

Report on Antidraft Activity - Doug J., March 18, 1967

From the beginning of the antiwar movement there has been considerable talk about antidraft activity and the possibility of establishing a national organization to guide this activity. With the present draft law up for Congressional renewal and with SDS's greater and greater emphasis on antidraft projects, there has been an even more intensive discussion of the draft. Liberal student groups (NSA, ADA, etc.) as well as moderate peace groups (SANE, WSP, etc.) have issued statements against the draft. Militant Negro organizations like SNCC and CORE, reflecting the growing disenchantment with the draft and the war in the Negro community, continually condemn the draft.

With this widespread sentiment against the draft, particularly among youth, there have been a number of attempts to establish some form of national coordination for antidraft activity. There have been dozens of conferences both on the local and national level to talk about this question.

This report deals with:

- 1) The CP's attempt at two recent conferences to take advantage of this antidraft sentiment to divert the antiwar movement into reformist channels.
- 2) The relationship of the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee to antidraft activity and the Committee's current status.
- 3) SDS's projected antidraft activities for April 15th.

1) The CP and Antidraft Activity

Two conferences were recently held in New York at which the CP attempted through the "authority" of Carl Griffler, Executive Secretary of the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee to launch a national antidraft organization. These attempts have failed.

The first conference held on February 25, was called and chaired by Carl Griffler, (not formally by the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee). There were 22 people present including Fred Halstead and myself. The majority of those present were CPers or like-minded "progressives" like Donna Allen, Frank Emspak, etc.

The CPers promoted the idea of establishing a national organization to support the liberal Congressmen who have spoken out against the character of the current draft law.

Fred and I outlined our political opposition to the draft but explained that not only was it more difficult to establish unity for antidraft activity than it was for joint actions against the war, but it took the focus of protest away from our central responsibility--that of mobilizing mass sentiment against U.S. aggression in Vietnam.

Several people including Irving Beinen pointed out the "narrow and sectarian" composition of the meeting and it was finally decided that this meeting would call another broader conference.

The second conference was called under the names of Mark Lyons (American Friends Service Committee), Franklin Alexander, Tudja Crowder, (N.Y. WSP), Irving Beinen, and Carl Griffler.

This meeting was held on March 8<sup>th</sup> and about the same number of people attended although the meeting was broader. Ivanhoe Donaldson (SNCC), Elizabeth Sutherland (SNCC), Ron Clarke (National Office, CORE), and Dee Jacobson (Assistant National Secretary of SDS) were present. The meeting was chaired by Donna Allen.

The CPers and Frank Emspak were quite anxious to set up some form of national staff, newsletter, etc. The CP representative present pushed the line that antidraft "resistance" (refusal to serve, draft card burning, etc.) should be organized on the local level and that the major national task should be the formation of a "legislative coalition" to lobby against the pending draft law. The goal, he said, should be to get 40 or 50 Congressmen to vote against renewal of the law. The Worker stated in an editorial that it was "realistic" to convince so many Congressmen of the evil character of the draft that a "majority" (!) would let the current law expire and not renew it.

There was resistance, however, from SNCC, SDS, and a Chicago Women for Peace representative as well as myself to the formation of an apparatus. The only concrete results that came out of the conference was a sub-committee to look into the possibility of obtaining lawyers for a defense committee. Ricky Eisenberg (DuBois Club), Frank Emspak, Carl Griffler, Ron Clarke (CORE), and a national SDSer volunteered for this. The possibility of another meeting to discuss the idea of a youth antidraft conference in New York on April 16 following the April 15<sup>th</sup> Mobilization was loosely thrown around but nothing was nailed down.

## 2) The Fort Hood Three Defense Committee and Antidraft Activity

At the last meeting (March 15) of the steering committee of the FH3 Committee, Staughton Lynd threatened to resign because the defense committee was on the road toward becoming the "NCC of the antidraft movement." He was very upset that the Committee's staff was spending most of their time on antidraft activity. Carl Griffler, as the Executive Secretary was especially criticized. Other members of the steering committee, including Mike Stein (CP) and Irving Beinen, criticized Griffler as well.

Consequently Griffler resigned as Executive Secretary of the Committee and a sub-committee consisting of Dellinger, Stein, and Beinen was set up to find a new Executive Secretary.

Staughton Lynd agreed to remain Chairman of the Committee only if it absolutely stayed away from antidraft activity.

On top of this, the current financial situation of the Committee is very bad.

What will become of the Committee remains to be seen.

3) SDS and April 15<sup>th</sup> Antidraft Project

The President of the Cornell SDS has initiated a campaign to get as many people as possible to fill out pledge cards indicating that they will destroy their draft cards publicly at the Spring Mobilization. The idea is to make it a "mass" action and therefore the pledge is not "binding" unless 500 people sign.

With what appears to be the full support of the SDS national office the pledge has been sent to nearly every SDS chapter and "We Won't Go" group in the country and SDS campus travellers are pushing it.