

## STRUCTURAL PROPOSAL FOR STANFORD SDS

Leonard Siegel  
January, 1969

**Introduction**--The organization of Stanford SDS must take into account several tendencies and goals. It must be conducive to stability and continuity. It must be democratic beyond formal democracy. It must help satisfy a need for community. It should encourage commitment, but allow varying levels of participation. SDS should have formal means for dealing with bureaucratic questions, official ways for reacting in emergency situations, continuing channels of internal education, ongoing methods of reaching new people, and accurate representation to the community at large.

**Summary**--I propose that general meetings be held every other week to set general policy. Educational programs can be held those weeks which general meetings are not held. "Small groups," cells, or "collectives" consisting of about 10-15 members, should meet once a week. A standing coordinating committee, consisting of about three members elected by the organization as a whole and one representative from each small group, should meet once a week. One of the steering committee members elected by the organization as a whole ~~XXXXXXXX~~ should be elected as the "chairman of the steering committee." The SDS desk shall be a clearing house for information and for proposals to be discussed at general meetings.

**General meetings**--One of our biggest hang-ups this fall has been our inability to hold short, interesting, or exciting meetings. General meetings should have the expressed purpose of deciding policy and beginning to implement it. This requires that we acquaint ourselves with problems and proposals before the meetings. Proposals are probably best made in writing, duplicated, and made available to the entire membership at small group meetings or at the SDS desk. The small groups should discuss the various proposals. The purpose of a meeting is not to reach consensus, nor to brainstorm ideas or air problems which could more reasonably be discussed within a small group. A rigid consciousness of the purpose of the general meeting will not, I believe, heighten undemocratic tendencies. Short, interesting meetings, with clear positions presented, should actually contribute to participatory democracy. Written proposals should be ~~available~~ <sup>coordinating</sup> to those who wander into meetings, without prior contact. The steering committee should prepare the agenda, and select the chairman. The ~~XXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ first item on all agendas should be the adoption of the agenda. Agendas, along with announcements, should be printed.

**Educational programs**--Policy meetings have proven worthless in terms of discussing materials which could prove to be educational, in terms of informing ourselves, developing analysis, and forming ideology. The steering committee, using the small groups as well as whatever special committees may be set up, should arrange for speakers, debates, films, panels, etc., appropriate for the education of the membership as a whole. Such programs should be advertised to the entire campus community, but should assume, in many instances, a certain level of radical perspective. Hopefully, attendance would parallel the attendance of general meetings.

**Small groups**--As the fall quarter progressed, most members realized the need for small groups in which they could discuss issues and get to know each other. "Collectives" or "cells" can help meet these needs, and can be a constructive tool in developing a radical community--if they do not become inwardly directed or cliquish. Structure and content of meetings should

be up to the various groups, and hopefully each group will consider its contribution to the organization as a whole, its ability to absorb new members, the development of its own projects, as well as meeting the needs of its members. Such groups could operate as the study-action groups should have last quarter, in developing politics as well as action, and they should ~~discuss~~ ~~discuss~~ ~~discuss~~ discuss overall organizational policy--evaluating written papers and generating programmatic suggestions of their own. One voting representative to the coordinating committee should be chosen to reflect the politics of "collective" membership.

Coordinating committee--This fall we have had many organizational fuck-ups, such as special events sponsored by SDS that no-one in SDS knew about. Budgetary matters have been handled by a handful (or fewer) ~~of~~ of members. And it has never been clear who to contact to find out what ~~was~~ was happening with the organization. The essentially voluntary executive committee ~~and~~ and rotating chairman were not sufficient in guaranteeing continuity. The ~~steering~~ steering committee should not have power to establish organizational policies, except in emergencies where, according to shared assumptions of the organization, there is no apparent controversy. The coordinating committee shall prepare the agenda for general meetings and help plan educational programs. The ~~executive~~ committee is not the appropriate place for the origination of programmatic proposals (small groups, or written papers should do this). The coordinating committee should hold the primary responsibility for informing the membership of events, etc. The ~~executive~~ committee should be empowered to represent (or delegate representation) ~~the~~ the organization to the media, whenever necessary. The coordinating committee should ~~be~~ authorize special events (not including direct action) and to oversee the "budget." Major questions or controversial matters should be posed ~~to~~ to the membership, at a general meeting. All coordinating committee meetings should be open, but only elected officers and "collective" representatives should vote. The committee should meet once a week, but the chairman, or about 4 members, should be able to call emergency meetings. The coordinating committee, despite my rhetoric, is not to be a steering committee or executive committee.

Officers--Three or so officers should be elected by the membership as a whole. Their position should not empower them to become spokesmen for the organization. (Collective responsibility for public relations should rest with the coordinating committee.) The elected Chairman should be responsible for making sure meetings and events happen when they're supposed to. He should also be responsible for making sure the membership, or community at large, knows about meetings and events. He should also be responsible for reserving rooms, etc. A second officer should be an educational secretary, who would supervise, with the aid of the coordinating committee, and the participation of "collectives" or special committees, the preparation of educational materials, maintaining some type of speakers bureau, and, if possible, maintaining a library. A ~~third~~ third officer should be responsible for bureaucracy and the maintenance of supplies--technical, prop, and office. The "bureaucrat" must be able to obtain ~~certain~~ certain supplies of services whenever needed by the organization. He should furthermore be responsible for relating to the ASSU bureaucracy, checking the mail, and instructing members in the use of the ASSU ditto machine (to duplicate papers) If possible, he should maintain office hours at the SDS desk. He cannot be held responsible for the organization's shitwork.

The SDS desk--SDS has a desk in the ASSU office. (If we can get a better office, fine.) Members should leave position papers (about 150 copies) on the desk, and post ~~XXXXXX~~ relevant announcements on a bulletin board near the desk. Leaflets will be kept on or near the desk. To keep in touch with what is happening, members should visit the desk frequently. In addition to reading papers and announcements, there may be leaflets or posters to distribute. The "bureaucrat" should be responsible for the maintenance of the desk, and for printing or bringing papers and announcements to general meetings.

Individual responsibility and commitment--Most of us reject discipline because in our lives our discipline has been to values and a system which we now reject. Our anarchist tendencies, however, often make it difficult to function seriously within an organization. While SDS must accept various levels of participation, here is a hopeful "list" of expected responsibility. Members should be expected to attend general meetings and educational programs whenever possible. Members are expected to belong to and attend at least one "small group." Members should obtain papers, etc., from the SDS desk. Members should be expected to help make sure things get done, even though it may appear that someone else should have the responsibility, and has fucked up. Members are ordered to love. Furthermore, it is hoped that members will help organizational officers, etc., assume ongoing responsibilities, and each member should try to involve himself as an organizer, formal or informal.

Membership--Dues are \$1.00 per quarter, but rich or committed members must give more. No general meeting or ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ coordinating committee meeting may be closed. All SDS "collectives" actions, events, etc., should be open to non-members (perhaps not to any non-members). If a meeting appears to be stacked by the "enemy," 3/4 of the dues paying membership present may vote to restrict policy votes to members--but in America this should never happen.

The above organization plan may seem a bit overstructured, but in practice we can have confidence that we will cast off those institutions which inhibit us. The anarchy of last quarter led to informal elitism which could not be challenged, because it was difficult to concretize. Perhaps this quarter we shall balance our organization as the spirit of the people transcends the structures through which it rises. We need not worry for the survival of spontaneity.

All power to the bureaucrats!!