

# PARTY BUILDER

## SWP Organizational Discussion Bulletin

Vol. 10, No. 1

January 1976

### REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTY TURN

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## PARTY BUILDER

The January 2-4, 1976, National Committee meeting authorized a written discussion in the *Party Builder* on implementation and organization of party building activities outlined in the report to the National Committee on Implementation of the Party Turn.

The *Party Builder* is open to all members to exchange experiences in various fields of our political activity and to put forward suggestions for making this activity more effective.

The *Party Builder* discussion is not for the purpose of determining political line; its specific purpose is to serve as a medium to aid the implementation of the decisions of the August 1975 convention and January 1976 plenum.

The *Party Builder* is now open to all members of the SWP. All contributions must be submitted on white paper in typed, triple-spaced format to the national office and should include title, author, and author's branch. Contributions must be typed 60 characters or less per line to facilitate typesetting for the bulletin.

The Political Committee suggests that contributions be held to no longer than 20 triple-spaced pages. If comrades have several topics they are writing on it would usually be more effective if they break them into separate articles.

## REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARTY TURN

By Doug Jenness

[The general line of this report was adopted unanimously by the National Committee plenum, January 2-4, 1976.]

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Comrades will recall that it was eight months ago at our May plenum when we first discussed the new stage in the political situation that required the party to make a turn. We agreed that our first task was to politically prepare the party for this turn during the preconvention discussion.

As comrades know, we began taking some steps to implement the turn prior to the convention, but it was following the convention that we really began to grapple with it concretely. The Political Committee, the city committees, and the branches have been discussing it, confronting unexpected problems, and seeing new opportunities posed by it.

This is one of the factors that led us to call a National Committee plenum sooner after a convention than we have been doing in recent years and to invite party organizers and heads of organizing committees so that we could have some collective discussion about the questions and problems that have arisen, assess how much progress we're making, where we're lagging behind, and what new steps are necessary to carry us further.

Our decision to make a turn did not arise out of some new theory about better ways of functioning and organizing but as a response to very real changes taking place in the working class. As Frank Lovell put it in our discussion in the Political Committee, "We didn't create the turn. We didn't have any say about it at all. It grew out of the world economic and political situation of capitalism. It imposed itself on us."

Jack Barnes pointed out the objective effects of this on us at the last plenum. He said, "If there is a central thesis in the political resolution, it is . . . that we are entering a new stage of the radicalization. We are in the beginning of the radicalization of the working class. A corner has been turned in the objective circumstances and the door has been opened for a new step forward in class consciousness and in the transformation of the political consciousness of American labor." [See *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 33 No. 4.]

Our discussion here today under the political report has clearly shown that events are confirming this judgement. We make no predictions in regard to the speed of this development but note its direction.

This new stage means that we have increased opportunities to do political work in wider sections of the working class and its allies—in the unions, among oppressed national minorities, women, and the youth. These are the principal targets of the ruling class attack and are the working people who we are convinced we can influence with our ideas and, most importantly, recruit.

The turn does not mean continuing to do exactly what we've been doing the last decade with the only change being larger union fractions. Rather it is taking all the party campaigns around the key political questions of the day—Angola, ERA, defense of affirmative action, busing, defense of "illegal" workers, support to the party political rights suit—and our *Militant* sales and election campaigns to the organizations, work places, and communities, where the awakening sectors of the working class live and work.

At this plenum we are launching a "Hands off Angola" campaign. We're organizing a speaking tour for Tony Thomas, will be getting out a book on the truth about Angola before the next month is over, and reporting on this campaign and the events in Angola regularly in the *Militant* and *IP*. We will draw together other organizations and individuals to sponsor protest meetings, teach-ins, picketlines, etc. There is widespread sentiment in the country against the danger of another Vietnam so the prospect exists of getting people we've been working with in the desegregation struggle, like the leaders and members of the NAACP and the Nation of Islam, to sponsor or participate in such actions. The Congressional Black Caucus, for example, has taken a stand against U.S. involvement. We should also take this issue into unions and community organizations whose members are opposed to another Vietnam.

### Desegregation Campaign

Let's take a look at our campaign in support of school desegregation. We actually started this campaign about a year ago in response to the racist offensive in Boston that was organized against busing. This work has led every single branch to establish new friends and relationships with organizations, leaders, and young militants in the Black community, and in several cities recruit Black members.

Through our collaboration with the National Student Coalition Against Racism we have been at the forefront of action on this important issue and have won wider respect as a result. This struggle has included organizing

participation in national conferences, two national marches on Boston and scores of local rallies, picketlines, teach-ins, etc. In many cities we've been able to link the struggle in Boston with local school desegregation struggles or related issues like discriminatory layoffs, housings, and cutbacks.

Also, our participation in this activity and the relationships we are establishing has led us to be more conscious about and audacious in getting involved in other struggles against racism both nationally like the Joanne Little case and locally around police brutality and defense cases. Defense of victims of racial oppression has emerged as an ever larger arena of party work. Just the list of a few of the cases we've given help to show this. There's the Delbert Tibbs defense committee in Chicago, Ray Mendoza in Milwaukee, the five Puerto Rican nationalists in New York, and the new Newark branch immediately involved itself in the Hurricane Carter defense effort. The St. Louis branch has made a major part of its branch work at this time the defense of J.B. Johnson.

Another important result of our desegregation campaign is that in some cities it has facilitated greater understanding of and involvement in the Chicano movement, as in Denver where the SCAR and the SWP have played an important role in a city-wide coalition in defense of bilingual education.

The busing issue is going to be with us for some time to come yet. There's no way that it can be brushed under the rug. And although there's no national action on the agenda now, events in Boston, Louisville, Dallas, or some other city could quickly change that. Our perspective is to continue our campaign around this issue through meetings, literature, local actions, etc.

Although we've taken initial steps in establishing ties with Black organizations we've still got a lot more to do. In the context of the present economic and political changes there are shifts taking place in Black organizations and we want to learn about them. For example, comrades in several cities have noticed changes in the Nation of Islam since the death of Elijah Muhammad and the shift in their membership policy. One shift appears to be a greater interest by them in participating in politics. We should probe this further, talk to their salespersons, get our literature into the hands of their members, involve them in forums and panels, and approach them for collaboration in common actions.

However, the organization that we've been most remiss in learning about and working with is the NAACP. On two of the key political issues around which most other Black groups have buckled, defense of affirmative action gains and busing, the NAACP has been in the forefront with legal actions and in some instances direct actions. At our convention we noted also that a younger layer of leaders are a bit more militant, and we noted that the NAACP is on a recruiting drive and is open to militants active in unions, antiracist work, etc., joining.

Being a member of the NAACP means going to meetings and social gatherings, meeting people, both leaders and rank-and-filers. Many NAACP members are members of or have contact with other groups, including unions, that militants can meet and get support for defense cases, meetings organized against police brutality, etc.

In Newark, a SCAR activist who joined the NAACP got the runaround from the campus administration of one of city's campuses about permitting SCAR to have a room for a teach-in. So she called the head of her NAACP, and he called the administration and demanded to know why they were giving one of his members a rough time. SCAR got the room.

Since the convention, we've taken initial steps to carry the busing fight into the unions. We are participating in a nationwide committee in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to wage an educational campaign in the unions around this key issue. It is excluded that any class struggle program will emerge in the teachers union that doesn't include support to the unconditional fight for school equality, including busing, and mobilizing union power to win it.

The concept behind this committee is quite simple. Wherever possible we should help establish committees in teacher union locals to carry out educational activities to convince and win other teachers to a probusing position and to participate in probusing actions. The focus of the campaign is around a resolution that would reverse the AFT's present reactionary position on the question at the convention next summer. Although we are encouraging endorsements of local AFT officials and local chapters, we especially want to take this campaign to the ranks of the union, win them to the busing position, and involve them in the campaign.

This committee is *not* a camouflage for a caucus out to remove Shanker and replace him with somebody else. It is out to educate, organize, and change the position of the AFT on this issue. We also are helping to establish a similar committee in the National Education Association (NEA).

## Women's Liberation

At the convention we discussed the growing interest in women's liberation and the increasing acceptance of socialist ideas among feminists, and decided to get more involved in the women's liberation movement.

Developments since our convention have confirmed the correctness of this, particularly widespread interest in radical and socialist ideas by hundreds of women at the NOW convention, the response to classes and talks on feminism and socialism by party speakers, and the significant response following the state ERA referendum defeats in New York and New Jersey. There is a widespread debate going on, and meetings are being held about the meaning of these setbacks and what to do about them.

We should draw three conclusions from this:

- 1) We want to participate in and help get involved in the national campaign that is emerging around the ERA. The Los Angeles Coalition for the ERA and Philadelphia NOW have called for actions on the March 6-8 weekend, and Chicago NOW has called for actions in April at the Illinois state capitol.

We should help build local coalitions in other cities too to organize ERA actions around the March 6-8 weekend, which has become a traditional time for holding women's liberation activities. The Illinois action is being projected as a national focus, and if this develops that way the local

March actions will help build it.

There was great sentiment at the CLUW convention in support of the ERA, and the convention voted to wage a campaign around ERA. We should make getting CLUW chapters involved a top priority.

If there has been a weakness in our work around the ERA it's that we've seen it solely as an issue for women's liberation organizations and CLUW. We should also take the ERA issue to all unions, and male comrades in the unions can help on this. For example, just before the plenum we received a letter from a comrade in Richmond, Virginia, who is trying to get the Human Rights Committee in his union to help organize support for an ERA rally in Richmond later this month. We should be doing more of this type of thing.

2) The second conclusion is that many more militants in the women's movement should join NOW. Every sign shows that there is tremendous sentiment in NOW chapters all over the country to do something about the ERA, including in states where it has already been ratified, and a lot of pressure is building up on the national leadership to do more. And it's clear from the NOW convention that there's a large number of young women in NOW who are radicalizing and are more open to more militant methods of struggle and to socialist ideas.

3) The third conclusion is that we should step up our classes, forums, and public talks about the relationship between feminism and socialism. Unfortunately we don't have enough national speakers available to adequately fill all the speaking requests we receive on this topic, so comrades in the branches should also work up talks and present them.

## Union Support Work and Getting into Unions

We've already indicated several examples of how we're attempting to take our key political campaigns into the unions and our plans to more systematically strengthen our efforts to do this.

There are a few other things about our union work. One is that many branches have been involved in strike support activity this fall, for example the Berkeley teachers strike, Atlanta school employees strike, and the D.C. *Washington Post* strike.

In some of the situations we've had comrades in the unions, which increased to some extent our ability to participate and take initiative in strike support activities. In D.C., however, we had no comrades in the pressmen's union, but the comrades have done an excellent job of orienting the branch toward this strike, which is receiving national attention because it's a showdown over whether or not this union will be crushed. Here's a few of the things the Washington, D.C. comrades did. They held a forum and invited leaders of the strike to speak along with a party speaker, and set up a meeting of union leaders with Ed Heisler when he was on tour. Comrades in other unions set up meetings to get support for the strike; the YSA organized a meeting for one of the strikers to speak on campus and get students to come to picket line; and comrades sold scores of *Militants* on the picketlines and at the Dec. 13 rally to strikers. The whole branch was geared up for the effort. And as comrades know, James O'Sullivan,

an, one of the picket captains, spoke at the national campaign rally here in Milwaukee.

There's another thing about this situation that we've noticed in other cities and that's the receptiveness of militant young union leaders to our support and our suggestions.

One of the issues comrades in D.C. have been discussing with members of the pressmen's union is the need for a clear position against union complicity with racist hiring practices. The reactionary history of the pressmen's union in D.C. on this issue has facilitated the *Washington Post's* attempt to divide the Black community and Black members of the union against the strikers.

At the present time we have 313 members in unions, and 27 of our 112 recruits between Sept. 1 and Dec. 1 were union members. Branch leaderships should continue to pay attention to organizing more comrades to get union jobs. Special attention should be paid to getting comrades into industrial unions, like those in the auto, steel, and electrical industries.

Some of the branches have learned this fall that a particularly good response can be found in Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and other Latino organizations and communities for our campaigns in support of Latin American political prisoners. When the government refused to let Hugo Blanco come in to do a speaking tour sponsored by USLA, we launched a very effective campaign that we plan to continue. Numerous protest meetings were held, and hundreds of thousands of people learned about this abridgement of democratic rights. So far we've got eight congress persons, seven bourgeois daily newspaper editorials, and many other prominent persons to support his admission. We want to take this case into the unions for endorsement and support, into the NAACP, NOW, La Raza Unida parties, and all the organizations and sectors that we're turning to.

## Election Campaign

Our election campaigns are one of the most effective and important ways we have of making contact and communicating with, influencing, and recruiting. It is the vehicle through which we can champion all of our other campaigns and at the same time provide a political alternative to the capitalist parties. It is not surprising that from the recruitment questionnaire we sent to organizers we learned that the category with the largest number of party recruits came from those who made their first contact with us in response to our election campaigns.

One of the interesting things about this election period is the extent to which our opponents have totally defaulted in respect to the elections. Peter Camejo gave us a little rundown in the Political Committee and hearing the whole picture was quite something. The Communist Party, after promising to announce a ticket last June, is still stalling. The International Socialists who were instrumental in the Peace and Freedom Party campaign eight years ago say they "aren't into elections" this year. The Maoist sects are abstaining. The Peoples Party has already changed presidential candidates once and is scarcely off to a sterling start. Baraka's effort to run a national Black candidate has fizzled. We, on the other hand, have a whole

year of successful campaigning behind us, reached a lot of people, and at this stage are reaping all the fruits of socialist electoral activities that our opponents have missed.

We've distributed far more literature than in any previous campaign, and a great deal of it has been distributed at demonstrations, rallies, and conferences of unionists, women, and other oppressed minorities. More than one half million Bill of Rights for Working People alone have been distributed, nearly 44,000 in Spanish. We've reached thousands directly through meetings and tours, and millions through the media coverage we've received. Particularly significant is the excellent response the campaign is receiving in the Black media. Many papers pick up our releases and run them in full. I think the weekly *Kansas City Globe* has the record for the most. There have been numerous interviews on the Black radio networks. The quantity and acceptance of this coverage is totally unprecedented in our previous campaigns.

Another notable feature of our presidential campaign is that we've made a start in getting spokespersons to testify before congressional hearings as we did with Peter Camejo at the House Select Committee on Intelligence and Ed Heisler at the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The local campaign rallies and banquets have been particularly successful in drawing people that we're working with in our unions, antiracist work, ERA campaigns, etc., and the rallies have been averaging about two or three times the number of comrades in the city. This means that we must be particularly conscious in organizing these events to eliminate even the tiniest shred of ingroupishness, to carefully plan the program, and create the best possible atmosphere for making a good impression and winning people to the movement. This includes keeping the admission costs within reason and raising funds through the collection.

A central activity of the campaign in the coming months is the drive to get on the ballot in thirty states and Washington, D.C. This is a jump from the twenty-three we were on in 1972. This is a realistic projection based on previous experience, our geographical expansion and growth. However, it will require a major effort on the part of the party.

Because of the changing moods in sections of the working class it generally gets easier to petition each year. Openly petitioning to get the party on the ballot means that we should tie our ballot work directly with political campaigning. Everybody who signs should get a copy of the Bill of Rights for Working People. Street campaigning in advance of petitioning can be tried. In general we can attempt to make petitioning as much of an inspiring political activity as possible.

We've already announced twenty-six of our local 1976 candidates in eight states, and other branches have plans to announce soon. Our local campaigns are particularly suited to helping us take our campaigns on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis to the working class and oppressed national minorities. Many of our local campaigns have begun experimenting with ways of doing this more systematically by organizing get-togethers with union contacts, door-to-door canvassing in the Black communities, etc.

## The Bethard and Garza Examples

Pat Bethard's campaign in Seattle this fall was an excellent example of how to conduct our campaigns in a way to consciously help carry the party further along in its turn.

The Seattle branch had been thinking about ways of establishing a broader relationship with the Black community even before Pat won a position in the run-off for city council. So when Pat got into the run-off the branch responded immediately by opening a store-front in the Black community to serve as a second campaign headquarters, organized some comrades to move into the area, held open campaign meetings, and made a special effort to win Black support and contacts. The branch in essence functioned as a campaign committee and the campaign became the focus of all branch work for a brief period.

Pat campaigned around every important concrete issue facing the Black community in Seattle with positions that were in sharp contrast to those of the Black Democratic incumbent. Short snappy leaflets that ordinary people could understand were distributed—about 25,000 of them. The city-wide campaign rally for Peter Camejo and a forum for Clifton DeBerry were held in the Black community. Although there was not significant recruitment right away, a periphery of Blacks was drawn around and the comrades have become much more politically oriented toward the Black community. The effort was so successful that it seemed natural to keep the headquarters open and assign comrades to establish a small branch in the area.

Although there were the special circumstances of Pat winning a favorable spot on the ballot, which helped to inspire comrades in the branch, there isn't one thing that they did that other branches can't do with local campaigns, at least during certain key phases of their campaigns. The branches will not at all times make their local campaigns the central axis of branch work but more branches should be doing it.

New York's Lower East Side branch, for example, has laid out perspectives of orienting the entire branch and its activities around Caterino Garza's campaign. Running a Puerto Rican leader of the party and a teacher unionist means that the campaign will have a national character and will serve as a model for how to take class struggle ideas to teachers. Launching this campaign in the context of the successful work we've already done in the District One school struggle where we've won influence and friends underlines its potential.

## Militant Sales and Sub Drives

We've taken some initial steps towards getting the *Militant* to the people the ruling class is radicalizing and we're turning to. The principal reason the convention lowered the sales and subscription goals this past fall was to allow greater flexibility for experimentation in getting the paper into the hands of fellow union members, people at workplaces, Black communities, housing projects, etc. In this respect we made some progress, particularly with subscriptions. Virtually all of the subscriptions sold by the

branches were in cities where we're active, rather than through trips to far away campuses. And even with the lowering of the goals the *absolute number* of papers sold at workplaces increased slightly and the *percentage* sold in the communities of oppressed minorities increased. It is in this direction that we want to continue to go in our spring drive. We are proposing similar goals—about 6,000 for the subscription drive and 7,500 for the sales drive. We're also proposing that the introductory subscription go for ten weeks instead of eight weeks as it did this past fall.

We want to launch this drive with a big campaign week beginning March 12 when we go way over our projected goals and when sales and subs are combined with getting out tens of thousands of pieces of national and local campaign literature. And then we want to keep up a campaign spirit throughout the drive. It's very important that branch executive committees lead the drive and take collective responsibility for politically motivating it.

### Division and Expansion of Branches

The political turn the party is making has necessarily meant adjustments in the size, location, and functioning of our branches. What was effective and necessary in a different period is not necessarily the best for the new political situation and in fact may be an obstacle to us taking advantage of the opportunities opening up to us.

We have found that for the new tasks that we're setting out for ourselves, of penetrating deeper and more extensively into key layers of the working class both on the job and where they live, that very large branches get in the way. They also present obstacles to the recruitment, education, and assimilation of new members and the leadership development of the membership as a whole.

As we decided at the convention we want to start applying the constitutional provision that specifies that when a branch reaches fifty members it should divide or release people for the building of branches in other cities. The corollary of this, of course, is that generally there won't be a need for huge headquarters, full-time assistant organizers, or even, in some cases where the branch is very small and just getting off the ground, a full-time organizer. Of course, a full-time organizer is something newly forming branches should work toward as quickly as possible.

We are actually facing two kinds of situations in respect to branch divisions. The first is the task of dividing up branches that are already too big and consequently are in a disadvantageous position to implement the turn. These included, for example, the East-Central branch in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, and the two Manhattan branches.

Our first step in this process began before the convention when Chicago divided and we asked the other branches to release people to help establish new branches in Newark, Baltimore, New Orleans, San Jose, and to reinforce San Diego. Although we did this, it proved insufficient in getting the large branches down to a more manageable size. So as you know, all of these branches are now at one stage or another of dividing. Four branches are being established in Los Angeles; New York is establishing the Queens-Jamaica branch, a mid-Manhattan branch, and another branch in Brooklyn; San Francisco, a Mission District branch oriented to the Latino

community; Oakland-Berkeley, the Oakland and Berkeley branches; and Boston is considering a Roxbury branch. As comrades in Los Angeles and New York particularly know, the accelerated pace of these steps has created a certain amount of turmoil and unsettledness. However, these moves are a *necessary prerequisite* for beginning to seriously implement the turn, and it's good that this process will be completed in a month or so.

Then there's a different type of division which we'll be seeing more of in the coming period. This is the kind of division that takes place as a natural organic part of carrying out the turn. This is what has occurred in Seattle where the campaign activity of the branch this fall naturally led to establishing a branch particularly oriented toward the Black community. It occurred before the branch got so big that it was already a serious roadblock to the progress of the branch. This decision was organized smoothly with a minimal city apparatus. Brooklyn has decided to take a similar step following the plenum. Houston, which grew to over fifty following the convention, is releasing people to help establish branches in San Antonio and Dallas, a decision that grows out of successful party-led regional work.

When all of the steps now in the works are completed in about a month, we'll have jumped from twenty-four branches and three locals at the time of the convention in August to thirty-nine branches and six locals. And that's just the beginning.

### What Kind of Branches

You'll notice that some of the new branches are particularly oriented to the organizations, communities and political life of oppressed national minorities. The Lower East Side branch, for example, is particularly oriented toward Puerto Ricans, East Los Angeles toward Chicanos, Mission District to Latinos, and Central Area in Seattle to Blacks. This is part of our attempt to establish deeper roots among these sectors of the working class. There could be no better measure of how well we're doing on the turn than to come to a future convention or plenum and hear a report that we have several branches whose membership and leadership are predominantly Black, Puerto Rican or Chicano, and branches where meetings are conducted bilingually or even just in Spanish.

Several comrades on the National Committee have raised the point that at this stage we should be particularly conscious of bringing forward Black, Puerto Rican, and Chicano comrades into positions of executive responsibility in the branches, as financial directors, sales directors, campaign directors, and organizers. This is very important. But we've also had to make some difficult choices. For example, Caterino Garza, who could become a Puerto Rican organizer of a branch, has been asked to be one of our major candidates this year. And several of our Black leaders are carrying heavy responsibilities in SCAR. The key thing is to be especially conscious to not overlook this other important aspect of leadership development.

There's another point about some of the smaller branches we're establishing that are oriented toward particular sections of a city. These are not "neighborhood" branches in the sense that they are primarily concerned

with the hundreds of local issues, block committees, etc., in their part of town. We're not establishing neighborhood versions of industrial branches that are concerned with organizing only one or two aspects of party work. All branches carry the party's campaigns into the organizations and struggles in their area. Of course, each small branch that's part of a city-wide local will do this differently, emphasize different campaigns, and so on.

I mentioned the Spanish-language question earlier. Unfortunately we don't have a Spanish-language organ of our own that we can sell but there are some things we can do until we get the resources and personnel to do it. We can sell the publications of our Mexican and Puerto Rican co-thinkers and *Intercontinental Press*. Houston, for example, sold 200 of *El Socialista* one month. Campaign literature can be published and distributed in Spanish. Spanish language titles in our bookstores and literature tables can be done, and Spanish-language contact classes established as has just begun in New York.

The number of new divisions, and particularly the extent of them in New York and Los Angeles, has created a new situation for the party in terms of local organizations. We'll soon have locals in six cities, and in New York and Los Angeles there will be an increase in the number of branches that are part of the locals.

A single branch in a city actually combines the functions of a branch and of a local leadership as it leads the work of that city. But when branches are divided and become significantly smaller and a local leadership is elected these functions become more differentiated. For example, the responsibilities of a branch in a local are more limited. They do not organize and lead the city-wide campaigns of the party but rather lead, organize, and implement the party's work in their particular area. Nor will all branches in a local necessarily carry out all the party campaigns equally or in the same way. Each local will have to grapple with the particular situation it faces, but all of them will have to establish authoritative city leaderships. In many ways—with all proportions guarded—they will be more like local political committees than like city-wide branch executive committees. At our next plenum we'll be better able to discuss this more concretely after we've had a few months of actual experience.

## Reach-Out to New Cities

In addition to the division of branches in cities where we are already situated we'll be expanding to new cities. Party branches are beginning to collaborate more with YSA chapters in helping to give political direction to our regional work. One thing that is changing, which is good, is that a larger share of the schedules of the regional teams are more oriented toward cities where we want to establish party branches.

The important cities where there are now at-large party members or functioning YSA locals where we are considering sending reinforcements to build party branches are Phoenix, Richmond, Indianapolis, Toledo, Cincinnati, Kansas City, and Louisville. None of these cities were covered in this fall's campaign tours, but the campaign committee is making special efforts to get Willie Mae Reid or Peter Camejo to these cities this spring.

Members of the National Committee and organizers have received correspondence relating to the Political Committee's decision to bring comrades in Toledo and Richmond into the party as at-large members. This is a bit of a shift in our policy. Generally the only at-large members in the recent period were party members recruited in branches who transferred to a city where we had no branch. The central guideline in determining this shift and how the Political Committee implements it is the prospect that the members-at-large can become the basis for new branches. We anticipate that we'll be bringing in more at-large members in the coming months.

Nearly every branch has discovered that they have more contacts around than in a long time, not only contacts from the YSA but working people who are considering joining the party without any YSA experience. This is an affirmation of the changing nature of the political situation that we've discussed. And it's leading to increased recruitment. As comrades know from looking at the statistics on party growth between Sept. 1 and Dec. 1 we have recruited 112 members; 40 of them, that is 35 percent, were not previously members of the YSA. Our goal is to continue this rate and increase it if possible.

As we get further along in carrying out the turn we can expect more contacts and recruits and should consider at our next meeting the possibility of organizing a recruitment drive with goals.

The education department is going to be making its number one priority working on new members classes and contact classes, helping to get reports out, preparing special study guides, etc. One thing that we should use more often in our recruitment work and education of provisional members is the Political Resolution, "The Decline of American Capitalism: Prospects for a Socialist Revolution," adopted by our last convention and reproduced in the November *International Socialist Review*. (Single copies are available at no cost from the *Militant* business office.) We should get it into the hands of people we're working with and discuss it with them and solicit their opinions and contributions for the *ISR*. We'll want to get reports on these classes in the national office so that they can be shared with other branches. We should bring into our recruiting activity all the planning, organization, and creativity that we can muster. The *Militant*, our election campaigns, etc., will project us as a party that is eager for people to join, welcomes new members, and is on a drive to get them.

## YSA's Campus Orientation

There are a couple of points that were discussed at the YSA convention that have a bearing on the party. The party's turn has brought into sharper relief the orientation of the YSA toward high school and college students, and the delegates there discussed how to continue and deepen this orientation, get more established on campus, and gear the chapters' activities more and more toward students.

One problem that the YSA has been discussing for some time is that the national and local financial demands on the chapters where there are party branches has led to a level of commitment that is intimidating to prospective members.



It also leads to keeping party members in the YSA who are not in school, who have no intention of going to school, and whose political activities have nothing to do with the campus work of the YSA, solely in order to meet the heavy financial responsibilities of the YSA chapters. A YSA campaign director or sales director, for example, often functions as assistant to the party directors rather than organizing this area of work for the campus. Even the YSA organizers sometimes end up being a *de facto* assistant party organizer if they are not really oriented toward the campus.

So the YSA is going to be moving in the direction of having campus leaders be YSA organizers, not necessarily having full-time YSA organizers or offices at party headquarters, releasing some party members in the YSA who aren't necessary to the student work.

This means that nationally the YSA's fund drive goal will be lower this spring, that the party expansion fund will have to cover the regional teams and that party branches will have to assume more of the expense of regional work.

## **Party Builder**

We should recognize that we are only at the beginning of the turn. We face a lot of new problems and unexpected opportunities as we deepen our implementation of it. Consequently it is important to involve the party as a whole in the discussion of these questions and share ideas. To accomplish this we propose launching the *Party Builder* following the plenum, which will be open to all members to exchange experiences in various fields of our activity and to put forward suggestions on implementation and organization of the party building activities outlined in this report.

This *Party Builder* will be different than those we've had in recent years.

In the recent past the *Builder* has been weighted heavily towards reports solicited by the national office. In this *Builder* we want to combine these very important and necessary reports with strong encouragement to party members to freely contribute their ideas, suggestions, and questions on party building.

We will launch the *Builder* with the publication of this report on Implementation of the Party Turn and the report on provisional membership.

## APPENDIX 1

### STATISTICS ON PARTY GROWTH

1. Total number recruited to SWP between Sept. 1 and Dec. 1: 112  
Total number recruited who were not previously  
YSA members, since Sept. 1: 40  
Total number recruited from YSA to SWP since Sept. 1: 72
  
2. Composition of SWP members recruited since Sept. 1:  
Number of recruits - Black: 13  
Number of recruits - Chicano: 5  
Number of recruits - other oppressed nationality: 3  
Number of recruits - women: 36  
Number of recruits - in trade unions: 27
  
3. Composition of party as a whole:  
Number of members who are Black: 64  
Number of members who are Chicano: 22  
Number of members who are Puerto Rican: 8  
Number of members who are from other oppressed  
nationality: 11  
Number of members who are women: 527  
Number of members who are in trade unions: 313
  
4. Percentage of recruits since Sept. 1 whose first  
contact with the party was:
  - A. election campaign: 19%
  - B. antiracist work: 9%
  - C. women's liberation work: 4%
  - D. union work: 6%
  - E. other: 38%
  
5. Total percentage of SWP members in YSA: 41%

## APPENDIX 2

### COMPOSITION OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP: COMPARISON OF THREE YEARS

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>
Percentage of members women	41.8%	43.3%	41.8%
Percentage of members men	58.2%	56.7%	58.2%
Percentage of members in trade unions	25.0%	30.4%	30.6%
Percentage of members in YSA	42.6%	42.8%	39.0%

Age of membership: (Slightly different categories used each year.)

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>
10.3% 20 and under		3.8% under 20	2.5% under 20
39.4 21 - 25 years		34.0 20 - 24 years	37.3 20 - 25 years
27.5 26 - 30 years		39.0 25 - 30 years	33.0 26 - 30 years
8.7 31 - 35 years		12.3 31 - 40 years	13.7 31 - 35 years
3.2 36 - 40 years		4.0 41 - 50 years	13.4 over 35 years
2.3 41 - 45 years		6.5 over 50 years	
2.1 46 - 50 years		.4 not reported	
6.5 over 50 years			

Number of years in movement: (Different categories used each year.)

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>
3.6% joined in 1973		8.6% in one year	8.0% joined in 1975
21.5 joined in 1972		45.0 in 2-4 years	49.9 joined 1971-74
21.9 joined in 1971		25.2 in 5-7 years	26.5 joined 1966-70
13.8 joined in 1970		4.5 in 8-10 yrs.	6.3 joined 1961-65
22.7 joined 1965-69		13.1 in over 10 years	9.3 joined before 1960
6.9 joined 1960-64			
9.6 joined before 1960		.6 not reported	

NOTE: These figures are taken from questionnaires tallied in March, 1973; August, 1974; and August, 1975

**MOTION ADOPTED BY NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM  
ON PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

January 3, 1976

To establish the category of provisional membership. Each new applicant for party membership, upon being approved by a majority vote in the branch to which they are applying (or by the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large), will become a provisional member for a period of three (3) months. Provisional members will have the right to attend branch meetings with voice and to receive internal bulletins. At the end of the three-month period of provisional membership, the branch (or the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large) will decide, according to the provisions in the constitution, on the applicant's membership.

This decision to become effective at the time of its publication by the Political Committee in the Party Builder.

# REPORT TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE ON IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE DECISION ON PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

January 16, 1976

by Doug Jenness

The National Committee's decision to establish the category of provisional membership flows politically from the party's experience and particular situation at this time. This situation is signified by a growing number of contacts and better prospects for recruitment. And an important aspect of this recruitment is the number of recruits who are working people and who haven't been members of the YSA. It is shown also by the expansion of the party into new cities.

However, another part of our situation is that we are not clearly seen as *the* socialists; we don't yet have clear hegemony over our opponents. Masses aren't knocking at our door, nor are we yet signing people up in large numbers at street corners. There's still resistance because it's a big step to join our organization which is a cadre organization and is different from any other kind of organization that people are familiar with. It takes a little time to become familiar with our organizational methods and accept them.

The purpose of provisional membership is to provide a *bridge* to draw people closer who are considering joining, but aren't necessarily willing to make that final commitment. It will help ease people into party membership, to help them overcome their doubts, and give people an opportunity to learn from the inside the full meaning of membership.

Provisional membership in no way implies, and must not be presented in a way to imply, that prospective members must meet a series of tests and jump over a row of hurdles. On the contrary, its purpose is to help break down barriers and resistance to membership. Nor is it some separate, second-class membership, or anything of that sort. It's really part of the procedure for the way a person joins.

Also, it's a different category than new contacts. It's a category of contacts who have reached a certain stage in their thinking in respect to joining the party and are willing to take the step of becoming provisional members, knowing that they are on the road to party membership. And it's different than sympathizers who are willing to help and contribute in different ways to the party, but who have no intention of joining. This is a valuable category which will grow.

Although the main consideration is to help build this bridge for people to join, it will also have a positive effect in making comrades more conscious and comfortable about asking people to join the party. It will help increase

confidence about the prospects for party growth, and it will help eliminate hesitations.

Many branches have already been grappling with ways of establishing a transition for contacts who are considering joining. Some of them are inviting contacts to the business parts of branch meetings and to fraction meetings.

The biggest problem with a pattern of inviting contacts to attend branch business meetings is that it could, if overdone, begin to undermine the norms of party membership, that is, the rights and responsibilities of members, and party democracy. It may not be apparent to many comrades, particularly the branch leadership, that this process is happening, because the comrades who are the most likely to be inhibited from raising questions and disagreements at branch meetings with new contacts present are the least likely to say something about it. In most cases we want to reserve attendance at branch meetings for members and provisional members, who are a category of contacts who have evolved to the stage of taking the final step towards becoming party members.

Inviting militants from the mass movement, i.e., the people our paper is named for, to fraction meetings is very good, and we'll be doing more of it as we get bigger and are more involved in the mass movement. And we will win many of them to our movement. But we must recognize that attending fraction meetings is a relatively one-sided aspect of party experience. It doesn't give militants a rounded experience of what party membership is nor the responsibilities and commitment of membership. It is insufficient as a bridge to party membership.

On implementation we propose that provisional membership be universal, i.e., that it apply to *all* applicants for party membership including members of the YSA. Although the YSA is also an important bridge to party membership in the sense that it helps familiarize people with how the Trotskyist movement functions, there are things other applicants for membership may know better than many YSA members.

And it can also be misread if the party has different provisions for applicants for party membership who are primarily students than it does for workers.

We've decided to make the duration of provisional membership for each applicant three months. If this proves to be too long or too short after we've had some experience we can review it at a plenum.

The procedure for accepting applicants for membership

is that the branch will decide by majority vote, in the absence of the applicant, whether or not to accept a person as a provisional member. When the three months is up the branch will vote again, in the absence of the provisional member, as required by the constitution, whether or not to accept that person into membership.

Provisional members will be allowed to attend branch meetings with voice and receive bulletins, but will not have the constitutionally defined responsibilities and privileges of members. That is, they can't cast decisive vote in meetings, can't be counted for determining the number of delegates for conventions, can't run for the

executive committee, won't pay initiation fees or dues, and can't be counted for per capita sustainer to the national office. Of course, provisional members from the beginning will be asked to make a regular financial contribution and to take assignments according to their means and time.

A key aspect of the implementation of this program is the education of provisional members. Especially important in this regard is for the branch leaderships to organize this education so that the greatest amount of individual attention is paid to provisional members. This may include small classes and/or assigning comrades to work with specific provisional members.

## KEY FINANCIAL TASKS

By Barbara Matson

[The following are remarks by Barbara Matson, National Financial Director, made during discussion of "Implementation of the Party Turn" at the SWP National Committee plenum, January 3, 1976.]

\* \* \*

One year ago, we met with the party organizers observing the YSA convention in St. Louis to report on a decrease in income to the party expansion fund. We outlined three steps being taken nationally to compensate for that decrease. They were: (1) Budgets were cut. The major cut was in slowing down the rate of publication of books, although all of the other budgets were trimmed in addition. (2) A national campaign was launched to raise the amount pledged by branches to the national office by one thousand dollars per month by the time of the party convention in August. (3) Branches were asked to consult with the national office before undertaking any major local expansion.

The projections for the expansion fund in 1976 are the same as they were last year. If we have the same size expansion fund, and are able to maintain the total sustainer pledged to the national office at the present level, any further cuts can be minimized.

This means it is very important to carry out the divisions and the establishment of new branches and locals with careful and prudent attention to the budgeting of overhead.

There were twenty-four branches at the time of the party convention in August. When the divisions and new branches and locals now being discussed are established, there will be thirty-nine branches and six locals.

The financial resources of the party have not increased in the same proportion. Therefore, part of setting up new branches must be finding ways to decrease the overhead. Specifically, this means finding smaller headquarters, minimizing the amount spent on improvements to the headquarters, re-evaluating the number of volunteers, and other similar ways of keeping the overhead down. Smaller facilities are adequate to meet the needs of the smaller branches we are building.

Branches should continue to consult with the national office before making any major local expansion such as the purchase of major equipment and moving the headquarters. It is expected that newly formed branches may have to temporarily lower their monthly per capita pledges to the national office while they are getting established, but this, too, should be done with consultation.

There are three areas of finances to be singled out for special attention this spring.

First, branch operating budgets were very tight over the fall months. This was reflected in an erratic performance in keeping current to the national office and departments. One of the primary objectives during the formation of new branches and divisions must be the rapid stabilization of branch operating budgets, and particularly the income

from the collection of the individual sustainer pledges.

The potential disruption of branch finances when even a few members fall behind in sustainer payments is much greater in a smaller branch. Consequently, small branches must place more emphasis on regular and timely sustainer collection. Each branch will want to work toward having all comrades regularly current to the branch and the branch regularly current on payments to the national office and its departments.

The second financial area that needs work is increasing the percentage collected of pledges made at national rallies. The Pittsburgh and Milwaukee branches were particularly successful last fall in collecting well over 90 percent of the pledges made to the party building fund at the rally in August. They were able to do this primarily through the assignment of a comrade who followed up in the branch on a weekly basis and helped plan the regular payments from comrades throughout the two-month collection period.

Such a method is needed to follow up on the collection of pledges made at the campaign rally here in Milwaukee, and it will be important for the people who have that assignment to begin collecting immediately when they return.

Third, branches have a political responsibility to help local campaign committees plan out the retirement of their present debts to the national campaign committee between now and December, 1976. The overwhelming majority of the national campaign's income is from local campaign committees and from the collections taken at national campaign rallies.

The debts from local campaign committees to the national campaign now total thousands of dollars. It will be a big task to retire these debts by December. Part of the amount owed is from collections taken recently at local rallies. Local committees will want to make the payment of this part of the debt *a priority* in the next few months.

The retirement of the older debts between now and December will require a specific budget which plans out the payments on this debt over the next eleven months. Committees will also want to consider specific fund raising projects earmarked for debt retirement.

The consequences of delaying or putting off the planning of campaign debt retirement are serious. It could result in having to raise the money after the elections are over, adding additional difficulty to the task. It is possible to avoid this with careful planning, and it should be given a lot of attention.

Finally, I want to point out that the growth in the party's membership helps both local and national finances. Each new member results in additional income to the national office. Although the national average per capita sustainer to the national office is now the same as it was one year ago, the actual monthly income to the national office has increased considerably. Growth will also help the expansion fund, and organizers who know of people who might be able to contribute to this fund should inform the national office.

