

CONVENTION ISSUE

JULY 1975

NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

MOVING ON



Towards a Socialist America

NAM CONVENTION '75

The year that has elapsed since NAM's national convention in Lexington, Kentucky has been one of contradictory signs. The victory of the Indochinese people in their struggle against U.S. imperialism certainly stands as the signal event of this period. There have been advances, too, on other fronts. The liberation struggles in Africa are drawing new strength from the victory over Portuguese colonialism. And in Portugal itself, a working class that has lived for forty years under a dictatorship has begun the difficult task of defining its own political life. As a result of the activity of women around the world, the U.N. has proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year--and now women are striving to provide revolutionary content to its proceedings.

At the same time, the weakening of imperialism has certainly not meant its demise. The U.S. continues to play power politics in the Middle East. Chile remains under the domination of the fascist junta. In Argentina, leftists are brutally murdered and the government teeters on the edge of fascism.

Internationally, however, it still seems possible to say that progressive forces are steadily moving forward. It is much more difficult to assess the situation with the U.S. Major segments of the Democratic Party and the labor movement continue to look to the emergence of Ted Kennedy and a liberal solution in 1976. The spontaneous outburst of workers at the recent Washington jobs rally could indicate that working people them-

selves are not willing to wait for a new candidate. But the struggles against busing and the popularity of George Wallace also indicate that racism continues to play a major divisive role within the working class. Whatever, we make of these developments, one fact is clear and shapes all other considerations: no unified, militant mass movement has developed in the past year, despite the deepening economic crisis.

NAM's work over the past year has been influenced by these larger events, but we, like the rest of the Left in this country, have rarely been able to intervene in shaping them. We have focused our efforts on supporting and stimulating mass activity wherever possible and on developing our own organizational coherence. We have participated in support work for the mineworkers' strike, the independence struggle of the Puerto Rican people, and Joanne Little's case. Local chapters have helped to organize against urban renewal, public service cutbacks, and minority program cutbacks on campuses--and fought for increased child care funding, utilities "lifelines," and better welfare services. The continuing economic crisis has also led to a focus on such issues as unemployment organizing. We have been moving--sometimes slowly--towards finding a realistic approach to organizing people and to providing alternatives to bourgeois cultural forms.

Internally, there has been more struggle--and probably more growth--than at any time in NAM's past. We have placed

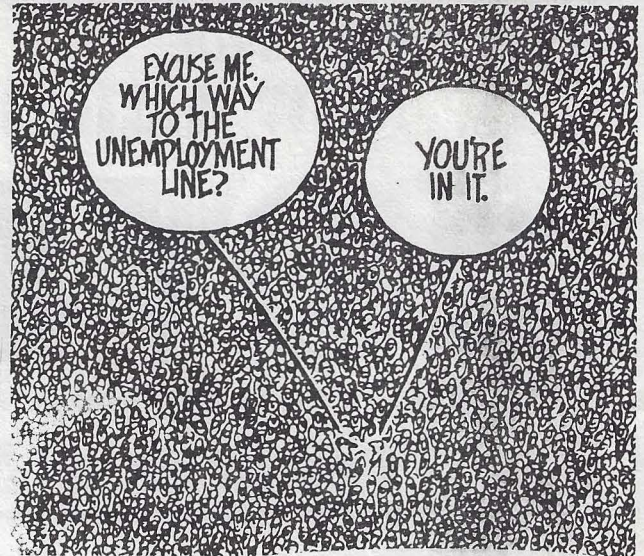
an increased emphasis on developing workplace related activity in the organization and on discussing programs that can make more concrete our commitment to socialist-feminism. We have initiated processes to develop positions on major questions of strategy, seeing this as part of a general move toward greater coherence. Ten new chapters have joined the organization since the last convention. We've shifted our National Office to Chicago and strengthened the national leadership through the establishment of a Political-Administrative Committee.

The questions that emerge as we seek to understand the meaning of the events of the past year will shape NAM's 1975 national convention. What are the present prospects for the development of a socialist movement in the U.S.? Where is the Left in this country? What do our answers to these more general questions mean for the work we will be doing in the coming year? NAM members and observers from across the country will meet in Oberlin, Ohio, August 6-10 to discuss a series of issues that speak to these questions.

A major focus of this year's convention will be the debates around strategy for the present period. The panel on strategy will be a summation of the discussions that have gone on within the NIC, in regions, and in chapters over the past twelve months. The NIC has developed majority and minority position papers based on this discussion and these will be presented to the convention for debate (in plenary and small groups) and possible adoption.

Related to the more general debate on analysis and strategy is the question of NAM's position on trade unions. This question has come to the fore as part of NAM's increased emphasis on developing a base in workplaces. The convention will adopt a minimal, experimental position on trade unions to be tested in our practice over the coming year. There will be panel presentations and small group discussions of the contending positions. To help strengthen our practice in this area, the convention will also feature a program workshop on the labor movement that will meet several times and occupational caucuses.

Such workshops and caucuses are part of an overall perspective that informs the convention. As much as possible in planning the convention, the NIC has attempted to examine the practical implica-



tions of broader strategic questions and to relate these to program development for the coming year. Thus, the NIC is proposing to the membership the adoption of a one-year plan for 1975-76. The purpose of this plan is to help NAM set clear priorities for work and to guide the NIC in the allocation of national resources. The plan presents organizational goals in five areas: program; political education; outreach materials; administration; research/analysis. The program proposals emphasize workplace and community organizing.

More specific program ideas and implementation of the one-year plan will be discussed in the program workshops that will occur several times throughout the weekend. The workshops will include: child care, health, internationalism, and many others. The major national programs of the past few months--utilities and unemployment--will be evaluated and experiences shared to help chapters doing this work.

In addition to the debates around positions proposed for adoption, the 1975 convention will have a major focus on beginning organization-wide discussion of two other important issues. There will be a panel discussion on culture and class consciousness that will explore the relationship between personal life and building a political movement. It will be followed by small groups and workshops on different areas raised in the panel presentations. And, as part of an attempt to integrate our ideas into the process of the convention itself, we are calling for people to bring instruments, songs, plays, etc. and to plan ways to make the convention a fulfilling experience.

Secondly, the convention will feature a political education session on "Should NAM Become a Cadre Organization?". The panel will particularly attempt to explore the relevance of Leninism for the development of a revolutionary organization in the contemporary U.S.

Women's and Men's Caucuses will each meet twice during the weekend. The Women's Caucus will be discussing how to best organize women. In the past, NAM has tended to de-emphasize issues that relate particularly to women in favor of programs that are directed toward "uniting the class" and involving women and men equally (e.g. utilities) while doing educational work around socialist-feminism. There is a growing move within the organization to change this approach and to stress the importance of organizing women around issues that are of immediate concern to them and that fight against aspects of women's oppression.

The Men's Caucus is scheduled to have a number of workshops on such areas as: "Men and Sports," and "Capitalism and Personal Life." The Caucus will also have further debate on an issue that came up at the last Expanded NIC meeting. Many men in NAM are becoming increasingly concerned with how they can actively fight the oppression of women. Most peo-

ple see this as a progressive development that can strengthen the organization. But it sometimes has a related aspect that is a source of greater controversy: this is the emphasis on how sex roles oppress men and the corresponding need for a men's liberation movement. Two presentations will be made on this issue.

There will also be gay, socialist-feminist, and androgyny caucuses that will meet throughout the weekend.

The convention should draw its meaning from our view of the events of the past year and our understanding of the prospects for political activity in the coming year. The panel discussions and related small groups will all try to do this. At the same time, the convention should be a place for us to come together to share ideas and experiences that are concrete and local and to learn from each other. Thus the agenda also includes ample space for caucuses, skills workshops, program workshops, and political education sessions. Finally, the convention should be a means for us to re-establish the sense of community that is crucial to the development of a revolutionary organization. In a country the size of the U.S., in a movement that has overemphasized unique local conditions, in a society that fosters divisions and isolation--such solidarity is vital.

AGENDA

- Note: (1) Different activities are often scheduled simultaneously. Chapters should try to have their members attend all of them, and report back.
- (2) There will be a place at the convention where additional workshops and caucuses may be announced, and space will be arranged for them.
- (3) The caucuses should decide at their initial meeting which of the other scheduled caucus times they want to meet.

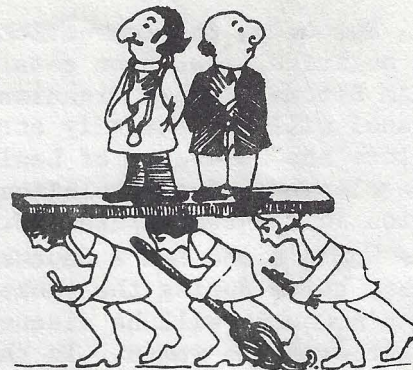
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6

- 12 Noon Registration begins.
- 1:00-3:30
 - **Small groups discussions on strategy, trade union positions, and the one year plan. Each small group will discuss one of these topics, and is intended to give people a way of preparing themselves for the major issues of the convention, and getting out their ideas.
 - **Orientation session on NAM and the convention for new members and observers.
- 3:30-6:00
 - **Another set of small groups on strategy, trade union positions, the one year plan, and orientation to NAM.



6:00-7:30 Dinner.

- 7:30-9:30 **Women's Caucus: discussion of the issues and debates that will be occurring during the convention, emphasizing how they relate to women.
- **Men's Caucus: small group discussions of such topics as "Sports and Capitalism", "The Military", "Capitalism and the Family".



THURSDAY, AUGUST 7

- 9:00-10:30 **Program workshops: These workshops will involve discussions of (a) work we have done in the past year; (b) ideas for future work; (c) implications of the strategy and trade union papers; (d) implementation of the one year plan. Workshops already scheduled are: problems in trade union work; organizing workers from outside the workplace; campus; utilities; internationalism; community organizing; anti-racism; socialist-feminist programs; childcare; culture and consciousness; electoral struggles; problems in chapter structure and functioning.
- **Political education: presentations on such topics as "What is Leninism?", "The Sino-Soviet Split", "Basics of Marxism", "What is Socialist-Feminism". In each PE session, one topic will be covered.

**Skills session: in each session one topic will be covered, such as "How to make good leaflets", "Socialist schools", "Newspaper skills", "How to talk about NAM".

- 10:30-12:00 **Gay Caucuses: issues of sexual oppression and liberation will be discussed, possibly in separate men's and women's groups.
- **Socialist-Feminist Caucus: for women who want to develop the theory and practice of socialist-feminism.
- **Androgyny Caucus: This begins with a discussion of how stereotyped sex roles distort our lives.
- **Another set of small groups on strategy, trade union positions, and the one year plan. Orientation to NAM and the convention.

12:00-1:00 Lunch.

1:00-1:15 **Plenary: Greetings and agenda adoption.

1:15-2:15 **Plenary: panel discussion on culture- the role and origins of ideology and false consciousness, mass culture vs. authentic culture.

2:15-4:00 **Small group discussions on culture and consciousness.

4:00-6:00 **Plenary on constitutional amendments: amendments are being proposed that in the main have to do with updating and clarifying the language in the constitution.

6:00-7:30 Dinner.

7:30-8:30 **Plenary: report from the National Interim Committee- an analysis of the current period, a summing up of our practice in the last year, and a presentation of the one year plan, which outlines our major tasks for the coming year.

8:30-9:30 **Small groups discussions of the one-year plan.



FRIDAY, AUGUST 8

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- 9:00-10:30 **Occupational caucuses: these will involve discussion of (a) problems of workers in the field specified; (b) implications of the strategy and trade union papers; (c) development of continuing organizational forms for the participants in the caucus and others in the area. The caucuses are: teachers, factory workers, health workers, and clerical workers.
**Political education session.
**Skills session.
- 10:30-12:00 **Regional meetings: Discussions of how each region has worked in the past year, and suggestions for improvement.
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch.
- 1:00-2:00 **Plenary: Panel on the NIC majority and minority positions on strategy. The three positions will be debated, to clarify the differences between them.
- 2:00-4:00 **Small group discussions on strategy.
- 4:00-6:00 **NIC nominations (first session): there are two sessions for NIC nominations, in order to lessen the pressure, and give more time for fuller presentations from the candidates.
- 6:00-8:00 **Dinner.
- 8:00-10:00 **Program workshops.
**Caucuses.
**Entertainment-- bring musical instruments!
**Political Education session.
**Skills session.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 9

- 9:00-10:30 **Women's Caucus: evaluation of Socialist-Feminist Conference; discussion of ways of developing program for organizing women.
**Men's Caucus: a debate/discussion on the relationship of men's and women's oppression, and the role of men in the fight against sexism.
- 10:00-12:00 **NIC nominations (second session).
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch.
- 1:00-2:00 **Plenary: Panel on the three positions on trade unions developed by the Workplace Organizing committee. The debate should clarify the differences between these positions.
- 2:00-4:00 **Small group discussions on the trade union positions.
- 4:00-6:00 **Plenary: floor debate and amendments on strategy papers. Voting for the new NIC.
- 6:00-7:30 Dinner.
- 7:30-9:30 **Program workshops.
**Caucuses.
**Political education: "Should NAM be a cadre organization?"- this will be a debate, intended to explore the issues involved, and will not lead to a resolution and vote at this convention.
- 9:30- **Party!

CONTINUED--P. 8

VITAL INFORMATION

LOCATION

The NAM convention is going to be held at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. Registration will be in South Hall.

TRANSPORTATION

If you are flying in, there is limousing service from the Cleveland Airport directly to the college. The limousines leave the airport at 9, 11, 1, 3, and 5, and the trip takes about 45 minutes. Cost is \$4.00.

HOUSING & FOOD

We will be the only residents in two of the campus dormitories. Rooms are available in single, double, or quad. Cribs are not provided. We will be eating meals together--cafeteria style--in South Hall, which can hold up to 450 at a single seating. The cost for room and three meals a day is \$11.50 per person per day.

CHILDCARE

We have rented the child care facilities of the First Church of Oberlin, which is located at the edge of campus. It will be open and staffed from 9 AM to 10 PM. We will only have limited paid personnel and members are expected to share in child care responsibilities. There are cribs at the church, but crib sheets, washcloths, diapers, etc. should be brought with you.

RECREATION

We expect this convention to provide ample opportunities for recreation. There are volleyball and basketball courts, and areas for softball, tennis, and three-hole golf. You should bring your own equipment.

OFFICE EQUIPMENT

There will be some typewriter and mimeograph equipment available at the convention. However, it will be limited and you should try to have anything that you want to distribute at the convention printed in advance. Priority will be given to program workshops. Chapters and individual members will have to pay for any paper that is used.

DELEGATES

NAM members must apply for delegate status during registration. Only members whose dues are paid up may vote (or be represented) at the convention. Though chapters are urged to pay their dues prior to the convention, dues may be paid at registration. One person in each chapter should be delegated to handle registration procedures. There will be a delay for chapters that are paying dues at the convention. Delegates may represent chapter members in good standing, but no one delegate may cast more than five votes. Requests for exemptions from this rule may be made to the NIC. Members-at-large in good standing may cast one vote.

OBSERVERS

We welcome observers who consider themselves in sympathy with NAM's overall purpose and goals. The observer is entitled to sit in on all plenaries and is invited to participate in workshops and small group meetings at the discretion of the members of the workshop. Observers do not have a voice in plenary sessions.



This year NAM is handling the arrangements for room and board. We are required to give Oberlin College a 50% advance deposit on the total expenses: room & board, plus rental of their facilities. This amount will far exceed anything that we have in our treasury. For this reason, it is extremely important that we receive advance registrations with at least 50% of the total fee (registration and room & board)--and preferably all of it --from members and observers immediately. The registration form and fees should be sent to the National Office by July 18th. In any case, do not send them after July 28th as they may not arrive in time.

FEES

Registration Fee--Delegates: \$10 Observers: \$15
Travel Pool--Delegates \$5 (Only NAM members may participate in the travel pool)
Room & Board--\$11.50 per person per day (includes room and all meals from Wednesday supper through Sunday lunch)

Note: Chapters should consider doing fundraising for delegates who cannot afford convention costs. Any member who will be staying off-campus and would like to make special arrangements for meals should let us know immediately.

Checks should be made payable to New American Movement. Please return the registration form and fees to: NAM, 1643 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. If you have any questions, please write or call us at 312-252-7151

THIS FORM SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE NAM NATIONAL OFFICE (1643 N. MILWAUKEE, CHICAGO, IL 60647) BY JULY 18.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

NAM MEMBER? YES _____ NO _____ IF YES, CHAPTER? _____

IF NO, OTHER ORGANIZATION? _____

DAY ARRIVING _____

CHILDREN ATTENDING WITH YOU (NAMES & AGES FOR CHILD CARE USE)

WHAT KIND OF ROOM DO YOU PREFER? WE WILL TRY TO ARRANGE IT ACCORDING TO YOUR FIRST AND SECOND CHOICES:

SINGLE _____ DOUBLE _____ QUAD _____

IF DOUBLE OR QUAD, GIVE PREFERENCE FOR ROOMATES: _____

TOTAL FEE: _____
(INCLUDES REGISTRATION, TRAVEL POOL, ROOM & BOARD)

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____
(AT LEAST 50% OF TOTAL FEE)



SUNDAY, AUGUST 10

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9:00-10:30 **Program workshops.

**Caucuses.

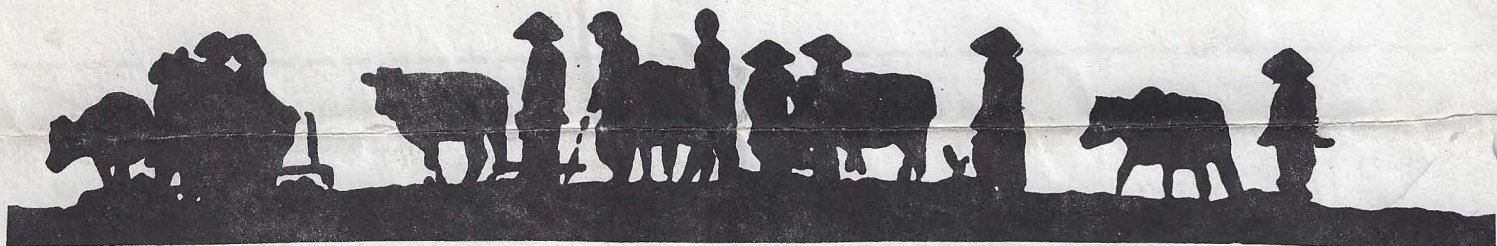
**Political education session.

**Skills session.

10:30-12:00 **Plenary: floor debate and amendments on the trade union positions.

12:00-1:00 Lunch.

1:00-4:00 **Plenary: floor debate and amendments on the one year plan, and any other resolutions.



New American Movement

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