

Views

Dena Clamage

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SDS Free University

For as long as the “New Left” has been in existence, “New Leftniks” have talked about the need for serious thought and analysis within the various “movements” which have arisen: analysis of American society, its history, its power structure, its operating mechanisms; analysis of other countries, especially those of the under-developed (overexploited) Third World; analysis of the problems which this country is or very soon will be confronting, i.e., automation, foreign policy, poverty, etc.; and analysis of where we as a movement, should be concentrating our attention and organizing energies. Unfortunately, very few New Leftniks have actually undertaken this type of work.

This summer in an attempt to meet these needs, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) is launching two new projects which will have important implications for the problem of the lack of radical understanding within the New Left. The first of these, a high-priority national project, is the Radical Education Project (REP), a program aimed at stimulating research and serious thinking on the local level through “study groups”, which will work on a wide range of topics, from Art and Politics, to the Economics of Underdevelopment. The efforts of these local study groups will be published in a national monthly bulletin, with every other issue devoted to the publication of a full research paper, and alternate issues devoted to the publication of bibliographies, seminar guides, film catalogues, and other materials valuable to people on the local level who are concentrating on intensive internal education. (For those wishing further information on this project, the REP office is located at 510 East William Street, Ann Arbor 48108).

The second project is a strictly local program sponsored by Wayne State University SDS, consisting of a series of seminars to be held over the summer—sort of an activist “free university.” Each seminar will be held in the evening once a week over an eight to ten week period on the Wayne State campus. Included in this series will be the following seminars:

Monday.

The Populist Movement, with Norman Pollack, W.S.U. History Department, 7-8 p.m., 111 State Hall;

Radicalism of the 1930s, David Herreshoff, W.S.U. English Department, 8-9 p.m., 111 State Hall;

Tuesday

Prospects of a Socialist city, Arthur Field, W.S.U. Sociology Department, 8-9 p.m., 21 Prentis Bldg.;

Wednesday

Africa, Ernst Benjamin, W.S.U. Political Science Department, 8-9 p.m., 127 State Hall;

Thursday

Civil Rights, Poverty and Other Domestic Problems, Frank Joyce, Northern Student Movement, 8-9 p.m., 21 Prentis Bldg.;

The Ultra-Right, Michael Whitty, History Department. Syracuse (NY) University, 7-8 p.m., 21 Prentis Bldg.

Friday

Automation, Hugh Whipple, Monteith Natural Science Department, and James Boggs, author of *Diary of a Negro Worker*, 8–9 p.m., 115 State Hall.

One night a week after classes, there will be forum-type meetings of all Free University participants; many will include outside speakers of special interest. Some of the forum topics which have been suggested are Politics and the Arts, The Nature of Social Revolution in the Underdeveloped World, Violence and Nonviolence, Mass Culture and Folk Culture, and Black Nationalism. If you have other suggestions for forums or for people to speak at these, let us know.

The purposes behind this political free university are twofold:

First, as described above, it is an attempt to confront the real ignorance of many members of the New Left on socially important issues. It is an attempt to prepare people presently within the context of radical politics for a long-range struggle with the colossus that is America, to prepare people to anticipate where conflicts will break out, what issues will be socially explosive, what constituencies will be most open to the concept of social change in the future. It is an attempt to indicate to those presently outside of radical politics, who are interested in attending these seminars, the depth and extent of the problems which this country faces and the problems which this country forces on the exploited, both of this country and of countries around the world. Finally, it is an attempt to begin to lay the theoretical groundwork on which the idea of the new society can be built.

As its second purpose, the “free university” is a protest against the contemporary “university as factory” conception. It is a protest against the current conception of the university as an institution which turns out cogs for the job machine. It is a protest against the university as a participant in the Great Consensus. It is a protest against the irrelevance of the university to the very real political problems with which we are all faced. It is a protest against the transformation of the university as teacher into the university as salesman for the Great Society. If the present universities cannot act as instructors in social consciousness, other institutions must be created which can and which will.

The Free University seminars are scheduled to begin June 27. Further information and registration forms are available from the office of the DCEWVN, 1101 Warren, 832–5700.

Classes will be open to any who wish to attend, student or non-student. All seminars are free.

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