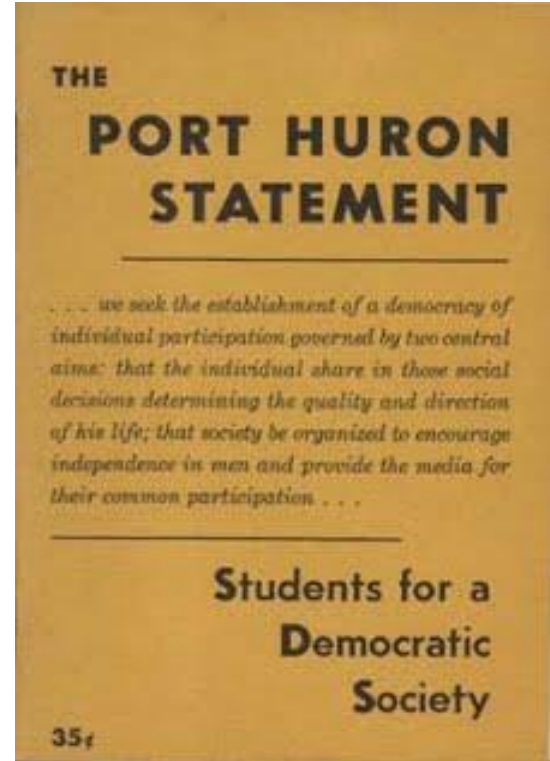


# Students for a Democratic Society



# The Port Huron Statement (1962)

- January 1960: SDS evolves from the student wing of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID)
- June 1962: initial SDS convention in Port Huron, Michigan
- The *Port Huron Statement* adopted as SDS platform:
  - Central Issues: Racism and Civil Rights; Nuclear Arms and the Cold War
  - “Participatory Democracy”
  - Multi-issue organization: “the issues are interrelated”; “the issue is not the issue”
  - “Our work is guided by the sense that we may be the last generation in the experiment with living.”



# Old vs. New Left

- SDS: reject idea that revolution will necessarily be led by the working class; envision that students could be agents of radical change.
  - C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left" (1960)
- Michael Harrington (LID member, later DSA founder) and other Leftists of the 1950s generation (Irving Howe) criticized SDS and the Port Huron Statement for being soft on Communism and the Soviet Union.
- LID and SDS split for good at the 1965 National Convention, where SDS deleted the clause in its constitution excluding communists from membership.
  - Opens the door to the Maoist group Progressive Labor (PL) after 1966



# Impact of the Vietnam War

- 1965: U.S. escalates the war in Vietnam
  - SDS organizes “teach-ins” about the Vietnam War across U.S. campuses
  - First major anti-war demonstration in Washington, D.C., with 25,000 participating
- Dramatic increases in membership and local chapters
  - “Prairie Power” as SDS expands its reach across the U.S., sparking tension with the “Old Guard” and its original commitment to multi-issue organizing
- “From Protest to Resistance”
  - Burn draft cards
  - Target ROTC, military recruiters, and research connected with the U.S. military



# Women's Liberation Workshop (1967)

- Resolution on Women's Liberation drafted for the 1967 SDS National Convention
- Demands for American Society:
  - Communal child care centers
  - Reproductive rights, abortion, birth control
  - Equal division of household labor
- Demands for SDS:
  - Male SDS members should work on their "personal chauvinism"
  - Women should participate in all levels of SDS work, including leadership
  - Leaders must not abuse their power in the leader/subordinate relationship
  - All programs created by SDS must include a section on women's rights
- Anticipated and stimulated the growth of "second wave" feminism after 1968
- Met with widespread scorn and ridicule from male SDS members

# April 1968: Columbia University Occupied

- SDS and other organizations protest against Columbia's connection with weapons research and its segregated relationship to the black community in Harlem.
- Several campus buildings occupied from April 26-30, ending with the arrest of 700 students (10% of student body) in a violent offensive of the NYPD.
- An Ivy League university in New York City, Columbia's occupation puts SDS into the national media spotlight.
  - Future weatherman Mark Rudd emerges as leader/media celebrity of SDS



# June 1969: SDS National Convention

- SDS at its peak: 100,000 members in 1969
- 2,000 delegates and others attend 1969 National Convention in Chicago
- SDS splinters into factions: RYM, PL, WSA.
- The Weathermen grow out of the RYM faction.









# October 1969: “The Days of Rage”



# Days of Rage

The SDS was “dissolved” by the Weathermen, who now controlled the central body.

Their first act as the Weathermen was to organize the Days of Rage in Chicago.

Instead of thousands showing up, only a couple of hundred.

250 were arrested after charging at police. Fred Hampton of the BPP called them “adventuristic and Custeristic”

Following this the Weathermen convened a war council and went underground.

The Weather Underground committed a series of bombings of US Government targets. No people were hurt in the campaign, although there were related attacks by WU offshoots and the Black Liberation Army that did cause casualties. (whoops)

## March 6, 1970: Greenwich Village Townhouse Explosion



# Weather Underground: Theory & Practice

In line with the theory of *foco* as developed by Che Guevara, the Weather Underground created several different cells in major cities that were decentralized in nature but answered to a higher body.

The Weathermen made the fatal mistake of becoming a small underground organization while simultaneously *dissolving the aboveground organization*.

Though paying lip service to elements of Maoism and Marxism-Leninism by way of the Black Panthers, they embodied the almost Anarchistic approach to Communism that many of the post-SDS groups abided by.

Far from waging an effective guerilla war, they only set off about 25 bombs (and broke Timothy Leary out of jail).

These mother fuckers thought it was 1917---in reality, it was 1905.

# Good Sixties vs Bad Sixties

The evolution of the SDS into the Weather Underground is often told as a tale of “Good Sixties vs Bad Sixties” but it’s not so simple.

COINTELPRO and misguided adventurism destroyed most of the successor groups to the SDS by the mid-1970s.

The Leninist model was popularized by the Black Panther Party(though they did not themselves use it) and most post-SDS groups became these Parties of a New Type.

The great failure was the inability to connect with the workers as the students in France had done.



## Alex Jones Debates Bill Ayers

The Alex Jones Channel

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