

# Socialists Disavow Electoral Politics

## Insight

The Daily Tar Heel

### 'There Are Alternatives'

"The movement on the left has expanded during the past few years," says NUC member Ben Blakewood, "but the real work for the movement lies in the future."

A new party, continued Blakewood, based on a mass movement and committed to fundamental change of the American system, is essential.

Bob Korstad, one of the spokesmen of the NUC, said people must read widely "about the nature of corporate capitalism in America and the power vested therein" if they are to participate in this new party and help bring about the necessary changes to make life in America more acceptable to the socialist movement.

To do this, Korstad related, students must understand "American foreign policy and its corporate underpinnings and read about socialist alternatives."

But reading isn't enough, say the pair; it must be coupled with action.

This action, they explained, means primarily relating to those "powerless groups in society which potentially can unite into a large-scale movement."

Students should continue to organize around issues such as ROTC, admission policies of universities and workers' conditions, said Blakewood, but

particular emphasis needs to be placed on labor organizing.

If students can organize white-collar and blue-collar labor by making them realize "they are inadequately paid, their social worth is defined by their ability to sell labor and they have no worker control over the decisions affecting their jobs," he continued, this new party movement would be greatly strengthened.

The organization of low-income communities, anti-war G.I.'s and minority groups such as blacks, chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Indians must be done, said Korstad, to enable the new party to contain broad-based social-reform support.

Numerous groups must be brought together, Korstad related, groups which exist to provide "basic human rights to the disenfranchised."

Among these groups are the Student Health Organization, the Medical Committee on Human Rights, the Southern Legal Action Movement, Law Student Civil Rights Research Committee and the Social Welfare Workers Movement.

All of these groups, said Korstad, "have the potential to become important segments of a mass movement because

they confront the contradictions and inhumanity of the present system."

Gains can be made by political organizations which band together, said Blakewood, and when these gains are made, activity must continue to bring about larger gains.

Organizations are "transitional agencies" which should be used to substantially push the system toward the goals of the leftist movement, he explained.

"Major political change derives from the strength of political organizations," said Korstad, "especially if the forces which push these organizations can become the base for a broad thinking socialist party."

Blakewood said students must also support radical groups such as the Black Student Movement, Female Liberation, Students for a Democratic Society, Young Socialist Alliance, International Socialists and the Radical Coalition.

If students are willing to read the history of American "imperialistic" involvement, say the pair, and if students are willing to learn of the "capitalistic" structure which helped provide the basis for this involvement, then the movement is halfway there.

But students must also actively involve themselves, said the two, in organizations which protect human liberties, and, if not join, at least support radical, socialist organizations which are attempting to change the system.

Only then, they concurred, "can a new party be formed which will bring about changes in the social structure of America—changes toward a socialist environment, with more freedom and opportunity for all people."

(Editor's note: DTH News Editor Mike Parnell talked this week with Ben Blakewood and Bob Korstad, members of the New University Conference. Blakewood and Korstad discussed the electoral system of the United States and what changes they feel need to be made through the socialist movement. The New University Conference at Chapel Hill is composed of members of the University community who share a "socialist critique of American society.")

"The New University Conference (NUC) is committed to political education and to direct political action," says Ben Blakewood, head of the UNC Moratorium Committee last year and presently a spokesman for the NUC, "when and where such involvement is congruent with the transformation of America into a socialist society."

Bob Korstad, also a spokesman for the NUC, said last spring's strike by students protesting the Cambodian invasion by U.S. troops and the deaths of students at Kent State University and Jackson State College brought calls from many students for support of "liberal candidates" for the November elections last week.

But, said Korstad, the NUC, as a socialist organization, does not view the support of "peace candidates" and liberals as being a feasible alternative to the young people and others in this country who are pushing for social change.

"While some of us will vote for the 'lesser of two evils,'" says a booklet recently released by the NUC, "we all agree that the bulk of our political energies, time and resources will not go toward electoral politics and the choice now before Americans."

"Liberal politicians who fulfill

the function of translating policy into the concrete business of legislation and administration cannot take stands which challenge the underlying corporate interests they serve, without cutting themselves off from major bases of their political, financial and ideological support," says the booklet, discussing why the NUC feels support of liberal candidates is worthless.

"They respond to discontent through minor adjustments within the system," the booklet charges, "which channel antagonism into 'legitimate' political forms, thus diffusing any basic opposition to the system as a whole."

Thus, because liberals as well as conservatives "share a basic commitment to American capitalism," said Blakewood, neither group questions the "intent of the U.S. to dominate the Third World (the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America) for its own economic needs."

Neither do these political groups challenge "the corporate interests who determine the allocation of resources within our country," he said. "They differ only in their strategy for maintaining a capitalistic, imperialistic system."

"We do not oppose elections," said Korstad, "we just don't think present elections are representative."

He related that other processes are just as valid as elections—processes which are more likely to "make America the kind of place we want it to be."

One of the other methods which the two spokesmen said has been used was nonviolent protest—a la the anti-war movement.

But anti-war sentiment in Congress was aroused only through the pressure of the moratoriums in

October and November of last year, said Blakewood, and dove candidates quickly sprang up. These candidates quieted down during the winter, however, he continued, and didn't reappear until the campuses were closed down in May.

Blakewood said people must guard against the thought that these doves were "merely opportunistic and did not want to end the war."

They did not argue against the war "as much out of principled objection as they did because it was becoming too costly in economic and political terms," he explained.

"The war springs from capitalism," Blakewood argues, "the past three administrations have argued protection of Vietnam was important, not for its resources, but because the strategic defense of Southeast Asia to protect our 'national interest' would best be served by ensuring the population and resources of the country remain under control favorable to the U.S."

"This is untrue," he advised, "Underlying this conception of 'national interest' is a concern that the large, multi-national corporations which form the core of our economy be able to do business on the best possible terms."

Korstad backed this statement, and further said the anti-war movement must "expand to an attack upon the capitalist system which brought about the war."

Students have yet to understand the implications of the capitalist system and its relationship with the war, he continued, and they must be enlightened to these implications or they will "continue to support these practically worthless peace or liberal candidates without realizing there are other viable, more realistic alternatives to change the system than the present electoral process."

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