

# DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 7 OF 16

FOLDER 16

HISTORY OF NLG REPORT

To: City Committee

From: Diane M.

Re: National Lawyers Guild Report

#### HISTORY AND MEMBERSHIP

The National Lawyer's Guild was founded in 1937 as a progressive alternative to the American Bar Association. From the very beginning it was dominated by the CPUSA and devoted its resources to the legal support of the labor movement and the rights of national minorities as the Party did. In the early 1950's the House UnAmerican Activities Committee labeled it the "legal bulwark of the Communist Party". Guild membership dropped off in the 50's with the intimidation concomitant with the McCarthy Era. In the 60's the Guild was very actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement establishing offices in the south.

The hold of the CPUSA ostensibly begin to diminish in the late 60's as the New Left developed thru the anti-war movement and began to assume leadership in the Guild. This took the form of a successful struggle to admit non-lawyers (first lawstudents and then legal workers) to admission in the Guild, a move which CP forces opposed. However, the failure of the New Left (in the Guild as in all other organizations) to develop Marxist-Leninist politics meant that no consistent political line was ever put forth. The result today is that the dominant line in the NLG is still that of the CPUSA. This is not done in an overt fashion. No one openly admits to membership in the CPUSA or runs or defends their line. It is rather the skillful process of consistently putting forth reformist programs with no revolutionary content that can only lead the class back to the bourgeoisie. It also must be noted that it is only very recently that the NLG actively starting supporting the "workers movement". Prior to 1971, great organizational resources were devoted to defense of the lumpen proletarian and the petite bourgeoisie student anti-war movement.

Present membership is 4000 lawyers, legal workers, law students and jailhouse lawyers in 54 chapters throughout the country. Of that number, perhaps 200 could be defined as developing Marxist-Leninists. The membership is almost 100% Anglo with the great majority being in the age group under 35 but a significant percentage being in the age group over 50. The lawyers in this latter category have long histories of representing the CPUSA and the trade-union misleadership. Some of the better known lawyers in this category are: Ben Margolis in L.A.; Ann Fagan, Ginger, Al Brotsky, and Charles Garry in San Francisco as well as Victor Van Bourg, the UAW's lawyer on the West Coast; Rudy Schwere in Denver, who recently represented Steel Workers

Local 890 in their strike against Kennecott Copper; Ernie Goodman in Detroit; David Scribner, Jean Eisner, and Ralph Shapiro from New York. In addition, the quote "House Counsel" for UE, Bob Lewis, and "House Counsel" for the UAW, Jordan Rossen, also actively participate in Guild activities.

The organization today defines its politics as anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-sexist but refuses to deal with the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The CPUSA has very skillfully emphasized the broad, liberal nature of Guild membership to prevent any revolutionary politics from being introduced.

#### PROJECTS OF THE NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

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There are many national Guild projects scattered throughout the country providing a variety of legal services. The main ones are as follows:

1. The national Grand Jury Defense office. Trains and helps obtain legal counsel for witnesses called before Federal Grand Juries. Trains legal people in Grand Jury law, and maintains a library of Grand Jury materials which are distributed upon request.
2. The Military Law Office in San Francisco is the stateside support center for Guild military law projects in Iwakuni, Japan and Kosa, Okinawa. Located near U.S. Military bases, the South East Asia Projects provide legal advice and representation to active duty military personnel in their struggles against American foreign policy and G.I. oppression the military.
3. The National Immigration project publishes a newsletter and an immigration law bibliography. The project trains legal people in immigration law, representing aliens threatened with deportation, and representing "illegal aliens" against whom dragnet raids have been conducted in the Asian-Latin community.
4. The International Committee coordinates organizational protest against events such as the military coup in Chile, makes educational presentations about international events at regional and executive board meetings, and coordinates Guild delegations to other countries.
5. The Guild has a variety of projects dealing with criminal defense law. Until very recently the main emphasis of the Guild was criminal defense. (Black Panthers, Chicago Conspiracy, the Harrisburg trial, the Pentagon Papers, and prison work in general.). Recently a National Electronics Surveillance Project was established whose purpose is to curtail the illegal use of wire tap and other types of surveillance and a Save-The-Jury Criminal Justice Project

was established to combat recent encroachments on the rights of criminal defendants and the jury system. Both of these new projects are primarily for the training of legal people and dissemination of materials.

6. Other major projects. For the last two years, the Guild has been extensively committed to criminal defense work in connection with both the Attica Brothers Legal Defense Committee and the Wounded Knee Defense Committee. In addition, the Guild has directed a Peoples Lawsuit to Set Aside the 1972 Elections, primarily for the publicity value and new propaganda work that could be done in the process of gathering 1000's of people in organizations to be named plaintiffs.

7. Finally, 1972 a National Labor Committee was established. Its main work thus far has been the publication of a National Labor Newsletter to disseminate information on various labor struggles throughout the country and to provide legal, technical information. (See attached sample) At the most recent NLG convention (August 1974) a National Labor project was established to be based in Chicago with a projected staff of 4 people and a initial annual funding request of \$60,000. The stated goals of the project are 1) providing legal training in labor areas, 2) "developing legal materials and strategies around specific problems which face the workers movement", 3) "providing information about an analysis of the state of the country and workers movement" and 4) "providing information about the legal system to workers". (emphasis added) The final draft proposal for this project is phrased in syndicalist terms and stresses the "anti-capitalist workers movement". Many of the specific tasks that the National Labor Project has set out for itself, could be valuable to the CLP: compiling information on the larger unions and employers and their lawyers, compiling and distributing a referral directory of legal people and their areas of experience and labor law, distribution of "shop sheets" (pamphlets that describe worker's rights and how labor laws work written for mass distribution to workers).

More will be said below about the role of CLP Cadre and the various Guild projects.

#### STRUCTURE OF THE NLG

The 54 Chapters throughout the country are divided in to six Regions. Each region has a Regional Vice-President who is a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) which makes decisions in between meetings of the National Executive Board (NEB) which are held every four to five months. In addition, there is a national convention every 18 months. This structure is relatively formalistic and inefficient and decisions

are in fact made by those who are most active in the organization and do the work of the organization.

#### THE ROLE OF CLP CADRE

It is unclear to the writer of this report what role the cadre in San Francisco are presently playing in the NLG/ Mike M., Pat. L., Dave M., and Don P. all have been active in the past. Mike A. in Hattiesburg, Mississippi has been a dominant figure in the development of the Labor Committee. Many cadre in the GAD firm are or have been active in the Guild. Buck D. is widely respected throughout the organization and has particularly functioned in the International Committee and criminal defense work in recent years. Ron G. and John T. were instrumental in forming the Labor Committee in 1972, but are no longer dominant in NLG Labor work because of other priorities. Bob D. has worked on various Detroit Chapter activities including a fund raiser for Wounded Knee. Diane M. formerly did military work within the NLG (defense of G.I.'s) within the NLG, and developed and edited the Labor Newsletter for 2 years. Other CLP Cadre from the Detroit area, (but not work in the GADTDM Firm) have also been active in Guild- Sam G. was Regional Vice-President for the last year and a half and Mike O. has been active at the Chapter level.

The GADTDM Firm is known nationally and widely respected both in terms of its level of political development and its high quality legal work (Buck D. for criminal work-everyone else for labor work). Sharp struggle went down at the time of the last Guild Convention in August, 1974. Diane M. had the job of organizing a labor workshop on the topic of "Strikes". In addition to technical speakers, she put forth Mike M. (CLP Cadre from San Francisco) as one of the panelists and specifically stated that he would speak to the political aspects of strikes i.e. that they were class struggle in embryonic form and an anti-revisionist multi-national communist party of a new type was needed to lead the class. "On Strikes" from Lenin On Trade Unions was xeroxed and attached to the proposal that was sent to Labor Committee members across the country. It was known that Mike M. was a member of the then CL and immediate denunciations came forth that such a speaker would be "sectarian" "opposed to the broad liberal nature of the Guild" etc. Buck D. was at the Convention and waged a skillful and successful struggle for Mike M. to be allowed to speak at the workshop. In the course of this struggle, a general discussion was had as to how communists function within the NLG. At the prior national meeting in Atlanta in March, 1974, a similar uproar occurred with Mike A. spoke about the role of the Party, also in the context of a labor workshop. The position of the CLP Cadre from the GADTDM Firm is thus well known

A fraction will be formed within the NLG in the coming months to move that organization to support of the United Front of the Working Class against Fascism and the Struggle for the Democratic Right of the Class. Our main emphasis should be work around the Labor Committee and the National Labor Project. Mike A. and Diane M. are representatives to the decision-making body that will determine the course that the NLG Labor Project will take. Buck D. should continue to work with the International Committee. In addition we should investigate the National Immigration Project and the possibility of cadre on the West Coast becoming active in legal support of the various military projects.

There are a variety of ways for our influence to be felt within the NLG. There is a national newspaper (Guild Notes) for which articles consistent with the various campaigns of the CLP can be written. The semi-annual NEB's (National Executive Board Meetings) are also a key time to propagandize as the various projects all have committee meetings during the NEB and then decisions are made about the work for the next period of time.

Finally, the NLG represents another forum in which to expose the revisionism of the CPUSA.

P.S. Clarification is needed on where to go with reports and discussions/decisions. Example: Diane M. just received word that Labor Executive Committee is having a meeting in Chicago December 7-8 to discuss the National Labor Project. Probably only folks from the Midwest Area will be able to attend. There is therefore the possibility of exerting some influence. Where is this decision to be discussed??