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"Our Founder, the Mimeograph Machine": Participatory Democracy in Students for a Democratic Society's Print Culture

■ John McMillian, *Harvard University*

It scarcely mattered whether it was day or night—people just kept coming and going. Amid the frequently ringing phones, the tap-tap-tap of perhaps a dozen typewriters, and the periodic rumble of a nearby, elevated train, they worked, ate, and talked in dimly lit rooms, perched on wobbly chairs, surrounded by sheaves of paper and battered desks.¹ Flyers, posters, and newspaper photographs nearly papered over the chipped plaster walls. Some of the wall decorations—a charcoal drawing of Eugene Debs, stickers from the Industrial Workers of the World, and a print by the social realist artist Ben Shahn—represented the American Left of previous years. But other ephemera—a photograph of Bob Dylan, a political cartoon from the *Village Voice* by Jules Feiffer, and the bumper-sticker slogan “Make Love, Not War”—gave the headquarters of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) a sense of political currency. One journalist who visited its National Office (N.O.), which in the mid-1960s was at the edge of Chicago’s West Side ghetto, described it as something between a newsroom and a flophouse, drawing attention to “an unmade cot, several laundry bags, a jar of instant coffee, and a half-eaten chocolate bar.” But one artifact, above all, caught his attention. Taped to one of the walls was a model drawing of a mimeograph machine; just beneath it, someone had written the words “Our Founder.”²

SDS leaders were nothing if not irreverent, but here we find a metaphor that speaks volumes about how workers at the N.O. conceived of themselves, their history, and their mission. Seeing as it was not unusual for SDS organizers to

imagine themselves working in the reflected glow of the left-wing luminaries they pasted on their walls, they could scarcely afford to be anything but confident about the agency of the written word and the power and authority of fresh ideas. Various and multihued pamphlets and flyers, densely printed newspapers, crude bulletins, circular letters, and delicate, smudgy carbons—this was the stuff from which SDS aimed to change the world.

On the whole, members of SDS wrote easily. Throughout the organization's various permutations, melodramatic zeal was rarely in short supply; reticence was. Even in its earliest years, when it was a more intellectually minded organization than it became, the group's frustrations with American society sometimes registered awkwardly in print. Increasingly braying tones became more familiar toward the mid-1960s, and by about 1968, its literature frequently displayed such a violence of feeling that writers literally took to calling their pamphlets "shotguns." (As in, "My first project was to write a shotgun on political prisoners.")³ From this perspective, an analysis of SDS's published writings could easily replicate, and even amplify, the familiar declension narrative describing how the group betrayed its roots in liberalism and participatory democracy and eventually self-destructed.⁴

However, through an examination of SDS's internal printed communications, we can tell an altogether different story, one that helps us understand how SDS established itself, first as a community of participatory democrats, and eventually, as the organizational arm of one of the biggest social movements in American history. Although the New Left's demise exerts a powerful hold over the imaginations of many historians, a certain degree of consensus and organizational cohesion may, in fact, be a more prominent theme in SDS's history than conflict over basic values. From its founding until its demise in 1969, its membership rolls increased year by year, and by the end of 1968, it claimed over 300 chapters and approximately 100,000 official members, along with countless thousands more who considered themselves affiliated with SDS even if they never got around to paying their membership dues. Meanwhile, the organization was active on numerous fronts, including the Vietnam War and the draft, the civil rights movement, poverty, and university reform.

Efforts to explain SDS's wide-ranging appeal have sometimes touched upon its highly *verbal* culture—its seemingly endless meetings and debates and late-night bull sessions, inspired by the existential politics of the civil rights movement, as well as C. Wright Mills's famous dictum that "personal troubles . . . must be understood in terms of public issues."⁵ However, SDS meetings frequently left much to be desired. Some people loved them, but others found them (by turns) tedious, windy, unfocused, cliquish, sexist, and liable to be

commandeered by whomever was most charismatic and articulate. Written conversations could be similarly skewed, but overall, SDS's print culture may have been better suited to its goal of eliciting genuine membership participation, reinforcing its inclusive and deliberative ethos, and affording a healthy spirit of mutuality.

To be sure, this spirit was sometimes strained. Resources in SDS were constantly stretched thin, the federal government waged a relentless dirty tricks campaign against the group, and certain internal debates—concerning SDS's structure, strategy, and programs—were about as predictable as the rotation of planets. But even amid all of this, SDS never lacked various internal newsletters that helped to raise people's stakes in the organization. Although a few New Leftists tried to reach a wide public audience with their writings, in scrutinizing SDS through the lens of print culture, our attention turns not only to ideas set forth in SDS's published works but also to the normative assumptions that framed the expression of these ideas. The chief accomplishment of SDS's print culture in the early 1960s is that it nurtured democratic sentiments that were already germinating among the student intelligentsia. Although scholars have traced the New Left's enthusiasm for participatory democracy to the civil rights movement and to the influence of a few pioneering thinkers, this essay shows that the New Left's inclusive style of decision making also grew out of the social processes surrounding the production, distribution, and transmission of its written texts.⁶

An Agenda for a Generation

Students for a Democratic Society was officially founded in 1960, but for all intents and purposes, the group launched itself in June 1962 at a United Auto Workers (UAW) camp in Port Huron, Michigan, when 59 of its members gathered there to complete the *Port Huron Statement*—a 24,000 word manifesto originally drafted by Tom Hayden.⁷ Today, a certain mystique surrounds the document, some of which is deserved, some perhaps not.⁸ On the one hand, only a cynic would deny the romantic appeal of young intellectuals writing a political *cri du coeur* from the edges of the Michigan wilderness. But the popular notion that the *Port Huron Statement* rekindled a moribund Left is overblown.⁹ It actually appeared during a rising tide of political activism and cultural nonconformity among young people, and although the new student radicalism was a fertile topic for journalists in the early 1960s, few of them regarded the SDS manifesto as especially important.¹⁰ Finally, while more than

a few 1960s veterans claim that their readings of the *Port Huron Statement* provoked a certain frisson, others found it rather dull. Those SDS leaders who have admitted that they found sections of it “tedious” or “boring” are probably more representative of the New Left as a whole.¹¹

But if it is true that an essential ingredient of politics is timing, then the *Port Huron Statement*’s authors were maestros. The manifesto’s celebrated opening salvo—“We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably at the world we inherit”—put into prose the smoldering discontent of countless students in the Cold War era.¹² Its dour conclusion—“If we appear to seek the unattainable . . . then let it be known that we do so to avoid the unimaginable”—captured a sense of moral urgency among young leftists.¹³ Its impertinence (the notion that it represented an “agenda for a generation”) reflected the outsized ambitions of many baby-boomer idealists.¹⁴ Its strategic call for “realignment” (which meant replacing the Democratic Party’s Dixiecrats with left-liberals) struck a familiar chord, but its suggestion that students themselves could be among the driving forces for social change was more novel.

Finally, the *Port Huron Statement* popularized participatory democracy, the idea that people should have some say over the decisions that affect their lives.¹⁵ Participatory democracy did not originate in the New Left; many whites gleaned the concept from the Civil Rights Movement, particularly the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s (SNCC) emphasis on consensus-building and “group-centered leadership.”¹⁶ Others had been educated in the virtues and pleasures of civic engagement through their encounters with social theorists like Arnold Kaufman and C. Wright Mills. As James Miller argues, participatory democracy was never adequately defined, and eventually the concept became hopelessly tangled up with the New Left’s calls for direct action and personal “authenticity.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, it provided a rationale for any number of left-inflected political activities in the 1960s, and offered a simple way of critiquing all sorts of existing institutions. Equally important, it promised to frame social relations within the New Left itself.¹⁸ Whatever different shades of meaning participatory democracy may have had in the 1960s, on this point the *Port Huron Statement* seems reasonably clear. One of the “root principles” of participatory democracy, it said, was the idea that “decision making of basic social consequence [must] be carried on by public groupings.” Furthermore, politics should be “seen positively, as the art of collectively creating an acceptable pattern of social relations” and bringing people “out of isolation and into community.”¹⁹ If participatory democracy remained rather vague as a macro-political analysis, as a basic interactional model

within SDS it was easily understood and implemented. Of course, people could (and did) quibble about the details: Did participatory democracy mean that decisions should be made by consensus, or simply by consensus-building methods? Should leadership positions be frequently rotated, or abolished altogether? Who knew? But participatory democracy did not need to be crisply formulated to function effectively as a bedrock ideal; certainly very few New Leftists ever called for centralized decision-making, entrenched leadership, or rigid hierarchies.²⁰

Members of SDS gathered in small groups to refine various sections of the *Port Huron Statement* that Hayden had already drafted with help from others, and they finished their work in three days. For decades afterward, many of those who collaborated on the project retained glowing memories of the whole experience. Dorothy Burlage recalled, "People kept operating out of idealism and their instincts about what would create a better world. It was a rare moment in history, and we were blessed to be given that opportunity."²¹ Barbara Jacobs (later Barbara Haber) remembered feeling "like the luckiest person on earth for having had either the good luck or the good sense" to have made it to Port Huron; the conference, she said, was "dazzlingly exciting."²² An often-overlooked preface to the *Port Huron Statement* underscores its democratic spirit. "This document represents the results of several months of writing and discussion among the membership," it begins, and goes on to explain that the manifesto should not be regarded as the final word on SDS's ideology, but rather as "a *living document* open to change with our times and experiences. It is a beginning: in our own debate and education, [and] in our dialogue with society."²³ In other words, the *Port Huron Statement* was itself a product of the collaborative ethos that it champions in its text. It was at once an epistemological tool, offering a critique of society and specific strategies for change, as well as a symbol and an embodiment of participatory democracy itself.

Band of Brothers, Circle of Trust

Although SDS began establishing a democratic print culture with the *Port Huron Statement*, the ethos they built around their printed communications did not become a pronounced force in the organization right away. Instead, it evolved gradually, over the course of several years, in an effort to retain the harmonious social relations that characterized SDS when it was founded. To understand how this happened, it is necessary to examine its institutional

history in the period following the Port Huron conference, as SDS began growing into a larger, more heterogeneous organization.

For a time, the same sense of camaraderie that marked the group's retreat to the Michigan woodlands continued to propel SDS. As one former member recalled, Tom Hayden and Al Haber personally drew many people into their fold. "They would go find people they . . . connected with on a gut level. It wasn't 'Do you believe in the principles of unity?' It was, 'You feel good to me. I have the feeling you're very bright and you're spirited and we see things basically the same way.' So this was a hand-recruited bunch of people who really wanted to use their lives to change the world, and who loved finding each other."²⁴ Frithjof Bergmann, a professor at the University of Michigan in the early 1960s, said much the same thing: "The nucleus attracted good people."²⁵ Most were high-achievers—student government leaders, editors of campus newspapers, and precocious intellectuals—who were united by friendship and mutual admiration.²⁶ As a result, dialogue was eased by a "mutual awareness." As Dick Flacks put it, "You could trust each other, even if you disagreed."²⁷

SDS meetings were typically thorough and intensive. Jeremy Brecher, who attended his first SDS National Council (N.C.) meeting in New York City in 1963 while an undergraduate at Reed College, found himself enthralled by the group's "freewheeling discussions," not least because they seemed scrubbed clean of the Old Left's sectarianism. "They weren't talking about the history of Soviet-American relations and who was right in 1956," he quipped. Instead, meetings provoked "emotional and political responses that were relevant" to people's lived experience.²⁸ Alan Haber's influence seemed particularly notable. Said one activist, "Until about 1963, just about everyone in SDS was either recruited by Al Haber, or recruited by someone who was recruited by Al Haber."²⁹ According to Brecher, Haber "was the one who taught [SDS activists] to be thoughtful and argumentative without being sectarian . . . He had set the tone of a place that was committed to open discussion and yet also politically committed." Brecher recalled that sometimes Haber "would play schoolmaster and say, 'Relate the following two issues.' We were just sitting around bullshitting at some odd hour. He would say, 'Can you say [what] the relation is between this issue and that issue?' That kind of thing."³⁰

Moreover, so long as SDS remained very small, there was room for deeply felt personal conversations. Ann Arbor peace activist Elise Boulding recalled one memorable evening when "eight or ten" SDSers attended a New Year's party at her home. After her husband, the economist Kenneth Boulding, read aloud Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Ring Out Wild Bells" at the stroke of midnight, a group gathered on the living room floor in front of the fireplace:

They began asking each other how they might have dealt with situations each had faced, like having police dogs unleashed on them. How do you protect yourself from a police dog that is taught to leap at your throat? . . . For middle-class students who had come from protected families, this was the first time they had faced raw violence. They were totally unprepared for it. This was a time for them to share with each other what it meant to them, how much it had hurt them inside—much more than the outside hurt—and what it meant to feel afraid. The tone of the dialogue impressed me profoundly, because there wasn't a trace of defensiveness or even hostility. It was beyond all that . . . Their conversation went on for hours. I just sat, barely breathing. I felt I was tapping another dimension of human experience that was very rare. One just didn't hear people sharing at that level.³¹

However, this very same group could also appear cliquish and self-absorbed. Looking back, one SDS veteran even characterized himself this way: "I honestly walked around with the feeling, as narrow and group-centered as it was, that if you weren't in SDS, your life was empty and you were not perceiving what was really happening," he said.³² Another former member, Barry Bluestone, said that his first impression of SDS was that it was dominated by "purely political people [who] had no other interests at all." When he attended an SDS retreat in 1962, it only seemed to confirm his negative assessment: "It seemed to me there was more to life than debating . . . infinitely detailed political nuances," he recalled. Only later did he learn that "you could get intensely involved and entwined with political struggle and yet still lead a full and active and enjoyable life."³³

Another problem arose from the fact that, although elitism was officially discouraged in SDS, the group maintained an obvious internal pecking order. According to Brecher, although "there was no intimidation about arguing" with the so-called "heavies" in the organization—people like Tom Hayden, Al Haber, Dick Flacks, Paul Potter, "and to some degree Steve Max"—it was often a foregone conclusion that "obviously their rap was going to take the way [and] your rap wasn't."³⁴ Moreover, no matter how inclusive SDS aimed to be, some members *were* intimidated, if only because others shined so brightly. Jacobs recalled a summer afternoon when Hayden—in many respects the early New Left's beau ideal—cockily announced (with his feet on the desk, while reading the *New York Times*) that the Democratic party's "realignment" was all but imminent, "and [so] it was time for him and Al [Haber] and Casey [Hayden] to get in the car and drive down to Washington." But when Jacobs read the same newspaper article without managing to reach a similar conclusion, she

thought to herself, “Boy, he’s a genius and I’m dumb. He knows how to read the *New York Times* and then he has the guts to go down and talk to congressmen, which I never would have the guts to do.”³⁵ Another SDS veteran, looking back with almost two decades of hindsight, said, “I still consider [SDS’s founders] to be some of the most brilliant people of our generation, and I still, in some ways, idolize those folks.”³⁶

Finally, although the issue of sexism within the New Left had yet to emerge as a topic of conversation, women generally took secondary roles in SDS. Today, SDS veterans sometimes disagree over whether women were muscled aside, or simply acquiesced to prevailing gender stereotypes, but almost everyone acknowledges that they were less vocal than men, and that they handled the great majority of what the New Left called “shitwork” (which could include anything from routine office tasks to cooking and cleaning).³⁷ Cathy Wilkerson recalled that she “first became conscious of the issues around men and women” at the SDS meetings she attended at Swarthmore in 1963. “I noticed that no women were in leadership positions. No women were really listened to . . . I realized that to be accepted, you had to date one of the men.”³⁸ Another woman who says she belonged to “a very typical chapter of SDS,” recalled that “men tended to dominate all the discussions and women tended to run the mimeograph machine, and would sort of be expected to screw and make meals.”³⁹

In December 1962, Al Haber and his fiancé, Barbara Jacobs—who, perhaps not coincidentally, was among the women who felt her talents were not being recognized—expressed some of these concerns in a Cassandra-like letter that they distributed among the SDS inner circle. “We have, each in different ways, felt isolated, missed communication from the national office or from projects, missed a sense of membership activity and élan, and squirmed with a feeling of in-groupishness,” they said. SDS was “still an association of friends, and not yet an organization where the individual member has dignity and respect and is the concern of the ‘leadership.’”⁴⁰ Although a few SDSers resented the letter’s tone, its general thrust was hard to refute. SDS may have described itself as a “national” organization in 1962–63, but this was an obvious conceit: it was barely solvent and basically jerrybuilt, with only four hundred members and nine chapters rigged together through a combination of meetings, conferences, and occasional visits from Field Secretary Steve Max.⁴¹

Moreover, the Haber-Jacobs missive arrived at a propitious moment, as the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis had had a truly unsettling effect on SDS—most obviously because it raised the horrible specter of nuclear war, but also because it threw into sharp relief the enormous chasm between SDS’s outsized

ambitions and its organizational capabilities. In New York City, SDS activists could do little more than greet the nuclear standoff with mordant humor.⁴² In Ann Arbor, students responded by converging on Tom and Casey Hayden's home, where they ran up a massive phone bill trying to keep tabs on protest activity that unfolded elsewhere; but all they accomplished locally was to organize a tiny demonstration at the University of Michigan, where they were pelted with eggs and tomatoes by an opposing group of students.⁴³

Much of what SDS required in this period was obvious: "A lot of plain dirty fundraising and a lot of laborious chapter organizing."⁴⁴ But SDS leaders also recognized that if their group was to grow stronger and more cohesive, it would need to experiment with new approaches.⁴⁵ The democratic idealism that fueled the *Port Huron Statement* would not be enough. As a result, they started promoting new ways of communicating with the membership through print. In short, they tried to replicate on paper what was attractive about SDS meetings (the warm, honest, probing discussions that helped to build a store of trust and a sense of community) while mitigating those qualities that hampered the organization (its ineffectuality, clannishness, and unequal participation). SDS may have been infused with a collaborative spirit *ab ovo*, but the values and assumptions that governed many of its communications, and that in turn bonded many people to SDS, evolved out of a painful recognition that participatory democracy—like any form of democracy—did not unfold naturally. It would have to be promoted and protected.

Passing the Charisma Around

To a considerable degree, SDS registered its egalitarian social theories and attitudes through its attitudes toward written correspondence. Although we frequently think of letters as among the most private of communications, in SDS epistolary exchanges were shared liberally. This was true from the beginning, when Tom Hayden sent the very first drafts of the *Port Huron Statement* to a select group of colleagues, who in turn mailed back their responses, which were then retyped, mimeographed, and distributed to the entire group "for the purposes of dialogue and cross fertilization."⁴⁶ However, in subsequent years, letters carried on and informed SDS conversations in such unusual ways that Arthur Waskow, a prominent peace activist, asked a friend whether anyone had ever considered the possibility that the New Left was inventing a "new literary form."⁴⁷

Sometimes, SDSers passed letters around by hand (and since they were frequently typed with carbons, multiple copies abounded). National Secretary

Clark Kissinger once acknowledged that, unless his missives from the Chicago N.O. were marked “personal,” he expected them to be circulated in this way.⁴⁸ On other occasions, New Leftists orchestrated an exchange of letters on a particular issue, intending their correspondence to be distributed to others, so as to expose the student community to differing points of view. At Swarthmore College, which had a strong SDS chapter, activists launched a small, mimeographed magazine called *Albatross* that was made up entirely of letters that students had also sent to campus and public officials “on such matters as the Cuban situation, the Un-American Activities Committee, the Peace Corps, foreign policy in Africa, and the sit-ins.” Recipients of these letters were told that duplicate copies were slated to be reprinted in *Albatross*, a magazine read by “several thousand students and adults.” The idea “was not only to make Congressmen attentive to the letters but to inform and consolidate student opinion.”⁴⁹ Similarly, New Leftists sometimes deployed the epistolary form when writing for a larger audience, say by publishing dispatches from their travels or open letters to the SDS community.⁵⁰ Finally, letters originally intended as private exchanges sometimes appeared in print later on, in one of SDS’s various newsletters or in its official newspaper, *New Left Notes*.⁵¹

Usually this happened with the author’s blessings, but not always. The democratic sensibilities of some New Leftists were such that they could be remarkably casual about copyrights, permissions, and rights of privacy.⁵² Occasionally, letter writers even took special care to indicate that they did *not* want to see their correspondence published.⁵³ Certainly Steve Max was not pleased when, on several occasions, SDS officers published his private letters. The final straw came when someone at *New Left Notes* took the liberty of printing a personal letter sharply critical of a recent essay by someone Max admired, the distinguished author and labor activist Sidney Lens. “Listen you sons of bitches, if I wanted my letter on the Sid Lens piece printed, I would have asked to have it printed,” Max exclaimed. “Unlike some people in SDS there is nothing wrong with my toilet training and I don’t feel the need to communicate my every thought to the entire world. When I write for publication, I try to write in a bit more reasoned and careful way than when I dash a note to you screwups.” (To Sidney Lens, Max added, “I must apologize . . . for my unfortunate use of the word ‘didleywack.’”)⁵⁴

Max’s letters were obviously printed by mistake, but the question of just how much confidentiality SDS’s letter writers could expect provoked a revealing discussion at a 1964 N.C. meeting. The issue came up when Vernon Grizzard, head of one of SDS’s Economic Research and Action Projects (ERAP), suggested that certain sensitive correspondence relating to their work should be stored in

locked file cabinets. But others strenuously disagreed. Shelly Blum worried that the proposal made SDS look like an "autocracy" and argued, "there should be some leniency in who sees what." Robert Ross was even more adamant: "Any dues paying member should be able to see all [SDS] correspondence . . . As soon as confidential files not open to all are established, a new elite is set up. People should feel that they know what is happening in the organization."

When someone else noted that there were important security considerations to take into account, Doug Ireland dismissed the claim as "old left conspiratorialism." "The FBI won't be prevented from getting information from a locked file," he scoffed. Another member suggested the group should simply rely on the good judgment of SDS's elected officers to decide which letters should be kept confidential, but added that, of course, the files should be left "fairly open." Only Todd Gitlin said flatly, "It should be the right of a member to decide who will read what he writes." When Dickie Magidoff argued that the case for confidentiality should not hinge on political considerations, but rather upon "pragmatic and functional" ones (apparently having to do with that fact that a few "nuts" were beginning to hang around the office), Ross amplified his argument that the very idea of holding letters in locked file cabinets was antithetical to SDS values. If the N.C. allowed one group of people to see its letters, but not others, he said, then it would not be treating everyone equally. Said Ross: "We're acting like people who attach more importance to little things without some concern for the way we do business." The discussion finally wound down when the group settled on a compromise: SDS's files would be left open to the membership, except for certain sensitive materials that could be stored elsewhere, "at the discretion of the president and national secretary."⁵⁵ Although Ross's position didn't quite carry the day, clearly the N.C. took special care to protect SDS's reputation as a democratic community.

Another way the N.C. helped to establish SDS's print culture was by voting, at a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, in 1962, to launch a newsletter called the *Discussion Bulletin*. Unlike SDS's *Membership Bulletin*, which aimed to keep people up-to-date on SDS's activities, the *Discussion Bulletin*—sometimes called the *DB* for short—was designed to stimulate discussion on the *Port Huron Statement* (although it soon opened itself up to a much wider range of concerns).⁵⁶ The N.C. charged the group's indefatigable Assistant National Secretary, Don McKelvey, with putting the *DB* in motion.⁵⁷ Having graduated from Haverford College in 1960, McKelvey was a touch older than most of SDS's members, and as a former National Secretary for the Student Peace Union (SPU), he had prior experience working in a highly democratic organization.⁵⁸ But at the same time, he had an almost sentimental attachment to the *Discussion Bulletin*,

and in his frequent correspondence with new and prospective members, he promoted it with all the zeal of an Amway associate. Later, the *Membership* and *Discussion Bulletins* were streamlined into a single *SDS Bulletin*, and Helen Garvy and then Jeff Shero took turns as editors, until the entire operation was scrapped in 1966 to make room for SDS's tabloid newspaper, *New Left Notes*. But regardless of who was at the helm, these newsletters welcomed input from anyone who wanted to contribute, even if they were not official members of SDS.⁵⁹ This easygoing editorial policy aimed to generate a steady flow of ideas in SDS, but it served another important purpose as well; as McKelvey put it at the time, people's written contributions were thought to facilitate the "creation of community."⁶⁰ Garvy agreed, but added that the *Bulletin* likewise functioned as a countervailing force against SDS's testosterone-fueled meetings. "I saw it as an equalizer," she recalled. "Sometimes meetings were dominated by whoever talked the loudest,"⁶¹ and from her perspective, the *Bulletin* represented a way "to bring members into the mainstream of the organization—into its thoughts and discussions."⁶²

The *Discussion Bulletin* appeared irregularly, and no one took much care to see that it looked nice. At first McKelvey printed it from SDS's headquarters on E. 19th Street in New York City on a hand-cranked mimeograph machine; later Garvy ran it on colored paper through an offset printer after SDS moved its operations to Chicago. Only when Shero took over in late 1965 did the *Bulletin* begin featuring a few photographs, illustrations, and sidebars. But one gathers a sense of the special role it played by noticing the various ways the SDS faithful described it—almost never as a newsletter, but rather as an "organ of intellectual exchange," a "dialogue," a "forum," or a "medium."⁶³ And just as it was an article of faith in SDS that politics grew out of personal experiences rather than entrenched ideologies, the *Bulletin* was spurred along by the notion that the very process of writing—of sitting down, laboring over one's prose, and putting ink to paper—often helped people to sharpen their thinking, crystallize their views, and generate new discoveries. When a student from Georgia State University inquired about how to go about building an SDS chapter there, McKelvey suggested he might begin by asking new members to write critiques of the *Port Huron Statement*. This was "most important," he said, because "those who write . . . are, hopefully, stimulated to thinking and writing on their own."⁶⁴ To a student at Rutgers, he underscored "the importance to you and others . . . of examining what you're doing in order to articulate your thoughts about it."⁶⁵

The opinions of newcomers were particularly welcomed. As McKelvey told one student, "We especially need the comments of people who were not

involved in the writing of the [*Port Huron Statement*]."⁶⁶ Similarly, editors took special care to solicit commentary from grassroots members, reminding them that they, too, had a stake in SDS's future. When Garvy took over the *Bulletin* in October 1964, one of the first things she did was write an editorial announcing, "The SDS program and analysis are neither static nor complete. There is a continuing dialogue within SDS and it should not be limited to . . . members who are active at the national level."⁶⁷ The *Bulletin* also sometimes published local chapter reports, which gave members an idea of the scope of SDS's activity and a sense of connection to a larger movement.

But the *Bulletin*'s editors especially prized dissenting opinions, iconoclastic proposals, and sharply argued theories—anything at all, in fact, to keep SDS ideas from calcifying into orthodoxy.⁶⁸ As McKelvey said at the time, SDS must avoid presenting itself "as a package of set ideas and dictated actions."⁶⁹ When a student wrote to ask whether SDS had any connections to the Communist Party, McKelvey answered that it did not, but he added that he worried that "overconcern [sic] with communism . . . contributes to an atmosphere in which young people . . . fear to inquire in 'unsafe' ways."⁷⁰ By contrast, SDS depended on its vigorous spirit of inquiry. When another student wrote to announce he would like to join SDS, but that he didn't always see eye to eye with everyone in the organization, he might have been surprised at McKelvey's reply: "I am more than glad to hear that you disagree with several of our members' published opinions," McKelvey said. The student was encouraged to give full vent to his disagreements in the *Bulletin*.⁷¹

So accessible were the *Bulletin*'s pages that its editors rarely fulfilled all of the duties their titles implied. "I really ain't no editor," McKelvey once confessed. "In fact, one of the reasons the *SDS Bulletin* has gotten so big . . . has been my general refusal to edit things, to cut things out, my desire to include everything. I have *compiled* an increasingly good—and now excellent—Bulletin; I've edited nothing, really."⁷² Shero, a colorful activist from Austin, Texas, who had an almost reflexive distaste for authority figures to begin with, proved equally reticent to exercise his editorial hand. "I've no fixed policy on editing copy, but tend to want to edit as little as possible," he wrote. "I conceive [of the *Bulletin*] as a democratic publication growing from the membership's concerns rather than a news magazine [coming] from the national office." When on one occasion an especially prolix letter arrived, Shero asked its author for permission to pare it down, adding humorously, "This confronts my budding neo anarchist tendencies with severe and difficult mental problems."⁷³

Shero recognized the obvious dilemma that arose from such a laissez-faire editorial approach: "A democratic publication sacrifices professionalism so that

all the voices, even the halting and poorly expressed, can be heard, yet at the same time a shoddy production will not serve the needs of the membership.”⁷⁴ Obviously, most of the *Bulletin*’s contributors were of college age, and although some were quite talented, it was a rare thing when their pronunciamientos could not have profited from an editor’s red pen. Moreover, with such minimal editorial oversight, the *Bulletin* always had a certain stitched-together quality. One typical issue featured material on an ongoing New York City newspaper strike, U.S. relations with China and Cuba, the peace movement, and the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950.⁷⁵ Another issue ran an analysis of the 1964 congressional elections, a debate on SDS’s Peace and Research Education Project (PREP), correspondence between two SDSers about strategies for organizing the unemployed, and a journalistic recounting of a misadventure that Tom Hayden had with the Newark Police Department.⁷⁶

Another persistent problem that the *Bulletin*’s editors grappled with was that, in spite of their eagerness to accommodate SDS writers, they frequently had difficulty getting rank-and-file members to contribute the kinds of material they hoped for. During their tenures, all three of the *Bulletin*’s editors—McKelvey, Garvy, and Shero—made urgent appeals for more writing, and sometimes they seemed convinced that printed discourse was as essential to SDS’s survival as food and water are to living creatures. In one unsigned editorial, someone said that writing “substantive pieces” for the *Bulletin* was as important as attending SDS’s upcoming national convention. “Without such participation by the membership, SDS cannot build the politically and socially conscious base on campuses which it must build in order to attain even the most modest success.”⁷⁷ Around the same time, McKelvey circulated a memo flatly telling SDS organizers that if they didn’t participate in conversations through the *Bulletin*, “the organization won’t grow and be cohesive.”⁷⁸ Garvy similarly pleaded with SDS’s inner circle to produce copy for the *Bulletin*. “I really feel strongly [that] there should be more discussion—and in a public way, involving as many members as possible . . . And I’m really at a loss as to how to get this going.”⁷⁹

We can be certain that each of the *Bulletin*’s editors had a healthy awareness of the important roles they played in SDS; otherwise, they’d never have tolerated the ludicrously long and painstaking working hours that their jobs entailed. But here one wonders if they may have labored under unduly high expectations. It bears remembering that during most of the time that the *Bulletin* was in operation, SDS remained a relatively quiescent organization—a situation that started changing rather quickly after the Berkeley free speech rebellion got underway in September 1964. In March 1965, students and

faculty at the University of Michigan organized an all-night teach-in against the Vietnam War that attracted some 3,000 students; similar events were soon replicated on dozens of campuses. The following April, SDS spearheaded the first national protest rally against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. Expecting a turnout of about 5,000, organizers were amazed when, on a balmy spring afternoon, the gathering attracted upwards of 20,000. Meanwhile, several major magazines and newspapers published long articles describing the new student intelligentsia, and a few were even vaguely flattering.⁸⁰ As a result, membership in SDS swelled from a thousand members among 29 chapters in June 1964 to more than 4,000 official members among 124 chapters by the end of 1965.⁸¹

From SDS's perspective, the only problem with this upsurge was that its sudden onset proved difficult to manage. To cite but one telling anecdote, when former SDS president Todd Gitlin embarked on a speaking tour through several Great Plains states in the fall of 1965, he discovered three functioning SDS chapters that no one in the N.O. even knew existed!⁸² Brecher summed up the exigencies SDS faced in an internal memorandum:

From an organization almost non-existent outside of the East Coast and Middle West, we have become an outfit with a severe case of national sprawl—so spread out we can hardly keep in touch across the continent. We have grown so much in size that whereas less than two years ago almost everybody knew everybody else, now hardly anybody but the "old gang" knows anybody else. Our function has grown from an organization where people got together to talk about the things they were doing in various movements to one [that] has its own extended program on half-a-dozen fronts, involving wildly different kinds of people and approaches.⁸³

Implied but left unsaid by Brecher was the widely shared sense that the influx of these "wildly different kinds of people" had produced a minor *kulturkampf* in SDS. Far removed in both temperament and background from the doughty, often well-heeled progressives who helped found SDS, this new generation of radicals—sometimes called the "prairie power" faction of SDS because many of them came from the South and the West—were mainly novices. More likely to be guided by urgent moral considerations than by any ideological traditions, the most agrestic among them lacked the old guard's sophistication, urbanity, and *savoir-faire*.⁸⁴ Many years later, former SDS National Secretary Greg Calvert, who was closely aligned with the prairie power faction, still bristled at the memory of being treated by some of SDS's old

guard with “upper middle class arrogance,” as if he were “some sort of ignorant bum”—a galling experience for anyone, but perhaps especially for Calvert, who grew up in severe rural poverty, yet came to SDS with a Ph.D. in history from Cornell University.⁸⁵

In a surprisingly unguarded letter to SDS benefactors, National Secretary Paul Booth voiced the concerns of those who feared that the group was becoming skewed toward the “non-reflective extreme.” “The phenomenal growth of SDS in the last year has taken no one by surprise more than it has SDS itself,” said Booth.

From a movement of theorists we have become largely a movement of activists . . . Where two years ago, the model SDS personality was someone doing a master’s thesis on C. Wright Mills, today he is a college dropout. Where we used to spend months prior to an SDS convention debating the preparation of a document of political analysis and strategy, today . . . activists with radical humanist values implement whatever analysis strikes them as appropriate.⁸⁶

Booth’s note displayed a dose of hyperbole, for at no point was SDS ever in jeopardy of being overrun by a scrum of college dropouts.⁸⁷ But others echoed his concern that the new members who were surging into SDS might have something of the effect of a downhill stream, loosening its unfocused agenda and carrying its nonhierarchical tendencies into uncharted waters. In a *National Guardian* article, Steve Max grumbled that SDS’s “fantastic growth” and heterogeneity carried a hidden cost: an “anything goes” ethos that threatened to undermine their political coherence. A “high degree of programmatic consensus” in the Port Huron Era had given way, he said, to a “Pandora’s Box of theories of social change.”⁸⁸

SDS’s disastrous national convention at Lake Kewadin, Michigan, in June 1965 stoked Max’s fear: by most all accounts, newcomers felt excluded, old guarders felt threatened, and discussions were tedious. Robert Pardun—a fresh arrival to SDS from Colorado (by way of Texas)—recalled that the Kewadin meetings “tended to be dominated by a few articulate men who spoke often and seemed to enjoy the political bantering.” This might have been tolerable enough, but Pardun also noticed something discrepant about the fact that these old guarders were so concerned with “winning” their various debates. To put it another way, by the time he attended his very first national SDS conference, Pardun had already reached an understanding—strongly encouraged in SDS writings—that “democracy and winning aren’t the same thing. Winning is about overwhelming the opposition while

democracy, as we defined it, encouraged everyone to participate in making collective decisions."⁸⁹

The sudden upsurge in SDS also put a new strain on the *Bulletin*. Originally designed to promote membership participation and organizational dialogue, it now tried to keep tabs on the widening range of SDS activities; to function, in short, much more like a traditional news bulletin. Complaints that SDS wasn't keeping its members up-to-date were particularly pointed when coming from members who lived in regions where SDS had yet to gain a significant toehold. As one letter writer put it, "being out in the wilderness like this makes one feel lost to the national tone of SDS."⁹⁰ Similarly, a regional organizer from San Francisco complained, "The longer I am on the West Coast the more I become concerned over the lack of communication between the N.O. and SDS in general . . . I am completely in the dark as to what has been happening in the East over the last two or three weeks."⁹¹

The N.C. responded to its "organizational turmoil" by revamping the *Bulletin* so that it would appear weekly rather than monthly, and so that it would do a better job of keeping members informed. In the summer of 1965, Shero was elected vice president of SDS largely on the basis of his pledge to do just this.⁹² Shortly thereafter, he sent out a note promising that the "new" *Bulletin* would give "the widest possible view" of recent SDS activity.⁹³ Here again we see evidence of SDS's confidence in the power of printed material, but as sociologist Francesca Polletta points out, from the perspective of hindsight, this may seem a rather small-scale solution to the divisions that were plaguing SDS.⁹⁴ Besides, even the "new and improved" *Bulletin* failed to meet everyone's expectations. One supposedly lackluster issue prompted a reader to snap, "People's literature isn't sacred merely because it comes from the people's! [*sic*] . . . If SDS is growing as rapidly as everything we read would have us believe, why the hell isn't there more substantive news about the chapters??"⁹⁵ In this same period, the N.O. received at least two more carping letters from members who claimed they learned more about what was happening in SDS from newspapers and magazines than from SDS itself.⁹⁶

After only a few more months, the *Bulletin* folded, this time for good. (Most members learned of its demise in January 1966 when its replacement, *New Left Notes*, arrived in their mailboxes with a front-page headline that said, "SURPRISE!"⁹⁷) As the chief means of internal communication between the growing number of chapters that were operating more or less independently, *New Left Notes* marks a turn in the history of SDS's print culture. Whereas SDS had once relied on printed dialogues as a way of shoring up its identity as a democratic organization, by the mid-1960s its character and temperament

no longer remained a question mark. The new challenge for the N.O. was simply to keep tabs on SDS as it outgrew its cosseted childhood to become an established force in the organized Left. Nevertheless, *New Left Notes* still bore more than a passing resemblance to its predecessor. Edited at first by Shero, its masthead featured the old ERAP slogan, "Let the People Decide," and as SDS historian Kirkpatrick Sale quipped, "in terms of how the paper presented itself that is exactly how it was edited. Almost any scrap of news, any letter, any essay or comment that came into the paper found its way into print."⁹⁸

Since democracy was the cynosure that lured so many into the New Left in the first place, it is not surprising that the movement was sometimes fraught with disharmonious relations. SDS may have had romantic and grand ambitions, but it was no utopian collective; as we have seen, when it came to actual social relations, the same group of old guarders who represented themselves through their print culture as a self-governing community of equals could also be standoffish and dismissive to newer members. Polletta describes this paradox well: On the one hand, "SDS leaders *were* highly conscious of the need to give the newcomers a sense of belonging and to be generous in their desire to turn over the reins of power." But first they were friends, with similar backgrounds and educations, who had bonded together over a carefully cultivated cosmology.⁹⁹ Ironically, one indication of the success with which SDS postured itself as an organization of participatory democrats is the fact that newcomers who poured into the organization in the mid-1960s took the old guard at their word; just as soon as they were intimidated or made to feel excluded, they responded in the obvious way: by challenging the veterans on their hypocrisy.¹⁰⁰

By most accounts, the old guard got the message. In late 1965, SDS veteran Dick Magidoff wrote a maudlin letter to a friend in which he agonized over whether or not he and others in SDS may have been "imposing concerns on a membership that doesn't feel them." On two successive nights, Magidoff said, he stayed up for meetings that spilled over until 6 A.M. to talk about just this question. Finally, he decided that it might be best simply to let SDS continue to drift in its new direction, but it wasn't a decision he felt good about: his letter drew acerbic attention to his "experience of five (count 'em five) years of experience in those three initials [SDS]."¹⁰¹ Paul Buhle, who joined SDS in 1965, described the organization's shifting center of gravity in similar terms. As he recalled, the old guard's basic attitude was to say, "Okay. It's your organization. Now you do whatever you want with it. We think you're totally wrong and you're going to wreck it, but you just go ahead," and [then] shuffle off."¹⁰²

So it happened. It wasn't always pleasant, but in this way, at this crucial juncture, SDS generally lived up to its democratic promise. SDS never quite had a fixed identity—its own members sometimes described it as amoeba-like, as an "*organism* as well as an *organization*"¹⁰³—but in its early years, when it was still of frail roots, and its place on the Left was far from certain, the social processes that guided SDS's printed communications helped to secure its reputation as an accessible, egalitarian New Left organization. True, this spirit was present at SDS's founding, when 59 of its charter members contributed to the redrafting of Tom Hayden's *Port Huron Statement*. Not only was the manifesto written collectively; its supple-minded authors also conceived of it as a "living document" subject to future deliberations by SDS's membership. But it was only later, in response to specific exigencies, that SDS fashioned a culture of print that granted liberal access to its records, in which letters were freely circulated, editors deferred to writers, and newsletters were regarded not as official organs, but as running dialogues to which everyone was welcome to contribute.

Of course, this ethos carried its own built-in biases; just as not everyone had the force of personality or mystique that was required to be an SDS leader, not everyone in the New Left had the wherewithal to express themselves capably in print. Nevertheless, by the mid-1960s, SDS was known on the Left as a group that "passed the charisma around."¹⁰⁴ Its print culture is part of the reason why. Soon, underground newspapers would begin playing a very similar role, affording a basis for community among activists and avant-gardists and helping to democratize the youth rebellion. With this in mind, the notion that the New Left was founded not by any individual, nor even by any group of people, but rather by SDS's *mimeograph machine*, is so rich a metaphor that if it hadn't already been suggested, one would almost feel compelled to invent it.

NOTES

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1. Thomas R. Brooks. "Voice of the New Campus 'Underclass,'" *New York Times Magazine*, 7 November 1965, 25; Robert Pardun, email to author, 17 February 2004; Cathy Wilkerson, email to author, 16 February 2004.
2. Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority* (New York: New American Library, 1966), 117–18.
3. Jonah Raskin, *Out of the Whale: Growing Up in the American Left* (New York: Links,

- 1974), 120. By 1969, even “shotguns” may have seemed a little tame to some members of the Weatherman faction of SDS, who advocated “revolutionary wall painting” (“RWP” for short). Suggested slogans included: “PEOPLE’S WAR,” “OFF THE PIG,” “OFF THE LANDLORDS,” “REVOLUTION NOW,” “BRING THE WAR HOME,” and “VC RUN IT.” See “Draw Your Conclusions on the Wall,” *Fire!*, 21 November 1969: 14.
4. Major works with this narrative include Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973). Also see Rick Perlstein, “Who Owns the Sixties? The Opening of a Scholarly Generation Gap,” *Lingua Franca* (May–June 1996): 30–37.
 5. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 226.
 6. Some scholars who study the 1960s have expressed concern that SDS has been over-analyzed at the expense of other, less heralded groups within the organized Left. To some degree, this is true. A full generation ago, Kirkpatrick Sale basically conflated the history of SDS with that of the entire New Left in his book *SDS*. Then in the late 1980s, two important and well-written works—Todd Gitlin’s *The Sixties* and James Miller’s *Democracy Is in the Streets*—helped to establish the reigning narrative explaining the intellectual and sociocultural forces that account for the New Left’s rapid rise and precipitous decline. However, by focusing so heavily on SDS—especially in its early years, when the New Left was not yet a mass movement—the authors probably understated the degree to which political energy in the 1960s emerged from the grassroots. As a result, the trend in recent historiography has been to decenter SDS and to examine the New Left from local, regional, or comparative perspectives. Although I endorse these approaches, it is too soon to put a moratorium on the study of SDS’s institutional history. This essay draws from neglected archival sources in order to complicate scholars’ understandings of how participatory democracy became so popular among student activists in the 1960s. For critiques of SDS-centric scholarship, see Wini Breines, “Whose New Left?” *Journal of American History* 75 (September 1988): 528–45; Andrew Hunt, “When Did the Sixties Happen? Searching for New Directions,” *Journal of Social History* 33 (September 1999): 147–61; Maurice Isserman, “The Not-So-Dark-and-Bloody Ground: New Works on the 1960s,” *American Historical Review* 94 (October 1989): 990–1010; John McMillian, “You Didn’t Have to Be There: Revisiting the New Left Consensus,” in *The New Left Revisited*, ed. John McMillian and Paul Buhle (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 1–8; Jon Wiener, “The New Left as History,” *Radical History Review* 42 (1988): 173–87.
 7. A pedant could trace SDS’s origins all the way back to the first collegiate radical movement in the United States, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS), which was founded in 1905. That group renamed itself the League for Industrial Democracy (LID) in 1921; its student arm was the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID). After World War II, LID grew wary of radical socialism and became largely inactive. However, SLID morphed into SDS in 1960, and Al Haber was SDS’s first president. Although Haber personally recruited some of SDS’s early leaders and organized an impressive conference on student radicalism at the University of Michigan, the group remained basically unknown on American campuses during the 1961–62 school year. Accordingly, most scholars and SDS veterans date SDS’s origins to the drafting of the *Port Huron Statement*. As SDS National Secretary Jim Monsonis explained in 1962, “SDS truly became a movement and an organization at the [Port Huron] convention.” See Jim Monsonis, in *SDS Membership Bulletin*, 30 September 1962, p. 1, SDS Records, Reel 34, Series 4A, No. 19. Also see Sale, *SDS*, 673–93, and Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 29.

8. See Tom Hayden and Dick Flacks, "The Port Huron Statement at 40," *The Nation*, 5–12 August 2002, 18–21.
9. Allen Smith, "Present at the Creation . . . and Other Myths: The *Port Huron Statement* and the Origins of the New Left," *Peace and Change* 25 (July 2000): 339–62. For scholars characterizing the *Port Huron Statement* as a watershed in the history of the American Left, see Sale, *SDS*, 49–51; Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 13–14; Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 213–14.
10. Smith, "Present at the Creation," 341. Also see Van Gosse, "A Movement of Movements: The Definition and Periodization of the New Left," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, eds. Jean Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 279–84.
11. For some SDS veterans, the *Port Huron Statement* seems to have elicited an unusual combination of excitement and tedium. For instance, Todd Gitlin once recalled being "absolutely enraptured" when he read a draft of the document, "thinking, 'My God, this is what I feel.'" But elsewhere he said he found its "programmatic particulars" to be so dull that he didn't finish reading it. See Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer*, 214; Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 101. Similarly, SDSer Cathy Wilkerson recalled finding parts of the manifesto "very powerful and inspiring," whereas other parts struck her as "boring." See Cathy Wilkerson interview by Ron Grele, 17 February 1985, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, p. 26.
12. SDS, *Port Huron Statement*, as quoted in Miller, 329. All subsequent quotations from the *Port Huron Statement* come from Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*.
13. SDS, *Port Huron Statement*, 374.
14. SDS, *Port Huron Statement*, 329.
15. SDS printed some 20,000 copies of the *Port Huron Statement* between 1962 and 1964, and another 20,000 by the end of 1966. See Smith, "Present at the Creation," 360. However, the manifesto was never commercially marketed.
16. The phrase belongs to Ella Baker. See Ella Baker, "Bigger than a Hamburger," *Southern Patriot* (May 1960) in *Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954–1990*, eds. Clayborne Carson et al. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991) 121.
17. See Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, esp. 145–47.
18. Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The '60s and Its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 72.
19. SDS, *Port Huron Statement*, 333.
20. This was true until the very late 1960s, anyhow. The Weatherman faction of SDS (which did not exactly enjoy good standing in the New Left) frequently adhered to the Leninist notion of "democratic centralism"—a political framework that allows for vigorous debate within an organization, but also requires members of that organization to publicly adhere to whatever decisions the majority reaches, regardless of their private beliefs. The Marxist group Progressive Labor (PL), which infiltrated SDS in the late 1960s, also adhered to democratic centralism.
21. As quoted in Rebecca Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 25.
22. Barbara Haber, interview by Bret Eynon, September 1978, Contemporary History Project

- [CHP], University of Michigan, 4–5.
23. SDS, *Port Huron Statement*, 329, emphasis added.
 24. As quoted in Klatch, *A Generation Divided*, 24.
 25. Frithjof Bergmann, interview by Bret Eynon, 18 June 1978, CHP, 5.
 26. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media and the Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 135; Richard Flacks, “Making History vs. Making Life: Dilemmas of an American Left,” in *Toward a History of the New Left*, ed. R. David Meyers (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 139.
 27. Richard Flacks, interview by Bret Eynon, 25 September 1978, CHP, 14.
 28. Jeremy Brecher, interview by Bret Eynon, 20 September 1983, Columbia, 13.
 29. Don McKelvey, interview by author, 17 May 2004.
 30. Brecher interview, 12.
 31. Elise Boulding, interview by Bret Eynon, November 1978, CHP, 4.
 32. Peter Dilorenzi, interview by Bret Eynon, 31 May 1979, CHP, 4.
 33. Barry Bluestone, interview by Bret Eynon, August 1978, CHP, 3.
 34. Brecher interview, 14.
 35. Haber interview, 11.
 36. Bluestone interview, 7.
 37. Sara Evans argues that women were socialized into taking secondary roles in SDS, because they weren’t accustomed to making forceful arguments and aggressively defending them. See Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knopf, 1979) 115, 166.
 38. Wilkerson interview, 19.
 39. Kitty Cone, as quoted in Annie Gottlieb, *Do You Believe in Magic: The Second Coming of the Sixties Generation* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 144.
 40. Alan Haber and Barbara Jacobs to “friends,” 15 December 1962, SDS Records, Reel 2, Series 2A, No. 1.
 41. Sale, SDS, 78–80.
 42. Sale, SDS, 74.
 43. The entire scene would make an interesting counterpoint to *Dr. Strangelove*. According to SDS veteran Mickey Flacks, in the midst of the Crisis, the Ann Arbor activists hatched various far-fetched schemes that included trying to call the Pope, and (if it can be believed) chartering an airplane to Cuba so that a group of women and children could “sit on the missile bases and offer themselves as hostages to the world.” Instead, they organized a small campus demonstration that had an element of unintended comedy when Hayden, while delivering a speech, spotted someone pulling an American flag down from a nearby flagpole. Assuming the flag-puller was one of SDS’s hecklers, he flew into a rage, screaming, “That’s the most obscene act I’ve ever seen!” A moment later he realized that the “culprit” was actually a member of the University of Michigan’s grounds crew, who was merely lowering the flag at sundown. See Flacks interview, 6–7; Bluestone interview, 7.

44. Sale, *SDS*, 81.
45. Sale, *SDS*, 78–81.
46. Tom Hayden to "SDS executive committee, others," n.d. (circa Spring 1962), SDS Records, Reel 1, Series 1, No. 6.
47. Arthur Waskow to Paul Booth, 2 August 1965, SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 42.
48. Clark Kissinger to Paul Potter, 31 January 1965, SDS Records, Reel 4, Series 2A, No. 29. Also see Ken McEldowney to Jim McDougall and George Brosi, 7 July 1965, SDS Records, Reel 14, Series 2A., No. 69.
49. Richard Chase, "The New Campus Magazines," *Harper's*, October 1961, 170.
50. Tom Hayden used both forms; SDSer Betty Garman Robinson recalled that Hayden's dramatic letters describing SNCC's activities in the Deep South were "the reason [she] went into SDS." As quoted in Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 125.
51. Quite a few internal newsletters came and went during SDS's history. Some were specific to SDS projects, such as the "Economic Research and Action Project" (ERAP) newsletter, the "Peace and Research Education Project" (PREP) newsletter, and the "Vietnam Summer" newsletter. There was also a *Membership Bulletin* and a *Discussion Bulletin*, which were later combined into the *SDS Bulletin*. *New Era* and *Caw* were two of SDS's very short-lived magazines. Some of SDS's older members founded the "Radicals in the Professions" (RitP) newsletter, which later changed its name to "*Something Else*." SDS's biggest publication in terms of size and circulation was its tabloid newspaper, *New Left Notes*, which briefly morphed into *The Fire Next Time* and then just *Fire!* In addition to all this, dozens of individual SDS chapters published their own newsletters.
52. As editor of the *SDS Bulletin*, Jeff Shero frequently reprinted articles or essays that first appeared elsewhere. "We just lift these articles, rarely getting permission from the publisher," he told one friend. See Jeff Shero to Gideon Sjöberg, 18 August 1965, SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 35.
53. See Becky Miller to "Steve," n.d., SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 38.
54. Steve Max, "Angry Letter," *New Left Notes* (11 March 1966): 4.
55. SDS National Council Meeting, 16 June 1964 (minutes taken by Helen Garvy), SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, No. 10.
56. Don McKelvey to Donna G. Hayes, 10 December 1962, SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, no. 21. The *Membership Bulletin* featured reports from SDS presidents, updates on chapter activity and projects, notices of upcoming events, and suggested reading material. However, like the *DB*, it also welcomed feedback and participation from the SDS rank-and-file. See *SDS Membership Bulletin*, 30 September 1962: 1, in SDS Records, Reel 34, Series 4A, No. 19.
57. Sale, *SDS*, 78.
58. The Student Peace Union flourished from 1960 to 1962, cosponsoring several marches on Washington, D.C., and attracting some 3,500 members. Unlike SDS, the SPU was shaped by Old Left ideas and concentrated its energies on a single issue, nuclear arms control. It collapsed in 1964, just as SDS was gaining momentum.
59. Editor's Note, *SDS Discussion Bulletin*, Spring 1964, n.p., SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 40.

60. Don McKelvey to R. M. Glee, 17 November 1962, SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, no. 21.
61. Helen Garvy, interview by author, 14 May 2004.
62. Helen Garvy, "From the Editor," *SDS Bulletin*, October 1964, 2, in SDS Records Reel 35, Series 4A, No. 35.
63. Don McKelvey to Donna G. Hayes, 10 December 1962, SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, No. 21; Don McKelvey to Allan Tobin, 23 November 1962, SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, no. 21; Dickie Magidoff to Helen [Garvy] and Clark [Kissinger], 19 January 1965, SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, No. 23.
64. Don McKelvey to Dayton Pruitt, n.d., in SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, No. 21.
65. Don McKelvey to Dennis Kelly, 15 May 1964, in SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 38.
66. Don McKelvey to Edwin Kahn, 10 January 1963, in SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, No. 21.
67. Helen Garvy, "From the Editor," *SDS Bulletin*, October, 1964, 2, SDS Records, Reel 35, Series 4A, No. 35.
68. This idea may have been inculcated in SDS early on. In 1960, Al Haber had a brief but warm correspondence with William F. Buckley, the conservative editor of *National Review*, after he asked Buckley if he could distribute some spare copies of *National Review* throughout SDS. Although he didn't expect Buckley's magazine to win many converts, Haber said "I do think . . . that it is valuable for our members to come into contact with views sharply counter to our own." See Alan Haber to William F. Buckley, 8 July 1960, SDS Records, Reel 1, Series 1, No. 10.
69. Don McKelvey to Gerald Knight, 2 December 1963, SDS Records, Reel 8, Series 2A, No. 93.
70. Don McKelvey to Murray L. Katcher, 26 January 1964, SDS Records, Box 6, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. Henceforth, this archive will be abbreviated WSHS.
71. Don McKelvey to Erik Johnson, 29 March 1964, SDS Records, Reel 4, Series 2A, No. 35.
72. Don McKelvey to "Kim and Pete," 10 May 1964, SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 38.
73. Jeff Shero to Mike Davis, 10 August 1965, SDS Records, Reel 28, Series 3, No. 108.
74. Jeff Shero to Jeremy Brecher, 3 August 1965, SDS Records, Reel 28, Series 3, No. 108.
75. *SDS Membership Bulletin*, January–February, 1963, n.p., SDS Records Reel 35, Series 4A, No. 19.
76. *SDS Membership Bulletin*, November–December 1964, n.p., SDS Records, Reel 35, Series 4A, No. 19.
77. "Convention," *SDS Membership Bulletin*, March–April, 1963: 1, 3, SDS Records, Reel 35, Series 4A, No. 19.
78. Don McKelvey, to "Worklist," 23 October 1968, SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 48.
79. Helen Garvy, to "Paul Potter, Ken, Sharon, Carol, Rennie, Todd, Booth, Dickie, Rich, Vernon, Nick, Larry, Bob, Lee, Dick, Tom, Carl," 15 October 1964, SDS Records, Reel 5, Series 2A, No. 35.
80. See Richard Armstrong, "The Explosive Revival of the Far Left," *Saturday Evening Post*, 8 May 1965, 27–32; Brooks, "Voice of the New Campus 'Underclass,'" 25; Andrew Kopkind, "Of, By and For the Poor," *The New Republic*, 19 June 1965, 15–19; Jack Newfield "Student Left: Idealism and Action," *The Nation*, 8 November 1965, 330–33; Fred Powledge, "The New Student

Left: "Spurring Reform," *New York Times*, 15 March 1965: 1, 26; "The Activists—Protesting too Much?" *Newsweek*, 22 March 1965: 48–54.

81. Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, 138.
82. Jim Russell to Helen Garvy, 30 October 1965, SDS Records, Box 34, WSHS.
83. Jeremy Brecher, "Some Notes on the 1965 SDS Convention," n.d., SDS Records, Reel 3, Series 2A, No. 14.
84. Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority*, 120; Sale, *SDS*, 204–7.
85. Calvert interview, 158.
86. Paul Booth to Vernon Eagle, 28 September 1965, SDS Records, Reel 19, Series 3, No. 1.
87. It is true, however, that more nonstudents were coming to SDS. According to an SDS membership survey in March 1966, only about 40 percent of SDSers were registered undergrads; another 25 percent were grad students, and 10 percent of members were in high school. As Sale points out, whereas on the one hand this means that 75 percent of SDSers were operating in an academic setting, there was still a significant "campus–off campus split" in SDS. See Sale, *SDS*, 271–72.
88. Steve Max, "From Port Huron to Maplehurst," *National Guardian* (circa summer 1965), fragment, SDS Records, WSHS.
89. Robert Pardun, *Prairie Radical: A Journey Through the Sixties* (Los Gatos, CA: Shire Press, 2001), 115–16.
90. Dick Shortt to Robert Pardun, 5 August 1965, SDS Records, Reel 6, Series 2A, No. 35.
91. Ken McEldowney to Jim McDougall and George Brosi, 7 July 1965, SDS Records, Reel 6, Series 2A, No. 69.
92. Pardun, *Prairie Radical*, 119.
93. Jeff Shero to "Comrades," 3 August 1965, SDS Records, Reel 28, Series 3, No. 108.
94. Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, 145.
95. Carol McEldowney to SDS N.O., 7 November 1965, SDS Records, Reel 19, Series 3, No. 1.
96. Scott Pittman to Worklist Recipients, 19 October 1965, SDS Records, Reel 19, Series 3, No. 1; David Stamps to Jeff Shero, 15 November 1965, SDS Records, Reel 28, Series 3, No. 108. Balanced against this, however, was at least one highly approving letter from a new SDS member who called the new *Bulletin* "one of the finest publications I've seen on the left." See J. M. Wagner to SDS, 18 November 1965, SDS Records, Reel 21, Series 3, No. 18.
97. Sale, *SDS*, 273.
98. Sale, *SDS*, 273.
99. Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, 143.
100. Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, 142.
101. Dickie Magidoff to Richie Rothstein and "DCC Kernel," 29 September 1965, SDS Records, Reel 19, Series 3, No. 10.
102. Paul Buhle, interview by Bret Eynon and Ron Grele, 24 January 1984 and 6 February 1985, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, p. 44.

103. "Not With My Life You Don't!!" *A Georgia Student Handbook*, Georgetown SDS, Fall 1968, SDS Records, Reel 22, Series 3, No. 26; Todd Gitlin, "President's Report," *SDS Bulletin*, December 1963, SDS Records, Reel 35, Series 4A, No. 19, emphasis in original.
104. In an undated letter (circa 1966–67), an SDSer attributed the phrase to activist and historian Staughton Lynd. See Bill Hartzog to Greg Calvert, n.d., SDS Records, Reel 21, Series 3, No. 11.