

PRAYERS TO THE RAIN-GODS THIS WINTER

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General Strategy

On its most general level, I'd throw out a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, we must radicalize as many students as we can and make socialist revolutionaries out of as many student radicals as is possible. On the other, we must make it increasingly difficult for Stanford to continue servicing the needs of corporate America. These two prongs are obviously related, in that radical-revolutionaries aren't made at SDS meetings and that we are going to need quite a few rad-revs to destroy the corporate-imperialist university. The major points here are:

- 1) Stanford's efficiency as a prime contractor for the training of the country's ruling class will be hurt if we can radicalize large numbers of students (and if we can bring in more radical faculty).
- 2) Even if we can't radicalize large numbers of Stanford students, which is possible, (look at the class difference between Stanford, and SF State and College of San Mateo) we can certainly make it more difficult for defense work, imperialist ventures, and liberal apologetics to go on here. If we get isolated and expelled after our best efforts, we will have made a de facto choice to go to the state schools or community colleges where our efforts may be more productive.
- 3) Restructuring the university can't be a goal in itself-- it's impossible to have a free university in an unfree society and world. It is conceivable that we can liberate parts of it (burrow from within departments or start one up, like a Department of Radical Studies). But for the foreseeable future, Stanford is going to be ringed by the Industrial Park and SRI and it's going to have strong Business and Engineering Schools, much of which has to be razed before there can be any honest reconstruction. Any structural reform must go well beyond "equal time for radicals" to posing on both the radicalization and disruption fronts. For example, a Department of Radical Studies should actively challenge the methodology and content of other social science departments and should, of course, integrate thought and action. So when we say we're working seriously at Stanford, instead of at CSM or SF State, we'd

better mean that we're seeking more than a "relevant education". We've got to do battle with a ruling class institution, and, for most of us, with our upperish class backgrounds, with our pasts.

4) Shutting down the university is not a goal in itself--only insofar as it radicalize-revolutionizes students and holds some promise of slashing several of Stanford's imperial tentacles does it make sense to close the mother down. This is a tactical, not a strategic, question.

5) It's not enough to say that there can't be a free university in an unfree society. An American Revolution won't be made at Stanford--we have to make contact with radical students at CSM, SF State, and San Jose State; we should support struggles of local workers (janitors, telephone operators), especially trying to get to know younger workers; we must try to make contacts with new working class technicians (SRI and the Industrial Park). Not only should we be getting a better understanding of the relationship of student struggles to outside struggles, but we should get ideas about where we can best organize and learn after we leave Stanford. This outside work should help many of us grapple with our class biases. For example, how many of us think we could be effective organizers on an assembly line? It also seems that the men in SDS should begin thinking about organizing in the Army instead of noncooperation if they get drafted.

6) It would be a mistake to think we can liberate this society unless we liberate ourselves, personally and collectively. We've got to think about how we can restore our repressed creativity (radical songs, crafts, poetry, new disruptive tactics). Even more important, we've got to begin forming communities within SDS that will give us the support we all need and bring radicals into SDS who can't handle political asceticism and endless meetings. If we are serious about risking death together, we'd damn well better start living together. In a physical sense, this might mean taking a neighborhood survey this winter or spring and leasing 8-10 houses over the next following 6 months; in the same area--organizationally, this means the formation of many groups small enough so that personal trusts can be formed; politically this means common struggle. It also means chatting at the Union, inviting people over for a Monopoly-Revolution game.....

Analysis and Ideology

Stanford SDS's ideology and analysis of American society are respectively non-existent and pretty damn rough. The decision to come up with a formal statement of principles and a supporting analysis can only be made collectively, but it seems essential that we encourage the circulation of position papers and debate on them, hopefully in smallish groups. An important consideration is that grad students might be more interested in joining and building what has been a largely undergrad chapter if SDS began to back up its rhetoric and occasional action with decent politics.

We always have to make it very clear that our politics are rooted in basic human values. We should start from a position that people are able to and should be able to love each other, work and create together; that they should have the opportunity to develop their collective human potential, restricted only by the potential economic level of their society. With core values of democracy and self-determination, it will be clearer why we are opposed to corporate capitalism, a new breed of imperialism, racism, and representative democracy (as opposed to a radically social democracy). Our goal should be a decentralized, democratic society--which means a democratic and socialist economy, a many-dimensional culture that motively encourages the development of Third World-American cultures, media that provide equal access and control to all community groups, and an educational system that will fill community needs eg. it should enable workers to make pricing and investment decisions and blacks and chicanos to develop their own cultures.

It's clearly not enough to lay out our values and our goals--we must have analyses of corporate capitalism, racism, and imperialism. I'd be opposed to expressly defining SDS as a socialist group, for example, until we could roughly agree on and collectively understand a critique of US capitalism. We also need comprehensive analyses so we can begin to think more seriously about the groups of people whose struggles will head us in the direction of our goals.

Quickly, I'd suggest that there are three major groups which will make an American Revolution-- so-called minority groups (blacks, chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians), students (especially in state schools and in some of the humanities and social science departments of ruling class schools), and young workers (ranging from the unemployed and the blue-collar to some teachers, professionals, and technicians). These categories should be clarified and modified as we attempt to build a radical movement at Stanford, as we observe whether the example of SF State spills over to other state colleges, as we see if it's possible to organize at SRI and in the army, and as we see if growing worker discontent over the work process (see USA: The Labor Revolt-S. Weir-REP pamphlet) leads to major attacks on the union bureaucracy and demands for worker control. We ought to constantly keep in mind the idea of non-reformist reforms-whether it be a Department of Radical Studies or worker control over production.

Organization

Lenny's organizational proposal is excellent. I'd only like to emphasize some things and add others.

First, the collectives should be the core of Stanford SDS. I don't see any other way that our political relationships and political skills can grow together. In order for the collectives to be exciting social and political units, people should try to join groups where there are a number of people whom they either don't know or whose politics they don't agree with. Once set up, the members of the collectives should feel free about bringing new people--there will naturally be some tension between bringing new people into the group and the need to maintain some continuity of discussion and action, but we're going to have to grapple with the problem if we want to grow. A further suggestion would be that each collective mimeo off a name-phone list, so people can get together easily between meetings so a phone tree can go into operation easily, and so we can give gift copies to the FBI.

The SDS literature-information table ought to be manned alternately by the collectives--there's no reason why there can't be music, skits, or surfboards and American flags at the table. I'd also suggest that, if someone digs a book or an article, that he buy or mimeo 5-10 copies of it and put it on the lit table. This might work better than reading lists.

One problem is whether to build collectives of oncampus people in the dorms or whether to try to integrate the oncampus people into the larger offcampus population. Though the decision will basically rest with the people in the dorms, I'd argue for moving people into mostly offcampus collectives, and then those who are organizing future collectives in the dorms will maintain their participation in an offcampus group. Wherever the collectives are held, the essential points are: 1) that there be a number of fairly experienced people in each group and (2) that on and offcampus people mix with each other.

I also think it'd be a good idea for people who have houses offcampus to hold open houses every week or two. If we want to do it in a more intensive way, we might take a day or weekend retreat when we have some breathing time. There aren't enough girls in SDS which means something's fucked up.

A final comment on the bureaucracy that Lenny's proposed. If we make a conscious effort to keep people rotating through it, if less active or new people begin to assert themselves, then there'll be a hell of a lot less elitism than there was this fall. No-bureaucracy doesn't mean democracy.

Winter Action-Education Program

At this point there seem to be 4 major areas of education-action this winter: Our original SE Asia Demand, a Department of Radical Studies, the Poli Sci seminars and other departmental organizing, and the SES proposals. I think we can and should work in all of these areas, but it's not clear at this point where our major thrust should be. Much of it depends on what happens in the poli sci department early in the quarter and on whether SDS people want to continue to push the fall demand in a modified form or whether they want to drop it completely.

SES-- Starting with the least important, the Study of Education at Stanford report on Undergraduate Education is mostly liberal ballast, but SDSers must understand the report--know what parts they can support and what parts they can reject and push much further on. For instance, it would help SDS's organizing to be on a semester system. On the negative side, we ought to go further than a small, elitist University Honors Program in attacking the concept of a department-major. We should also attack the power of the faculty at the department level to hire each other, decide what's taught, and set requirements.

A left-liberal-radical group, formed over the vacation, is going to push for more student self-determination in the educational process. Their approach, which may involve student referenda and demands for joint student-faculty boards, is uncomfortably near to being student powerish, but if large numbers of students are interested in a further liberalization of SES, we're going to have to relate to their desires in a further liberalization of SES, we're going to have to relate to their desires in a very tricky reformist, yet radical way. We'd only be latter day Luddites to oppose all educational reform as liberal milksops--it makes more sense to concentrate on filling liberal procedural reforms with radical content.

Poli Sci seminars -- This leads directly into a discussion of the PS seminars and other departmental organizing. It seems that we could support demands of the anti-SES group to loosen up the faculty's hold on the departments only if we made concret demands for more radical courses and faculty at the departmental level.

As most people probably know, in the last couple of days the Poli Sci Department in its full majesty and glory, turned down all of the proposed seminars with objections that grad students weren't "qualified" and that reading lists were "unbalanced". Some of the more intelligent conservative faculty might well have realized that there would be considerable pressure in the future to expand the radical courses, to have them satisfy requirements, and to hire radical scholars and scholar-activists to teach them. As it stands now, we're planning to have a large meeting Wednesday afternoon to talk about how we should react. It's very possible that more than a few students will want to lock horns with the Neanderthals in the poli sci dep't.

It makes sense for people in other departments to organize around the inadequacies of their departments. A demand for a Dep't of Radical Studies will have much more power and legitimacy behind it if liberal-radical groups in many departments have decided that they can't get the education they want through their own departments. And if some of the radical courses do go through, they might very well be a wedge for the splitting apart of the authoritarian structures and liberal content of the departments.

Radical Studies -- There's been a lot of talk recently about a Radical Studies Dep't. It's potentially a very powerful organizing tool as well as a concrete, structural goal. But this will be true only if it's linked up with comprehensive attacks on the existing departments and if we can come up with a reasonably detailed proposal to organize around. This could be a very effective way to bring radical grad students into SDS, and it might serve as a proposal around which left liberal-radical professors could organize themselves. The New University Conference might be forming a chapter here, and this might be the catalyst needed to get a radical faculty group going.

SE-Asia -- We've inherited a much maligned SE Asia demand from last quarter. It's clear that our original demand was too general to relate to. Even some of our own people still call it the SRI demand. We've got to pick out several areas, contracts, and individuals on which to focus, yet making it clear that this is just the first step in meeting the full demand.

The idea of a petition is good, but we can't decide on the form of the petition until we meet in the collectives at least once. The petition should then help us gauge our strength and build strength for an ultimatum to the trustees. If we can get our shit together in time for next week's trustee meeting, fine. If not, let's pick our own time to push.

The Petition I have in mind is long, but can be scaled down easily. A rough outline would look like this:

We, member os Stanford SDS and other concerned members of the Stanford community, repeat our demand of this fall, that all members of the university community-- trustees, faculty, SRI, and administration--halt all economic and military operations and projects concerned with SE Asia. As a first step towards meeting this basic and just demand, we make the following specific demands, to be met early this winter:

- 1) that trustee William Hewlett resign from the Board of FMC Corp, which makes lethal nerve gas and antipersonnel bombs used in North Vietnam.
- 2) that trustee Ernest Arbuckle resign from the Board of Trustees and the Business School Advisory Council or resign from the Board of Utah Construction, which builds B-52 bases in Thailand and mines iron in Peru.
- 3) the trustee Tom Jones resign from the Board of Trustees and the Electrical Engineering Advisory Council or resign from the presidency of Northrop Corp. which makes F-105's and CN tear gas.
- 4) that SRI disband its Bangkok, Thailand office and stop all projects concerned with Thailand and Vietnam now and in the future.

- 5) that SRI cease all chemical and biological warfare studies now and in the future.
- 6) that the military electronics research at the Applied Electronics Labs be stopped now and in the future, and that it not be transferred to SRI.
- 7) that all faculty resign from Defense Department boards; that no faculty be hired who serve on DOD boards.
- 8) that President Pitzer resign from the presidency or from the Board of the RAND Corp., which needs no introduction.

In order to better study and act against foreign imperialism and domestic oppression, we demand

- 9) a Department of Radical Studies, to be governed jointly by students and faculty, which would be composed of radical intellectuals and scholar-activists (there would have to be more explanation here).

There are obvious dangers in personalizing our demands by picking out too many individuals, but I don't see any other way to get at the corporate powers who run Stanford. I'd argue strongly for integrating the trustees, faculty, administration, SRI, and a Department of Radical Studies into our petition and hopefully into an ultimatum as soon as we can our collective asses in gear. We ought to have some sort of action at the trustees meeting, but we may not be ready to get an ultimatum then. In any case, we ought to start thinking about tactics. We'll have to schedule it around the rain.