

Report to the NEC on the National Mobilization Committee

By Larry Seigle, September 16, 1968

The Administrative Committee meeting of the National Mobilization Committee held in Washington, D.C. on September 14, marked a further step on the part of Dave Dellinger and Co. away from an antiwar coalition and away from the perspectives of mass actions against the war, and towards a multi-issued, "radical" direct-action organization -- an "adult" Radical Organizing Committee (ROC). The meeting continued the evolution of this section of the antiwar coalition along the same lines indicated by the split from the Student Mobilization Committee and the Chicago Democratic Party demonstrations (see report by Lew Jones, Sept. 4, 1968).

The YSA and the SWP, along with the Student Mobilization Committee, went to the meeting with the objective of getting agreement on a fall action that would have been compatible with the decision made by the SMC to call an International Week of Solidarity -- against the war and with American GIs -- Oct. 21-27. The failure of the NMC to take any positive action in this direction makes doubly important the call by the SMC for this action.

Only a narrow section of the coalition was present in Washington. A total of about 60 people participated. Not present were SANE, AFSC, the Committee of Professions, Professors' Committees, the Du Bois Clubs and the CP youth.

Dave Dellinger and Rennie Davis proposed, in a vague and abstract way, a fall action centered around "disrupting" the elections on Nov. 5. Only two concrete proposals were actually made. The first was that there be demonstrations at the polls on election day, with special emphasis on those polling places where the major candidates vote, i.e. Minnesota, Alabama, Maine, Maryland, and New York (Nixon's residence). The "scenario" projected by Davis was one of demonstrators either preventing the candidates from voting or forcing them to pass through police lines a la Chicago. It is hard to believe that this is a serious proposal, even if considered only from the point of view of the geography involved. At the very most, it would mean an ant-Nixon action in New York City.

The second concrete proposal was to have mass rallies sometime between Nov. 2nd and Nov. 5th. The concrete decisions and plans for these actions were referred to an Administrative Committee meeting scheduled for the middle of October. The fact that a meeting at that time would be too late to organize any large action is an indication of the lack of seriousness towards any major fall action.

A proposal on structure (also presented by Rennie Davis) made perfectly clear the direction in which he and Dellinger and their grouping are headed. Under the guise of "broadening the coalition" it was proposed to completely revamp the structure of the NMC by establishing a steering committee that would be composed of officers and regional representatives (not representatives of organizations, but NMC "organizers"). Such a steering committee would undertake long-term "organizing projects." Thus the NMC would cease to be a coalition based on unity through mass action and would become a "new" movement of the type that Dellinger has been trying to create for some time.

The meeting was far from decisive because important elements of the coalition were not present. The whole question will continue to be the center of controversy in future meetings. It is quite clear, however, that there will be no mass actions this fall organized by NMC. This means that the responsibility and the opportunity for organizing the tremendously increased antiwar sentiment lies with the Student Mobilization Committee, and the local and regional coalitions that will follow the initiative of SMC.

We want to go full-steam ahead on the plans that have been made, and continue to make the concrete arrangements for the fall actions in local areas. A more complete report on the NMC, and the perspectives for the fall actions will appear in The Militant.