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February 5, 1975

TO ALL ORGANIZERS, BLACK WORK DIRECTORS AND AT-LARGE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Recently the Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU) dissolved itself to form, along with three other Black groups, the "February 1st Movement." February 1st is the date of one of the first civil rights sit-ins by Black students in the South during the early sixties. The three other groups which merged with YOBU to form the February 1st Movement are: the National Save and Change Black Schools Project, the Black Student Collective in New Jersey and Peoples College in Tennessee. Upon publication of its next issue, the African World, formerly YOBU's newspaper, will become the journal of the February 1st Movement. Because it is the largest and most influential of these groups, it is clear that YOBU will be the major force behind the new organization.

The first national meeting launching the February 1st Movement was held in December, 1974. As a result of this meeting, the February 1st Movement "Statement of Unity" was drawn up, outlining the organization's general program and goals. This statement points out that the February 1st Movement is an organization of Black students whose aim is building an "anti-imperialist student movement" in this country. They point to the importance of learning from the experiences of the Black student movement of the sixties.

The February 1st Movement feels there are 2 significant lessons to be learned from the student movement of the sixties:

- 1) the importance of involving students in struggles around campus issues and relating these struggles to the issues facing society as a whole, and
- 2) the importance of a successful student movement being consciously "anti-imperialist."

One passage of the February 1st Movement "Statement of Unity" states: "Students must see the need and commit themselves to struggle. For it was only through struggle that gains were made by the Black liberation movement in this country."

The February 1st Movement outlines six arenas of struggle in which it plans to involve itself: "Student struggles, Community struggles, Worker struggles, Women struggles, the struggles of Oppressed Nationalities in the U.S., and National Liberation Movements in Africa, Asia the Middle East, and Latin America."

Although a Black student organization focusing on the specific problems of Black students, the February 1st Movement plans to unite with students of other nationalities around common struggles on the campuses.

On the weekend of January 30-February 1, the first regional conference of the February 1st Movement was held in Boston for the New England area. Apparently, there are plans underway to hold similar conferences, introducing the February 1st Movement to students in other areas of the country, in the near future. In some areas, these may already have taken place.

The Boston conference was open to white students in the Boston area as well as Black and other national minority students. The keynote speakers at the conference were three national leaders of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC): Owusu Sadauki, Abdul Alkalimat, and Gene Locke. The fact that the February 1st Movement invited these particular speakers to address the conference indicates that these students are influenced, at least to some extent, by some of the Maoist-oriented Black leaders. It is clear, on the other hand, that the milieu around the February 1st Movement, at this time, are not hardened Maoists. None of their literature, for example, incorporates the Maoist rhetoric of organizations like the Congress of African People (CAP). Although unclear about how a Black student movement should be built (the February 1st Movement incorrectly holds that a prerequisite for participation in its organization and the building of the Black student movement is an "anti-imperialist consciousness"), they seem to be serious about and committed to building concrete actions on the campuses around issues like the cut-back struggles and anti-police repression campaigns. If they follow through on these plans, they will learn important lessons in how a Black student movement can be most effectively built to educate and mobilize masses of Blacks to understand the need to do away with the capitalist system.

While the February 1st Movement officially claims to have no position on the busing struggle in Boston at this point, it is clear that on this issue, they are influenced by some of the incorrect positions of Maoist-oriented Black leaders. Following the Boston regional conference, the February 1st Movement helped to build a forum on the busing struggle in Boston which was sponsored by the "Third World Coalition," a group which includes CAP and the ALSC. This coalition holds that oppressed national minorities in the Boston area need schools under community control -- completely ignoring the issue around which the struggle in Boston is being waged today: the right of Black students to utilize busing as a means of achieving an equal education in the Boston schools.

We will want to try to get local leaders of the February 1st Movement to the February 14-16 National Conference Against Racism in Boston, let them know about Student Committee activities and plans coming out of the conference, and get into discussions with them on the Boston events and our analysis of them.

In general, we want to take a friendly attitude toward the February 1st Movement, involving our comrades in February 1st Movement-initiated actions and activities around issues such as protests against budget cutbacks in education, etc. An organization such as this one has the potential of attracting Black students who want to do something about the deepening economic crisis and stepped-up government attacks on the Black movement. This would be a positive

development. If the February 1st Movement carries out its stated intentions of building itself on the campuses and getting involved in concrete struggles, it has the potential of developing into a significant organization involving large numbers of Black youth.

Locals should keep on top of activities initiated by chapters of the February 1st Movement. When these activities take place, information about them should be sent to the National Office, as well as any theoretical or position papers that local chapters distribute. Where possible, locals may want to consider approaching leaders of February 1st Movement chapters, inviting them to share a platform with us at campus and/or Militant forums to discuss the Black student movement, the Boston struggle or other issues.

Comradely,

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