

# Socialists combine picnics, planning

by Robert Thomason  
Staff Writer

Wheeling around Raleigh, the two men realized they were lost.

"I know it's around here somewhere, off this road somewhere," said Doug Clark.

The duo was on its way to a fundraising picnic. They were sure the site was near, but they couldn't exactly figure out how to get there.

It was no ordinary picnic. The weather or the family lives of the guests most likely would not be discussed. More likely the conversation would cover the tyranny of Joseph Stalin or Richard Nixon, the failure of capitalism to meet the American dream or the way in which a great revolution would fulfill that dream.

The Raleigh branch of the Socialist Workers' Party was throwing a picnic.

"It's got to be around here," Doug said. Doug is a member of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) in Chapel Hill. The YSA is not a part of the Socialist Worker's Party, but has the same political philosophy.

Another member of the YSA said of Doug, "He puts more time into YSA activities than anybody else, so I guess he would be like a leader for us. But the YSA in Chapel Hill really doesn't have a leader, *per se*."

The two persons in the car came upon a fork in the street. "Take a left here," Doug said.

"You're always taking left turns," the driver said.

Both started laughing.

At the picnic, most of the food sat on a table, with the money box. For \$2, one could eat the typical fare of hotdogs and hamburgers, and drink beer or soda-pop while listening to the finest of recorded songs of the socialist movement.

Across the lawn, some Socialists sat around two grills, cooking food and discussing Marxist theory. A walk across the lawn to the grills was cosmopolitan indeed. Accents from almost every continent in the world could be heard. None spoke with a southern drawl, though.

Jay had only recently come to Raleigh from Atlanta. He explained that the Party had recently consolidated the two branches it once had in Atlanta.

"There used to be two, you know, one on each side of town," Jay said. "They just combined them. This left a number of people free to do other things."

"The Party asked me if I would like to come to Raleigh. I said I would."

Jay went on to explain the organization of the Party. There are

branches of the Socialist Workers' Party in most states of the Union. There are between five and fifty SWP members in a branch.

"With less than five members, it is sort of hard to organize effective activities," Jay said. "You really don't need more than fifty in one place. Its more important to use the extra people to spread the movement into new territory."

There are about a dozen members of the Raleigh branch. Most have come to North Carolina from the North in the last year.

In Chapel Hill the most common site is the book table for the YSA. This spring, the YSA's right to sell their literature was challenged. The University Administration ruled that no one could sell material of any type which had not been produced by an on-campus group.

One day, Socialists manning the literature were told of the rule. They contested it, saying first of all that the Bill of Rights gave them the right to distribute literature, and second that the books were produced by the national backbone of the campus organization.

After consultation with the North Carolina Attorney General's office, the University agreed to let the YSA sell literature on campus.

A big topic at the picnics was the establishment of unionism in North Carolina. Part of the SWP strategy for a smooth and peaceful transition to a Socialist state is placing industry in the hands of the appropriate unions.

The transitional program was drafted by Leon Trotsky in 1938 when he formed an international movement to establish a democratic form of Socialism. The SWP is the American arm of that movement.

One of the Socialists said, "You can tell how people feel about Socialism by the way they use Trotsky's name. If they are sympathetic, they will call his followers Trotskyists. If they don't like Socialists, they will call them Trotskyites."

The Socialists pondered on the question of a Socialist America. "People have the idea that people won't be able to own houses and cars after the revolution. They will be able to. It's just that one person can't own a whole town and the lives of the workers in it," one Socialist lady said.

"We aren't ogres," she said. "We're very human. We even have picnics in our back yard."

"After the Revolution, there will be restaurants where people can go to eat, free of charge. There will be grocery stores because some people are going to want to fix their food and



Staff photo by Allen Iernizan

American Socialists have traditionally organized in small groups in order to utilize their manpower over the widest possible area.

eat at home."

The Socialist Workers' Party involves itself in most of the controversial issues of the day. In fact, it gets much of its membership through these issues.

"Back in the Sixties, I really didn't know a lot about the Socialist Workers' Party, but I was pretty active in political struggles," one SWP member said. "After a while I noticed that the SWP was there every time I turned around. They were involved in everything, it seemed. abortion rights. War protest."

"One day, a group of friends and I went over to the branch office and bought about \$60 worth of books. We talked about it a while, and then I realized that the SWP knew what it was talking about."

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