

To members of the P.C.

The following are reports from Cleveland and Richmond about expansion of the party.

1/14/76

Doug Jenness  
SWP N.O.  
New York



Dear Doug,

We are trying to come to grips with the geographical expansion of the movement here in Ohio. Given that there are a dozen major cities in our region this is a big problem. It is especially a problem since three cities seemed to be quite concretely projected for the near future: Toledo, Louiseville, and Cincinnati. At least that is the impression I got from the rally at the YSA convention, and nothing had been raised with us prior to that.

It would of course be great if we could move on these cities, but I am somewhat in the dark as to exactly what you are thinking on them. In a meeting with the Toledo comrades Betsy raised sending at least a couple of people in there within the next few months. In another meeting with her things were sort of left up in the air in regards to Louiseville and Cincinnati.

While I am sure it is difficult for you to make concrete projections at this point in regards to sending people places, it would be good if we in Cleveland could have more of an idea of where we are heading in the Ohio region. Comrades here have for a long time informally discussed expansion in Ohio, and it would be good to make sure that our thinking is jiving with yours.

Over the last couple of years a lot of the regional work has been geared towards areas we are now looking towards for branches. The last statewide campaign emphasized certain places as well, like running for office in Cincinnati. The question of how, when and where we are heading comes up concretely for us in planning the statewide campaign, regional teams, and other activities of that sort.

It comes up first around Cincinnati. Cinti is the city in Ohio that would be most important for us after Cleveland. The YSA has thirteen members now, and has always enjoyed good recruitment. There are a couple of people who could be recruited to a party branch there. But there are also some problems in the local, political wise. If we had the perspective of some people going in there in the next period it would be good to run for office their again and do some other things along that line. If it is a longer range perspective though, we might not want to do it.

In my opinion if and when comrades can go to Cinti they will have to be of the calibre to be able to handle some of the problems there, but if handled correctly the local could really move ahead rapidly. It is difficult for us to do the consistant work out of Cleveland as it is about a seven hour trip.

Louiseville and Toledo are different in that respect. Although the local in Louiseville is small, and only one SWP member in Toledo, they are healthier politically. It would also seem much more important to move into Louiseville, a whole new state, an important city in the middle of a nationa lly important desegregation fight. If that is our perspective though we would want to stagger the team schedule to spradd much more time there.

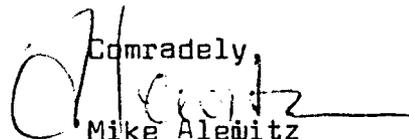
Two other cities important for us are Columbus and Lexington. Columbus is a major industrial city in Ohio, the third largest. It is the state capital and has OSU with 50,000 students. Lexington is the other major city in Kentucky and has our strongest and most active YSA local. There is a small local in Columbus as well.

Another area we have been discussing is Akron. A major industrial center, Akron is only an hour from Cleveland, and although we have no comrades there now we do have some periphery and ex-members. Kent state is on the outskirts and along with OSU is the most important school in the state. We are currently discussing running a comrade from Cleveland for US congress in the district that covers Kent and Akron.

Other cities which we have no plans for at all include Dayton, Youngstown, Canton, etc.

At this point we are planning on concentrating our activities in Louiseville, Cincinnati, Columbus, with the possible campaign in Akron. (Detroit will be covering Toledo). For purposes of a statewide slate, regional team schedules and future personnel moves from Cleveland (NOT FOR AT LEAST A FEW MONTHS), we should begin to hone things down a bit. Peter will be spending additional time in Columbus, Cinti, and Louiseville this spring...that is all projected so far.

Let me know whats happening...

Comradely,  
  
Mike Alewitz  
Branch Organizer

P.S. I am writing to you with a copy to Betsy, but it would be good to know who in the main will be dealing with this stuff from now on. I just assumed Betsy would be on the road a good hunk of the time.

Report on Political Opportunities for Party-Building in Richmond  
by Jim Gotesky, Diane Prokipchak and Toba Singer

The following is a report on our visits to Richmond, Virginia to look into the political situation there and explore the possibilities which may exist to build a party branch. We have outlined the areas of work which appear to present the greatest number of openings for us.

ERA

Toba was able to observe a meeting of the ERA Ratification Council, which includes delegates from a broad variety of organizations; ~~in the~~ Common Cause; WLIPF; WSP; AAUW; AAUP; Women's League of Voters (WLV); NOW; Richmond Education Association (REA); Virginia Education Association (VEA); etc. Michael P. is a delegate from the REA Human Relations Committee to the ERA Ratification Council. There is a distinct focus on lobbying activity and the Ratification Council has set up ERA Central to do lobbying in the state legislature, ~~through~~ January 28th, when ratification is expected to come up for a vote. There are a small number of women who see the need for an outreach campaign that goes beyond the lobbying perspective. The ERA demonstration on January 14th drew about 5-600 women. It was built mostly in the Northern Virginia area and not very much in Richmond. However, a large number of women appeared to have joined the demonstration from the Richmond area and from the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) campus. The reception to the march through the downtown Richmond area was exceptionally friendly. Between the comrades from Pittsburgh and us, we were able to sell about 30 Militants, a small number of YSes and distribute Bills of Rights. We learned that there is a group called the Women's Alliance (leaflet enclosed) which YAWF works in, but is by no means the major force. The head of the Women's Alliance, Bessida White, is also in the NBFO, the president of the Virginia Women's Political Caucus and a NOW member. She's interested in setting up a meeting for Willie Mae during her tour of Richmond.

Michael and his wife, Cathy Goodnight called a meeting of VCU/ERA last Sunday night by placing an ad in the campus newspaper. Ten independents, including Jean Hellmuth, the WVL delegate to the Ratification Council, came to the meeting and the meeting decided to build a larger meeting in two weeks with a speaker.

YSA

There is one YSA member, Lucille, who is an artist. She is partially blind and is very restricted in her activity and not willing, at this time, to carry out much YSA work. There is a very good YSA contact at VCU, Janet, who expects to join the YSA very soon, has been active with us and attended the VCU/ERA meeting. There are also a few contacts from the last team's visit; one ~~of them~~ helped the YSA to get recognized on the VCU campus and ~~she~~ is still interested in our ideas and activities.

Unions

All of the major building trades unions have offices in Richmond. Other unions include: Amalgamated Meatcutters; Amalgamated Clothing Workers; Steelworkers; CWA and Tobacco Workers. There is no AFSCME and the right of government workers to collective bargaining is a major issue right now. Michael is an REA member and is on the Human Relations Committee of the REA.

Black Community

We were able to drive through three principal Black neighborhoods: Church

Hill, Sydney and Highland Park. Richmond is 65-70% Black. Highland Park is a fairly middle class area with several shopping centers, where sales work and campaign work could be carried out. Church Hill and Sydney are both very depressed areas with a number of housing projects and shopping areas. Sydney seems to be a focus of a number of community organizing projects, some of which are receiving federal funding such as Richmond Community Action Project (RCAP).

The NAACP seems to be the principal Black organization. It is currently suing the Board of Elections because the Board has annexed several white suburbs to the city in order to maintain a white voting majority. Because of this litigation, there have been no municipal elections in Richmond for five years. We recently heard, via the National Black Network, that the NAACP is planning to launch a Virginia-wide desegregation campaign from Richmond, but we need to get more information about this. There are two predominantly Black campuses--Virginia Union University and J. Sargent Reynolds College.

#### Opponents

None we talked with, knows of any open functioning of the CP. YAWF has a few people in Richmond; the NCLC has one member and the SP-USA (Debs Caucus) has a small nucleus of people, but seems to do most of its work out of Williamsburg. None we talked with knew of any Maoists who function openly.

#### Recruitment

Cathy Goodnight is very willing to be active with us as much as she is able. She feels that she hasn't read enough of our material to join and she has a heavy workload at VCU where she is getting her Masters degree in Social Work. We will want to discuss provisional membership with her, since we think this will help ease her into the party and ~~help~~ reduce her qualms about party membership.

Zelda and Martin Nordlinger are two activists in their mid-forties. Zelda is a past president of NOW and is a very respected figure in reformist circles. She has read Evelyn's books and most of Pathfinder's women's liberation titles, as well as America's Road to Socialism. She is now reading The Transitional Program and The First Three Internationals. Martin is a Real Estate agent and very interested in our activities, though he hasn't had as much opportunity to read our literature. They are both members of the SP-USA and very dissatisfied with the SP. They invited us for dinner and discussion with Michael and Cathy. They also invited four SPers, including the state-wide SP organizer and their daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and Doug Murphy, and Janet, ~~secretary of the~~. One of the SPers, Wayne Young, Debbie and Doug were very open to our ideas. The other SPers were not. Zelda, Martin, Janet, Cathy and Michael plan to come to D.C. this weekend to hear Dan Styron's talk on labor and the economy.

Two other contacts, Joan Watson (a sculpture professor at VCU) and Ann Misik, whom we have not yet met, are interested in talking with us and may also come to D.C. this weekend.

#### Current Opportunities

There appear to be four clear areas of work which could be initiated in the near future in Richmond: ERA work, on campus and in NOW and the Ratification Council; YSA work, especially at VCU; ERA activity in the REA and possibly other teacher rights work; and general propaganda work through the campaign, sales, classes, etc. In

future, we may want to look into getting comrades into the Steelworkers and *do* work connected with the NAACP activities. We would like to discuss beginning a class series at VCU very soon.

Personnel

There seem to be good opportunities for building both a party branch in Richmond and a YSA chapter at VCU. In its effort to expand the movement, the D.C. branch is considering transferring an initial four comrades to Richmond by March 1st, to be at-large members along with Michael until a branch is established, or an organizing committee. The four comrades who have agreed to take the assignment, Jim, Toba, Dana and Paul, are all non-YSA party members. To fully take advantage of the openings to build the YSA, it would be good to also consider sending some YSAers with campus and/or women's liberation experience to Richmond. The four party comrades from D.C. should be free to concentrate their efforts on consolidating a branch. The transfer of YSAers to Richmond, along with the D.C. regional team could greatly aid in establishing a VCU YSA in the near future.