Clubs is up to you. We need your response to this general

plan. Your questions, criticisms, suggestions, additions and amendments.

**WHO ARE YOU?**

Most of all, we need to know who is prepared to take up the task. Fill out the form printed in this section. Tell us something about yourself, your political experience, your background. Do you know others who would want to join or help found a Guardian Club in your area?

Something new is underway. No one has the vision to know precisely what the particular outgrowth of this plan will be. But we are sure that it will make its appropriate contribution to building a new communist party in our country and strengthening the general struggle against imperialism.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN GUARDIAN CLUBS**

I have read the article describing the plan for forming Guardian Clubs. I support the formation of Guardian Clubs and I am in firm agreement with the Clubs' 10 principles of unity. I would like to participate in a Guardian Club in my area, actively engaging in both the theoretical and practical work of the Club. Please contact me with details so I may be considered for membership.

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

It would be helpful if you would include with your application some information about yourself, specifically: a description of your political background and experience (if you are writing on behalf of a group, please describe in detail); what kind of work you do; what special skills or areas of expertise you have, if any, and to what extent you are prepared to play an initiating role in establishing a Guardian Club in your area. We would also like to know some of your views on the Guardian's political statement, contained in our party-building supplement, and on the Guardian Clubs plans.

A few "personal" details should be included, such as age, occupation, sex, nationality and length of time reading the Guardian.

We encourage response from people in all areas of the country. While in the initial stages Clubs are planned in 10 cities, more Clubs will be established later. Let us hear from you if you want to take part in laying the groundwork for a future Club in your area.

# 10 PRINCIPLES OF CLUB UNITY

The Guardian has put forward in its party-building supplement 29 principles which we believe constitute a sound basis for the ideological unity of Marxist-Leninists today in building a new communist party. We believe that these principles should be fought for within the party-building movement. In our view, the principles of unity for Guardian Clubs do not have to encompass all of the 29 principles. We have therefore concentrated the political essence of those principles in the following 10 points which provide the basis for the political unity of Guardian Clubs.

1. Guardian Clubs take the theoretical principles of scientific socialism as the ideological foundation for their unity.

2. Guardian Clubs are organized to take part in and help give leadership to the struggle against U.S. imperialism, the system of monopoly capitalism which rules in the U.S. and is the principal enemy of the working class and oppressed peoples and nations throughout the world.

3. Guardian Clubs hold that the contradiction between U.S. imperialism and its imperialist allies on the one hand, and the oppressed and exploited peoples and nations on the other, is the principal contradiction in the world at the present

time.

4. Guardian Clubs hold that the multinational U.S. working class is the only revolutionary class in U.S. society and that the struggle to overthrow monopoly capitalism and establish socialism must proceed on the basis of its own emancipation and under working class leadership.

5. Guardian Clubs believe that U.S. Marxist-Leninists have the following strategic tasks:

- The building of a new, multinational, anti-revisionist vanguard communist party.
- Making Marxist-Leninist theory into a material force in the class and political struggles of the present period by fusing that theory with the already existing spontaneous struggle of the working class and thereby developing the revolutionary class consciousness of the working class.

- Working to build the revolutionary alliance between the multinational U.S. working class and its firmest, most reliable allies, the oppressed nationalities and national minorities of the U.S.
- Working in and giving leadership to mass movements of the people in defense of democratic rights, against imperialist war, in solidarity with national liberation movements throughout the world.

6. Guardian Clubs see the struggle against racism, national oppression, white supremacy and great nation chauvinism as the foremost democratic

task confronting the working class. The key to working-class unity rests in winning white workers to take up the special democratic demands of the workers of the oppressed nationalities. Guardian Clubs work with and give support to the democratic struggles of the Afro-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Latino, Native American and Asian-American peoples in the U.S.

7. Guardian Clubs see the emancipation of women from the super-exploitation of capitalism and the institutionalized system of male supremacy as completely bound up with the cause of proletarian revolution; the working class will not be able to defeat monopoly capitalism unless it becomes the foremost champion of women's emancipation.

8. Guardian Clubs are firmly committed to the struggle against revisionism as the chief form of opportunism within the working-class and progressive movement in our own country and internationally. The Soviet Union is today a hegemonist superpower and the chief ideological center for revisionism internationally. Within the anti-revisionist, "new communist" movement, the dominant error has been ultra-"leftism" and sectarianism. This has expressed itself particularly in class-collaborationist stands on international questions, flunkeyism and dogmatism.

9. Guardian Clubs are based on the principle of proletarian internationalism, understanding that the cause of the emancipation of the U.S. working class and oppressed peoples throughout the world is one. The following are particular expressions of proletarian internationalism which are paramount at this time:

- Active support and solidarity with the peoples of southern Africa in the struggle for majority rule and national liberation against colonialism, white supremacist regimes, apartheid, neocolonialism and U.S. imperialism.
- Independence and self-determination for Puerto Rico.
- Solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people.
- Support for the struggles of the people of Chile, Western Sahara, Oman, East Timor, Northern Ireland and other peoples and nations fighting for their democratic rights and national liberation.
- Solidarity with socialist and newly emancipated countries, such as Albania, Angola, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Guinea-Bissau, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Laos, Mozambique and Vietnam.

10. Guardian Clubs support the general political line and world view of the Guardian and work to build its influence through public forums, promoting circulation, fund raising and other activities.