

Movement for a Democratic Society

Post-Graduate Guerrilla

By BILL EDWARD

The New Left has a problem. Carl Davidson, a leading light of radical journalism and a past president of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), spelled it out in a recent issue of the *Guardian*. "Thousands of New Left activists leave the campus every year. Some have dropped out, a few have been expelled, but most have simply graduated. All of them confront the same problem: how to create a relevant off-campus movement."

For the New Left ideologues, whose avowed goal is disruption and ultimate revolution, this is a serious problem. No sooner does a student become "radicalized" by SDS than he graduates, loses contact with his radical associates, and is "co-opted" by the many "materialist" advantages American society has to offer a young person with a college degree.

So—after school, what? Obviously, form a "graduate" SDS organization which can keep young radicals in a revolutionary milieu. And this is precisely what is happening.

The name of the new graduate organization is "Movement for a Democratic Society" (MDS). According to an MDS pamphlet, "The Conspiracy," MDS is "the initial organization of the off-campus New Left."

As an off-campus organization, MDS is a direct outgrowth of Students for a Democratic Society. According to Carl Davidson, a resolution calling for "post student organizing projects" under the name "Movement for a Democratic Society" was passed at the 1966 national convention of SDS. However, little was done for over a year.

The majority of the organizational work on MDS was not completed until the spring and summer of 1968. A formal announcement that MDS was open for business was made on Sept. 28, 1968, in the *Guardian*: "MDS—Movement for a Democratic Society—is the best new idea of the year. Conceived as an 'organization of the adult New Left,' MDS is obviously a logical outgrowth of SDS, attempting to create a permanent group to work for radical change in America. One of their first activities is the launch of the Betty Boy Floyd Memorial Lecture Series (dig it; this is for real) Thursday night at the New School."

As it has developed over the past few months, MDS is growing into one of the slickest organizations ever to come down the radical pike. It views its future "domain for change" as the "whole world," and to take on the world, it has devised an intricate organizational structure consisting of five different kinds of groups: geographical, service, "special project," occupational, and "affinity" groups.

The MDS groups in operation at present and their chief organizers are:

- Teachers for a Democratic Society (Ted Gold and Adrienne Yurick)
- Urban Underground (Jackie Leavitt and Paul Becker)
- Crazy Horse MDS (Richard Epstein)
- Queens MDS (Phil Nicholson)
- Meta Information Applications and Computer MDS (Robert Shapiro)
- Courts Project (Brian Glick)
- Day Care Project (Nina Hutchinson and Rachel Fruchter)
- Caseworkers for a Democratic Society (Ted Kaptchuk and Joni Rabinowitz)
- New School (Chris Robinson and Naomi Jaffee)
- NYU (Hal Benenson)
- Con Edison Project (Marge Piercy)
- Radio Free People (Mike Kapezi)
- Publishing MDS (Isabel Feldman)

Still in the planning stages are Science and Technology MDS and Agricultural Workers for a Democratic Society. The organizers are, respectively, John Ehrenreich and Ted Kaptchuk. There is talk of a Psychology MDS. Involved in these discussions are Peter Candell and Dr. Tom Harper of the Medical Committee for Human Rights.

The chief organizer of MDS is Bob Gottlieb, co-author of the Port Authority Statement and a long-time SDS member until he graduated to MDS.

The only strictly geographical or community-oriented group in operation is the Queens (New York) MDS. This group was organized to see if radicals who have nothing in common with each other but where they live could form a viable group.

At an MDS organizational meeting held in January of this year in

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New York City, it appeared doubtful whether Queens MDS could survive. Members of Queens MDS had spent the previous three months arguing among themselves whether a revolution would come within a stable society by a small group of the elite or whether it would come in an unstable society from the proletariat. No resolution of this conflict was in sight.

The only service group in operation at present is the Day Care Project which provides day care facilities for movement people with children. Part of the motivation for starting this project is to keep as much money as possible circulating within the movement rather than obtaining day care from the Establishment.

The "special project" groups are temporary groups whose membership is drawn from various sub-groups within MDS. They are designed to attack particular institutions and, according to Carl Davidson, writing in the *Guardian*, "After the projects are completed, the groups then dissolve until new targets are selected." Special project groups currently operating are the Con Ed Project (Con-Edison is a public utility which supplies electricity and gas to New York City) and the Courts Projects, which is designed to attack the courts and corporate law firms.

MDS' "vanguard affinity group" is Crazy Horse MDS. Little is known about this group except that it is reported to have been formed by a group of former University of Chicago students living in New York City. It is also reported to be dismayed by the "lack of militancy" at recent anti-war demonstrations. It tries to raise the level of militancy by engaging in "arm-linked, disciplined marching and the chanting of so-called obscene slogans."

Apparently the most durable of the MDS groups are the occupational-oriented chapters. The reason for this is that they have a visible focal point for organizing and communication—their place of work. Two of these groups in the Movement for a Democratic Society deserve especially close attention by those interested