

# DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 7 OF 16

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## San Francisco Chapter News

### SAN FRANCISCO REGIONAL OFFICE

In San Francisco, the Guild's Regional Office has been set up to assist the "movement" in areas currently uncovered by private firms and poverty program offices. It is in the process of firming up the apparatus prepared to handle mass arrest situations, as well as to maintain close and continuing contact with students and poverty-community action groups in the Bay Area. The objective is to protect these groups by assuming both affirmative and defensive postures on their behalf.

1) Defense work: co-ordinate lawyers in the area by organizing and servicing a defense panel which will be prepared to answer criminal charges and injunctions; instruct those persons intending to defend themselves in court; and assist defendants' committees in their effort to relieve the lawyers of the investigation and co-ordination functions.

2) Affirmative actions: bring lawyers together for the purpose of initiating affirmative suits to stay the hand of those wishing to suppress the voices and actions of dissent; be available to these groups for consultation regarding the legal implications of alternative strategies; suggest methods of sustaining continuity between politics in-and-out of courts; and provide information revealing the ways in which court personnel are advocates of reactionary positions despite their cloak of impartiality.

To the extent that one can discuss the functions of the office as distinct from one another, the following categories are helpful.

A. Regional Office Staff Counsel as "The Organizer's Lawyer": This orientation involves working with various poverty-community and student organizers, and involving other lawyers on a continuing basis in the group's projects. There is an attempt to establish a close, street-level relationship between the lawyers and the organizer. To the extent that OEO assists in the planning of rent withhold-

ings, welfare unions, school boycotts, or community-alert patrols, those legal services move in the same direction. The office staff provides access to information about government agencies; a group is less vulnerable to oppression when its leadership is aware of standards expected of those agencies and is in a position to expose the excesses. In addition, the office is a direct link to lawyers capable of providing defense to criminal charters, and doing so in a manner which is promotive of the group's organizational objectives; the issues are dramatized in such a way that consciousness deepens and membership is expanded.

In the next few months the office will be devoting more of its resources to this area of activity. Since its inception in early December, however, time and energy have been applied to the mass arrest situations at the college campuses in the Bay Area. It is evident that our involvement specifically with the Third World Liberation Front Defense Committee at San Francisco State College has been helpful in establishing the type of trust necessary for work with the characteristically suspicious student and racially-conscious organizations.

The office has been called upon, particularly by Chicano organizers, to recruit and coordinate their relationship with sympathetic lawyers. One group at Cal-State in Hayward sought protection for some of its leaders who were arrested at the campus, and in the rural town of Visalia. A very close contact has been developed in the Mission District, the latin section of town, with several young men consolidating what were formerly enemy gangs. A looser relationship has been created with Chicano leadership at nearby San Mateo College and at the University of California in Berkeley. We have developed contacts recently with the Red Guard, a Black Panther style action group, which has surfaced in Chinatown a few months ago. A few

of these young people are interested in developing their present members' awareness of the law and expanding membership in the community by a guerilla theater whose performances would interrupt meetings and street gatherings.

Our assistance has consisted of calling on lawyers to take cases for these groups and discussing with them what we know about the group, its problems, objectives, and the areas in which they need help from a lawyer. The objective is to encourage the lawyer to be accessible on a continuing basis as that group's "house counsel." As a part of this effort, we have joined organizers in their effort to get the allegiance of Chicano, Chinese and Black lawyers in their communities. And we continue to meet with a surprising degree of success in that regard. We also responded to what was an encouraging sign of confidence from the Chicano community, by recruiting defense counsel and undertaking to arrange the initial steps of a surrender of six youths charged with murdering a police officer.

B. Regional Office Staff Counsel as Adjunct to Defense Committee in Mass Arrest Situations: This task of coordinating defendants and their lawyers no doubt will be a continuing function of the Office as the crisis aspect of present-day American society shows no sign of abating. OEO offices are inundated with case work and are prevented from handling criminal cases. No private firm can afford to perform this efficiently and to everyone's satisfaction. And the office, as well, has not been without its problems in that regard. Either of the two aspects to this work would be a full-time activity.

Lawyers must be recruited and assigned in light of their legal and political experience. This matching problem is the first step to ensuring a dialogue between lawyers and defendants; a highly political defendant must receive the type of defense to which he is entitled. He will not get one from an inexperi-

enced lawyer who cannot be swayed from his naive contention that law and politics are separate. Sometimes discussions with other lawyers, who can argue from experience, are necessary before this lawyer is willing to see that the arrests and ensuing stages of the judicial process are politically motivated; lawyers must be made to understand that the minds of the jurors have been so saturated by the mass media with inflammatory material that the only way to deal with their apprehension of the defendant and their desire to punish in the name of God and country is to provide them with definitions of such concepts as "non-negotiable demands," racism," "Third World," "power to the people" and "shut it down."

The motivations of lawyers who responded to the appeal from the San Francisco State defendants for free assistance varied a great deal. Whereas some had followed closely the events preceding the early arrests, others first learned of a controversy between the students and administrators from the misleading accounts of TV stations and newspaper publishers. The latter, through exposure, came to realize that these were not ordinary criminal trials of "hard-core subversives," who are "after all entitled as everyone else to a legal defense," they developed an awareness that our system has its "political criminals" as well, acquired a new respect for the activities of Guild firms and projects, and responded, as one Public Defender confided recently, to a growing "feeling for the kids."

Lawyers, for additional unknown reasons, are not initially disposed to working as a group. They tend to be autonomous in style and extremely jealous of their time. They have been persuaded, however, that it is worthwhile to work through the Regional Office. Involvement with the Berkeley strike, as well as the People's Park controversy generally followed the pattern of San Francisco State which is described below.

The Regional Office provided lawyers with access to investigation which had been performed collectively by defendants; films, witness statements, photographs. A discovery motion, a subpoena requiring TV companies to make their footage available, a memo on the effects of criminal convictions on financial assistance to students and one on techniques for obtaining free counsel on appeal, jury instructions, and a newsletter were all made available through the office.

The Office lawyer responded to requests, by sole practitioners generally, that he fill-in on court appearances; in addition, he was constantly "on call" to perform various investigative func-

## Guild Reaffiliates

### With I.A.D.L

After a mail poll vote of the National Executive Board conducted late in the summer, it was decided to reaffiliate with the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. The vote was 53 for, 17 against, 7 abstentions.

tions and to intercede in disagreements between defendant and counsel or, in some instances, between co-counsel.

A committee was formed and it utilized the office resources to draw up a motion for dismissal or, in the alternative, indefinite continuance on the ground of prejudicial pre-trial publicity; postcards of joinder as amici were solicited from the Bay Area Bar. Another group of lawyers prepared a demurrer on behalf of a large group of defendants arrested together, the 480 of the 700 persons arrested over a five month period. Lawyers brought a Dombrowski suit to enjoin the criminal prosecutions, as well as an injunction against the college disciplinary hearings. Legal assistance was also mobilized to respond to an injunction which had been obtained against the striking students.

Many meetings were held for the purposes of pooling information and suggesting pretrial and trial strategies. Lawyers who had completed trials and had tried similar cases in the past formed panels to lead these discussions. Minutes were circulated among volunteers who had been unable to attend.

2. Defendants must be worked with closely to prevent the judicial system from having its intended effect of thwarting progressive movements by deflecting the energies of members and demoralizing them in the process. Instead, defendants must discover that their fate is manageable. Lawyers must convey knowledge about criminal procedure; "clients" must not be allowed to wallow helplessly in the unknown. On the other hand, defendants must be encouraged to convey their politics to the lawyer and to insist, if necessary that their political content be injected and their political strategy be implemented.

The Regional Office staff worked closely with the defense committee, participating with its formation in the early stages. The Central Committee (the strike leadership) was convinced

to free some of its resources to assume direction of the committee and determine a defense strategy. Weekend advising sessions were held for all defendants. Informational material was distributed. A two day seminar on "How to Defend Yourself In Court" was held and followed up with practice sessions. Numerous defendants' meetings were held and their direction was planned in consultation with the Regional Office staff. Claim forms for civil damages were completed and filed with the City by a great number of persons who had been beaten, and otherwise abused by the police.

The telephone lines were in constant use; the limited staff of one full-time attorney, assisted by a part-time woman, were available 24 hours a day for errands and explanations. An office committee of five to nine different lawyers and one to five different law students attended meetings every two weeks. They supervised the work of the Office Staff and assumed direction of some of its projects.

A great part of the work was performed by a combination of lawyers, who had not been active in past Guild projects. OEO lawyers, in particular, seemed to rejoice at the opportunity to engage in activity which is different from that of their poverty program jobs. The Western Office of the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council has been unembarrassed by its close connection to the work and experience of the Regional office. A small number of public defenders became interested in this occasion to be associated with the "action" in the student movement. Several of the younger members of the Bar, in their never-ending quest for the unconventional and "unlawyer-like," attached themselves rather quickly to the office activities. (This became apparent by the healthy response to our offer that they participate in the weekend meeting in the mountains of about forty Guild law students.) There is contact (very minimal in some instances) with at least 100 lawyers in the Bay area.

In conclusion, the first few months have constituted a productive learning experience. The projects will prove more and more as fruitful introductions to the community of organizers as well as to various parts of the legal community. The members of the office-committee will undertake individually to head projects on behalf of the office. An increasing number of lawyers, especially the recent committees to the Bar, will provide resources to the office. The need for additional full-time staff will be recognized and met. The Regional Office will soon become an established center of movement activity.