

# THE NEGRO MOVEMENT: WHERE SHALL IT GO NOW?

*We print below a condensed transcript of a discussion held in May 1964 between a number of leading figures in the Civil Rights Movement and several editors of DISSENT. Among the participants: Bayard Rustin, organizer of the March on Washington and perhaps the single outstanding leader to have appeared in the movement these past few years; Norman Hill, National Program Director of CORE; Tom Kahn, assistant to Rustin in the March on Washington and author of "Problems of the Negro Movement" in the Winter 1964 DISSENT; Rochelle Horowitz, assistant to Rustin in the March on Washington; and Jack Rader, active in the Queens, N.Y. movement for quality integrated education. The other participants are DISSENT editors.*

*Below are the questions that were submitted by Irving Howe to Bayard Rustin and the other guests at the discussion:*

1) Would you care to speculate about the next stages of the equal rights movement? Several facts seem to converge to produce a stalemate or near-stalemate: a) the "era of good feeling" between Negroes and liberal whites, which reached a climax at the March on Washington, seems to have come to an end, at least for the moment; b) the Negro campaigns in the South have in a number of crucial instances run into a stone wall of opposition, effectively maintaining the Jim Crow structure; c) the pattern of repeated demonstrations, often without precise objectives, leads to exhaustion, demoralization, loss of interest when there are no visible results; d) it becomes more and more apparent that the demand for Negro rights is deeply related to problems of the economic structure, a point we socialists have been emphasizing but which doesn't allow of easy solutions. Now, add to these facts that support for the Negroes in the white community seems to be decreasing, and that the passage of the Civil Rights Bill will not greatly affect the life of the ordinary Negro living in a Northern city—and you have a genuine dilemma. What, then, do you think the future prospects for, and tactics of, the

equal rights movement should now be?

2) You have stressed, and we all here surely agree with you, that the Negro movement needs tremendously to gain and hold allies in the labor movement. Yet my general impression is that the unions have not responded to this crisis with the urgency we would wish. What do you say to your friends and/or critics in the Negro movement who say: "All right, an alliance with the unions would be fine, but how we can have an alliance with organizations that have little interest in forming one, and whose membership is corrupted by prejudice?"

3) There seems to be a genuine crisis of leadership in the Negro movement. It has been obvious all along that there hasn't been a single movement, but rather a loose alliance of parallel and sometimes competing groups. How does this alliance stand now? And something else: I have the impression that there is arising a new kind of Negro militant, in almost all the active organizations. He is fed up with white promises. He has discovered that he is *proud* to be alienated from white society. He has strong "nationalist" inclinations, vague though these may seem. But above all, he is desperate—impatient with the tactics of gradualism, nonviolence, etcetera. In effect, he decides to "go it alone," scornful of the white liberal and labor groups and of those Negro leaders who prefer to work with such groups. He has, it would seem, little faith in the possibility of changing American society, and consequently he is determined to shock and assault it. In a way, though he shows no inclination toward practicing individual terrorism or anything of that sort, he acts out of motives somewhat like those of the late 19th century Russian terrorists, who tried to substitute their intransigent will for the slowness and sluggishness of history. Is there anything to this description?

4) Finally, I want to ask you about the internal condition of the Negro communities, especially up North. It becomes clear that the struggle for equality will not be won very quickly; it will be a long and hard fight. That means having a community that is ready for a sustained struggle. But many of the activists seem, on the contrary, oriented toward short-run action to the exclusion of virtually everything else. And within the Negro community there seems also to be a very serious process of social disintegration, shown through many symptoms of pathology and demoralized behavior. Doesn't this raise, then, for the Negro movement and leaders the problem of trying to effect an internal self-mobilization in the Negro community, not merely for struggle on the outside but for social, cultural and morale purposes within its own ranks? I know that the comparison between the present-day Negro community and the Jewish community of thirty or forty years ago can easily become a facile one, especially if it is used too easily as a way of criticizing the Negroes. Yet, making all due allowance for the ways in which the Jews, even at their most exploited, were in a more favorable position than the Negroes, isn't there something to be learned from the way in which the Jewish world, especially the Jewish labor world, built up a highly complex and rich association of schools, societies, movements, etc., all of which helped sustain morale and provide vision even when objectives could not yet be realized?

BAYARD RUSTIN: A number of the circumstances you pose in the questions are definitely there, but I think the important point is that the civil rights movement, because of its limited success, is now confronted with the problem that major Negro demands cannot be met within the context of the civil rights struggle. The frustration in the Negro community is not merely the result of difficulties in the struggle, but also of the fact that these demands are made in a context where the *Negro alone* is in motion. So that the major problem before us is how to relieve the Negro of this isolation. If there were a democratic left in this country, the Negro movement would be in it along with labor, liberals and intellectuals and people from the churches.

But now the Negroes have to deal not only with discrimination but also the problems of the whole society. While many Negroes would not so analyze it, they know in a visceral way that this is true. They know there is really no way to get jobs for Negroes unless something else happens. And they also know, and I know, that the labor movement, affected by automation, is itself unable to provide jobs for the people already enrolled in the unions, that the only way labor can handle this thing is if it allies with the Negro in a bigger struggle in which it can then afford to be an ally because its problems are simultaneously being met. Without this over-all political program, the Negro and the labor forces are antagonistic and will remain so. The unions will give money and pass resolutions but they will not act. That, I think, is the problem—not Galamison, not PAT, not Malcolm X—none of the things mentioned as being crucial are really crucial unless *this* is made crucial first.

NORMAN HILL: A related problem is that the usual tactic of direct action which here and there has produced an integrated lunch counter does not seem to be answering the demands of larger numbers of Negro people. The civil rights movement has therefore been forced to dig deeper, just to hold its own as an established part of the Negro community. In its very thrust, this movement poses questions that get at the basic problems of society. It is faced with a situation where, like it or not, it inevitably is driven toward making serious judgments upon society.

EMANUEL GELTMAN: I think Rustin and Hill are right so far as the long haul is concerned, but before you get there, you must face some problems right now. When Bayard speaks of the importance of integrating the civil rights movement with a revitalization of the trade union movement that for us is a familiar context and we, so to speak, know what to do about it. But before we get to the trade union problems, we must come to grips with PAT. I think it's almost easier for

us to deal with the broader social problems raised by Bayard than to provide answers to local ones. After listening to a television broadcast where these PAT people were talking, I felt that I could not contain my impatience or even discuss with them. Yet that's the level that willy-nilly we're compelled to deal with now.

JACK RADER: In the school integration struggle in Queens, one of the things that strikes me about the reaction of the whites is that they act as if the question were one of special privilege for Negroes. There is tremendous irritation and misunderstanding. The postwar period saw the rise of new middle-class elements, typified by the white suburbs. These people who have recently arrived at this middle-class status feel threatened in a personal and direct sense. "My kid, what kind of education is he going to get?" They say, "I was brought up in a ghetto"—an ethnic ghetto, or a slum. "I made it, and I didn't go on any protest. Now, what the devil do these people want?" It seems to me that this threatens the possibility of a labor-Negro alliance. You have a tremendous privatization of life in this country, and the Negro movement arises when there are no other movements to coalesce with.

IRVING HOWE: Let's see if I can focus what's been said so far: In principle we're all for a Negro alliance with the labor movement, but that idea is too general, and doesn't provide guidance for what has to be done tomorrow in Queens or the next day in Birmingham or the third day in Chester, Pennsylvania.

RUSTIN: When I talked about an alliance, I did not mention the labor movement as such. I'm talking about trade-union people. I certainly do not look for any alliance which would include the AFL-CIO per se. Secondly, I think we have to think about what I call a political movement, not as a movement of the thirties or even the sixties, or anything else we've been through, but something new. To me it is programmatic-political; that is to say, I think now, today, around questions like total employment, limited planning, work training within planning, and a public-works program. There are many elements in labor, in the Negro community, and among liberals who can move on such a programmatic base.

I am not concerned fundamentally with the level of argument which has to be made with PAT. If we concentrate on that level, we are lost. PAT and the people it represents "have" to be anti-Negro as long as we are in the objective situation of declining schools. We have got to lift the school problem from integration to that of quality schools, which has to include, we say, integration secondarily. You must make a totally new approach, and it is only then that people can be brought into a

broader movement. It is the broader social movement which educates them, while the civil rights movement keeps things stirred up.

HOWE: The question that must then be posed is: What *meanwhile* happens with the Negro movement, when it has to survive in relative isolation, under increasingly difficult conditions?

MICHAEL HARRINGTON: Well, I'll take off from that question and say that the Negro movement will simply lose; there is no happy answer if you posit it that way. This discussion points up that we're not talking about the Negro question, we're talking about the American question. If the American labor movement continues to take the John L. Lewis approach to automation, that is, to bid farewell to the workers who are kicked out, to re-form their organizations on a narrow but highly-skilled, fairly well-paid base, to accept a smaller role in this society but to keep their structure intact on that base, then you can say that instead of an alliance there will probably be a war between white and black at the bottom of American society. Second, if the American labor movement does that, not only will there be a war between white and black at the bottom of society, but neither the American labor movement nor any force for social change will be able to answer *any* of the questions, the automation question, the school question, the hospital question, the whole shooting match. But I think the trade-union movement, out of its self-interest more than concern for the Negro, will be forced to start doing some things that will move it into a position of alliance with the Negroes.

The idea we've discussed around DISSENT, and which is now being discussed at the UAW, of the trade union movement organizing the working poor both as a means of expanding its membership and of reaching Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans and other minority workers, is one proposal. Here I agree with Bayard, that in a context of full employment, or in the context of the type of proposal just suggested by Senator Clark's committee in Washington, of a five billion dollar additional annual social expenditure for construction, that even the building-trades unions, if they were enabled to double their available jobs and membership, wouldn't care if fifty per cent of that increased membership were Negro, as long as they paid their dues and didn't unduly upset the hierarchy. The possibility for successful action is dependent on these big questions. The answer to what we do *meanwhile* in the specific situations is—improvise, probably unsuccessfully, so long as so many of the massive determinants are loaded against us.

TOM KAHN: The Negro movement arose at a "wrong" time, when there are no supporting mass movements in the society. But to conclude

that the Negroes have to face all issues on their own is to accept all kinds of things which the movement cannot accept. First of all, it means to accept defeat. Now there is a certain romantic strain in the Negro movement that's almost willing to do that. A segment of the Negro leadership and perhaps among the rank-and-file seems almost to want the movement to have a tragic ending which would somehow illuminate the human condition in all of its frailty. But the consequences of failure of the Negro movement would really be catastrophic. If you take automation and technological change into account, and if the rate of Negro displacement through automation continues, you get a picture of a class-color society. This will provide the basis for all kinds of extremely reactionary political developments. If that prospect is kept before us, and it's not a matter of hundreds of years, but in the decades ahead, I would maintain that the labor movement even in its present state represents a certain social ballast against such a development.

RUSTIN: Because we have gone so far but haven't come to the final step, we end up with the fact that we find ourselves without sufficient allies, and the Negroes are turning to tactics which are not commensurate with what they're trying to achieve. This is what always happens when a group attempts to achieve more than it has the power to. PAT would not exist if other elements were in the movement, and if it did we wouldn't care, because then it would be of no consequence.

HOWE: In other words, PAT and certain kinds of "extremism" in the Negro movement are both evidence of the absence of a vital major participation by the liberal-labor white world. They form symmetrical phenomena.

RADER: Both Bayard and Mike propose massive public works. But massive public works, government engineered and lopped off the defense budget, is a *substitute* for economic integration. It might succeed in admitting a given number into the building trades, but it will not succeed in allowing the Negroes to break through the normal pattern of employment in this country.

What we come to is that a whole new approach to social priorities is needed. What shall the wealth of the country be used for and how shall work be directed? Posed in these larger social terms of social priorities and the expenditures of the wealth and the energies of the country, I don't think you have anything on the horizon at this point which is concerned with this type of question.

RUSTIN: We're talking about our lives. If the labor movement is concerned now about full employment, it is concerned about public works. So are a lot of liberals. So are church people. Therefore you start

with that point. Down the road they will see the logic of what you are saying. But let us start where we're talking about our lives, where our lives can in fact move. On the question of Negro strategy for now, I think we have not to be so pessimistic. In my mind, there have been many more successes of the civil rights movement prodding the society in the direction I want to see it go, than there have been successes in the civil rights movement *per se*. The churches are moving around the civil rights bill as no church groups have ever moved in this country and they cannot stop at civil rights, but must go beyond to the question of full employment.

Number two: There would not be any war against poverty had it been left to white workers. The Negro workers moved out of a sense of Negro dignity, and they stimulated Mike's book, they stimulated Johnson's program, which was in part stimulated by Mike's book, etcetera. It has an accumulative effect.

Three: We got rid of McCarthyism on the American campus in 1960 because Negro students moved in the sit-ins. Whites were touched and some of them had to move also. This made political discussion possible on the campus.

Now concluding: I think that the civil rights movement has two fundamental strategies to follow: First, stay in the streets, winning little victories, and sometimes none, but stay, for the very reason that you stimulate other segments of the society, limitedly, to move. Second, the civil rights movement now has an obligation to carry the questions which I discussed earlier under full employment, planning, training, and so forth. They must now begin to carry that message into the streets. When they go to sit down in front of the building trades, or to climb a crane, they have to say, "We are doing this as a symbol of the fact that we want jobs. We want ten jobs *now* in the building trades. And further, we insist that America hear and act on this program for dealing with our real problem." I think the civil rights movement is just about ready to move in that direction.

HARRINGTON: I agree with what Bayard said. But to go back to something that Jack Rader said, not so much in contradiction, but, I think, an extension. When Jack said that this public-works plan Bayard has been talking about would not allow the Negro to break through to the normal employment pattern, that's true. The reason is that the normal employment pattern in the United States is partly being revolutionized out of existence by technology. Nobody's breaking through to the normal employment pattern—not just Negroes, but whites and Negroes, which again points up how radical the American problem is.

HOWE: And to interrupt you, Mike, public works may itself become a normal work pattern.

HARRINGTON: Right. But let me go on to just a couple of statistics I came upon recently which indicate how extraordinary the situation is. According to the House Labor Committee which investigated the functioning of the Manpower Development and Training Act, fifty-seven per cent of the Negroes twenty-four years of age in the United States were school dropouts. According to the Secretary of Labor, you need a high school education to really function in this economy. Therefore, presently, fifty-seven per cent of the Negroes in the United States cannot hope to break through to a normal employment pattern. At the same time, the Committee pointed out that about twenty-eight per cent of the whites at the same age are dropouts. This means between a quarter and a third of all youth are unfit for present technology.

In a sense the Negro alone has been facing the entire American question and that's what a lot of the problem stems from. But we can't be too pessimistic, because someday American society is going to have to face the American question, and when it does it can't help but ally itself with the Negroes.

STANLEY PLASTRIK: Unfolding right before our eyes now is a beautiful illustration of what Bayard and others here have been talking about; that is, the way in which the so-called Negro question is really the question of the entire future of American society. Until a few weeks ago the concept of the educational park was largely unknown. Now the Board of Education has put it on its agenda. It's posed before the entire population of New York City. I don't want to discuss the merits of it now, but obviously it transforms the whole discussion of education and integration. Or, to take another illustration: Some years ago, a few people—I remember Bruno Bettelheim, for example—raised the questions of the effects of a kind of *de facto* segregation within the schools, that is the homogeneous grouping of children. That discussion didn't get anywhere, but obviously the question must come up again.

RUSTIN: Neither of these things could possibly have burst into the picture had it not been for the movement of the Negro. And already the Negro struggle for quality education has forced the school board to do something which is of tremendous benefit to every child regardless of color, and that is dropping the so-called I.Q. tests.

GELTMAN: I find myself annoyed by the pessimism that frequently issues from the civil rights movement. A great deal of progress has been made which may ultimately be a lot more important than whether some particular person got into the sheet-metal workers union or not. Other



civil rights leaders do not talk, at least publicly, the way Bayard does, not even the socialists, or the trade unionists like Randolph, or the educators like Kenneth Clark. Clark, for example, speaks in terms of quality education; it is *our* function to give it the broader context. If you tackle slums you find they are not just problems in housing. You have to tackle the slum as a problem in education, and in health. It is really our function as socialist intellectuals to portray the total picture.

And I seriously believe that the problem is not one of just working out some accommodation between the trade union movement and the civil rights movement. Even in terms of self-interest, the leadership cannot stick with the status quo.

HOWE: Let me inject a "pessimistic" note here, just for the sake of stirring up the discussion. It seems to me there's a terrible discrepancy between the general, programmatic, ideological level on which we all really agree and the immediate practical reality. In New York City you have the following situation: a white middle class which favors integration in Birmingham but faced with changes at home has really hardened. For the first time a large section of the Jewish middle class, traditionally liberal, is also hardening, and is simply holding out in behalf of its own narrow interests. And this middle-class reaction has shown itself to be more resourceful than the whole liberal-labor movement in New York City. On the other hand, as far as I know, neither the ILGWU, the main trade union in New York City, nor the NMU sent anyone to the conference on integrated, quality education which was organized by David Livingston and Reverend Donald Harrington. Not only have major unions not participated in this effort to weld a rough sort of alliance, but the intellectuals have also been disgracefully absent. Yes, it's essential to work out the broad programmatic conception. But in terms of concrete politics the immediate situation cannot be confronted only through that general program. Locally the situation is extremely tough and rather bad.

HOROWITZ: What makes the problem so difficult is that there are reasons for both optimism and for pessimism.

There is the Allen report. And Bayard's right about the churches. But the Negro in the street has not seen one gain, and you have to be an intellectual to see the larger perspective.

The March on Washington raised a whole series of demands in a way that was able to pull in the white community on the programmatic level that we're discussing now. It's interesting—

HOWE: Let me interrupt you, Rochelle. The March on Washington was general, it was humane, it was brotherly, but it didn't affect what

happened in the white guy's job or neighborhood. Now suddenly it's come home, and it's hit him, and he's nervous.

HOROWITZ: You have to work out a broad programmatic base to involve the white community. It is possible to march to City Hall, for instance, for quality, integrated education and to get white people involved in this. It would have been possible for Galamison to have structured his demands, before the first school boycott, in a way that would have brought the white community along with it and not have terrified them.

There is a certain type of leadership which does thrive on defeat, a lazy, opportunistic leadership. They not only don't have a program, they are opposed to a program. This can be very demoralizing. Temporarily it results in publicity and an easy style of leadership. It's much easier to be a Milton Galamison than a Bayard Rustin.

HOWE: There are people in or near the Negro movement who say that Bayard's program is certain to fail, that it must fail, that the very nature of American society is such that the idea of a Negro-labor alliance is doomed to failure, that it puts too much trust in the white community. Consequently it seems to me that there must be forming a sentiment which is roughly equivalent, to make an historical analogy, to that of certain kinds of revolutionists in Russia in the late nineteenth century who turned to terrorism, not because they believed in terrorism in principle, but because they believed there were no longer any positive social forces which could act. Therefore they tried to substitute for a static history their own sacrifice and desire. The consequence of such terrorism almost always is to exhaust the best cadres, and to lead to isolation and defeat.

I suspect one of the feelings such people, the "desperadoes" in the Negro movement, have is that they may never have allies in America, but they do have allies in Cuba, China and in such places. And this is really a terrible illusion.

RUSTIN: I have a little anecdote which bears you out. Norman Hill and I were investigating the set-up at the World's Fair before we went out to have the sit-downs. I called a friend who works for the delegation of a new African nation and asked him if he could get one of the African countries to let us come in early with their officials to look over their pavilion. When I called the next day, he said, "Look, the boys are scared. The last thing they will do is to take you or any other Negro out there to see this fair. These boys are so economically dependent on the West that the only thing they will do is debate South Africa in the

UN but they will never touch anything regarding the United States and its internal questions."

KAHN: There is some justification for the comparison with a nineteenth century Russian-terrorist type of psychology. On the positive side, there are changes in consciousness yet no changes in the basic situation. There is a movement for integrated schools in New York but no signs that major breakthroughs will be made. We talk about the ecumenical movement among the religious groups and the changes in consciousness that result. The liberal ideology spreads over the country but at the same time, underneath, certain regressive trends are going on that clash with it.

The economic situation means certain things for the Negro and unless a massive change takes place, it looks very bad. Demographic changes are crucial. A new consciousness about the New York school situation may arise, but it can make no difference as long as Negroes continue to make up a larger and larger proportion of central cities, while white people continue to move to the suburbs. Therefore, it is bad to have so much activity without visible results, because the democratic ethic may suffer from the disillusionment.

Two years ago I was saying that you have to have a sympathetic attitude toward the Negro extremist because he suffers a great deal of frustration. To an extent, that may still be true. But I am much stronger in my opposition to those elements now, simply out of the realization that it is a tremendous disservice to the masses of Negroes to lead them to expect that their needs can be articulated by a voice in isolation.

HILL: It seems to me that we're in for a very rough period. The leader who is likely to emerge in every local situation is the demagogic type rather than the type who is going to articulate anything of what Bayard says in his speeches. And not only because the Negro movement exists in the absence of any democratic left, but also because no matter how you put what we've been saying in this room it sounds to the average Negro like "Wait." Galamison can say, "Tie up the schools." Now we can't say it because we're too honest to pretend that that alone would achieve much. Still, we can say all kinds of other things which to the average Negro sound like, "This is for real." As long as his alienation persists and as long as we don't really build some kind of secondary cadre, then we will have to confront the emergence of the demagogic or "nationalist" leaders. The young Negro militants pay attention to them.

HARRINGTON: What Norman is talking about could, by way of his-

torical analogy, be something akin to what took place among the coal miners in the 1920's when they waged a bitter struggle in isolation from the labor movement as a whole. I would only point out on the other side that eventually that struggle did pay off.

I think that the report of the Clark subcommittee calling for five billion dollars extra expenditures annually, the growing consciousness in this society that *something* has to be done, is already leading, not yet at the bottom of society but at the top, to the possibility of some changes which could help the civil rights movement.

HOWE: In all past major social and revolutionary movements there have been ups and downs, but the important difference here is that we're speaking about a minority movement, only ten per cent of the population. Given a society which is fundamentally cut off from that minority, large parts of which are hostile to it, and large parts of which are cosily affluent, we have a new prospect, namely, a minority becoming more and more desperate, but without the possibility of a major upsurge such as previous social movements have had.

RUSTIN: It's important to point out that one of the problems is that in the civil rights movement we have no literature, no history, no former revolutionary movement that has ever taken place in the context you have just described. Certainly, India where I have worked is not the same because even the untouchables do not have high visibility. The government of India from its very inception, largely because of Gandhi's spiritual approach to revolution, made a tremendous reconstruction effort in India. Gandhi's death did not cut it short as Lincoln's did here. Now I think we have to be very thankful that things have even gone as well as they have. Those who talk about the use of violence and so on, also have to face the fact that no minority is going to get away with guerrilla warfare in the United States. It's just impossible. Therefore we must realize that we are dealing with a situation which is far different from any we have ever been through.

KAHN: I have a question to put to Bayard. Numbers of young people in the movement seem to regard the stall-in and similar tactics as logical extensions of your theory of social dislocation. Where does your theory of social dislocation end and the stall-in tactics begin?

RUSTIN: I think it is, in a sense, a logical deduction. Many of them have come to me and said, "We thought we were doing exactly what you were proposing." I don't think that one can ever think of the theory of social dislocation in the abstract. One must always, when developing tactics, think of the exact situation one is in, the reaction one is going to get, and certain tactical problems. Now, I was opposed to the

World's Fair stall-ins for a number of reasons. One, it is a tactic which can only be successful if it is secretive. Once the police know about it, they will do what they did. Second, they can get injunctions against the leadership, isolating them when they should be organizing the masses. Anytime you call upon two thousand people to do something, it could not possibly be secretive and therefore they stepped into the government's hands. And further, it was wrong, because it did not leave an adequate alternative. A tactic which just harumscarum ties up everybody is wrong. Not that in principle I'm against people being alienated. In social change there is always alienation. But if you're trying to win allies, you want to reduce that alienation to an irreducible minimum. Also the tactic was not good because it did not pinpoint the objectives that were to be achieved. No one could have said: "What can we give you to call off this project?" Therefore certain principles have to be applied if social dislocation is to be reasonable.

GELTMAN: Isn't that also true of the sit-in in which you took part?

RUSTIN: No, it was not. Several times I got up to let women and children pass through.

GELTMAN: No, I mean the specific objectives. Could they say, "We'll give you this, we'll give you that..."

RUSTIN: Oh yes. If the Mayor of New York City had said, "We will have round-the-clock discussions on the school integration problem. I'll call everyone to my office and tell them to stay there until this problem is settled," we would have left.

HOWE: Norman Hill says that the problem is the incongruity between the long-range political program that Bayard proposes and the difficulty of keeping the Negro movement going in a constructive way right now. Bayard, you ought to talk on this.

RUSTIN: I think we've got to have a political movement, in the sense that the civil rights movement is now a political movement. It's a matter of broadening that. Regardless of people's politics, regardless of what church they belong to, or union, thousands and millions of people are contributing to the civil rights organizations, are getting into the streets. They came to the March on Washington. This is the kind of movement I see as a political movement, around such things as full employment, some planning, training within that planning, a public works program. I think without setting up a political structure or a party we can carry this to the people and get the kind of enthusiasm that you now get around the civil rights bill, or that we got around the March on Washington.

But it has to be spelled out so people can understand it. Meany has

already called for public works. Let's take him up on this, not damn him. Men like Ralph Helstein and Reuther are prepared to go even further. Let's get a simple program now around which we can organize. While people may be bound by certain political allegiances and the like, these things can be broken as the need is seen. Then you ask for a deeper program and you proceed in that way. I don't know what else there is except getting the Negroes to carry that program in their demonstrations and saying to them, "Continue to demonstrate. We now have not only an objective of getting a few jobs here but of spelling out a political program."

HOWE: Could you say something about the question: What is the present mood of the more important sections of the Negro leadership in regard to this program?

RUSTIN: I think the Negro leadership out of its own frustration is having to look in two directions. One, organizing the grass roots, getting down to some block organization in the ghetto; and, on the other hand, seeing the limitations of this method alone and thereby increasingly following the Randolph notion of seeing the problem as an American social problem. They will be forced into this, by the fact that they can't deliver what needs to be delivered by merely looking at the problem as a civil rights problem.

HOWE: Question four. Rustin should answer it.

RUSTIN: I agree with what is implied in the question. I don't think there's much of a comparison. Jews were an ingrown group themselves, with a very long history and culture, and this had an effect. They also could become invisible as many of them did. But on the major question I am one of those who has a very dim view of being able to patch up the ghetto. There is a ghetto psychology, and this cannot be eliminated. There is the filth of the ghetto; and the ghetto has its own logic. However, I am very much for mobilizing the community to deal with their immediate problems. If there are rats you help people get rid of them, and the same with roaches and triple-sessions. I am for approaching the problem on this level as a means of doing a basic educational job with these people.

GELTMAN: We're touching on a much broader problem than may be apparent. There has begun very serious consideration not merely for Negroes but for society as a whole, of various kinds of self-mobilization programs. You will see the idea put forward in connection with jobs. If you have so many young people who cannot find jobs, who are not trained, you can employ them in helping themselves. The whole proposal with respect to self-mobilization is going to get attention precisely

in the terms in which you originally spoke, that is, of coping with general problems of society, from poverty to narcotics addiction, and anything we can do in this connection with respect to the Negro problem obviously is relevant. There is one point I want to throw in on the Jews and that is that what everyone forgets is that the Jews, in moving forward, had a very important and unique connection. Apart from their invisibility and so forth, their progress was largely tied on the economic front to the unions in New York, especially the ILGWU.

HOWE: Granted, the ghetto has a bad psychology of its own which can't be abolished without abolishing the ghetto itself. I accept that. Granted, too, that the analogy with the Jews has its obvious weakness. My point is this: Given the present situation, school dropouts in Negro communities and various kinds of social pathology, it is not sufficient to try to involve such young people in political and social struggles. Necessary, but not sufficient. One of the responsibilities of the Negro leadership is to work within its own world, morally, socially, educationally, psychologically, for purposes of sustaining morale, of inculcating values and vision. This kind of thing must be done, and here the comparison with the Jewish world makes some sense because the internal richness of its own community was one of the great sustaining factors of the immigrant Jewish world where there was poverty, alienation, unemployment and all the rest. Am I wrong?

HOROWITZ: There is a way in which a stereotype produces a certain kind of person, and you have to think about the stereotype of the Jew and of the Negro and the kind of pressure that the Negro community has been subjected to. Never have you heard about Jews being inhuman. That is, they were shrewd, businesslike, etcetera. For Negroes, to conform to their stereotype is to be . . .

HOWE: Why can't one of the objectives of the self-mobilization within the community be to break down these stereotypes?

HOROWITZ: That is what the sit-ins are about, right?

HOWE: Of course, the sit-ins are one way of realizing the objective at a time when you have to have a prolonged struggle, but it seems to me that there's a great need for internal education.

KAHN: There has been a great deal of self-help in the Negro community, and I bet there's been more intensive effort at this among Negroes than among Jews. The whole emphasis on self-help, on Negro solidarity and economic uplift, is accentuated in times of social discouragement. There is a whole Booker T. Washington tradition, that's self-help. Negro fraternities, mutual aid societies, etcetera.

HOWE: But what I'm talking about is self-help toward the objectives of winning the revolution.

KAHN: You find that the fight for integration is pushed by the middle-class, "assimilationist" Negroes and not by the nationalist-oriented Negroes; and that contrasts with the Jewish community. The fight for integration did not come from those Negroes who felt that they had some cultural heritage to preserve. The self-help movement broke up on the shoals of the ghetto. I'm not so interested now in seeing a self-help movement among Negroes, because I know the form it's going to take. We want equality; I want Negroes to get *out* of the ghetto, not to be helped within it.

PLASTRIK: I can understand the fundamental objections on this self-help issue. It seems to conjure up images of small business operations and small capital accumulation, which of course is a very important part of the Jewish background.

A couple weeks ago, two French intellectuals from the *Esprit* group were here and they asked me to accompany them on a visit to Harlem. They had expected to see, as you do in Paris, a small Algerian quarter. They had absolutely no idea of what was there and when they saw the reality and extent of it, they were dumbfounded. And I realized at that point that if I talked to them in terms of the sort of thing we talk about, self-mobilization, they would have felt the utter inadequacy of that kind of response. They wanted to hear me say, as a representative of the left, something to the effect that this whole thing has to be smashed to smithereens.

When we talk about self-mobilization, I think perhaps what we have in mind is the struggle against the spiritual and psychological demoralization that one finds in Negro communities.

HOWE: Tom, I mean by self-help the kind of thing that your group has been doing with those young kids—educating them, trying to give them some perspective, so it isn't just a matter of demonstrations but some understanding to build their morale.

RUSTIN: But what you're talking about is that you get these people to realize the nature of life, of the economic system, what dope really means and why it should be overcome, what prostitution really is and why it must be rooted out. You can get this in one way and one way only, not by preaching and not by inculcation, because Negro mothers have always told them this; but in the struggle to destroy the ghetto.

GELTMAN: An illustration of the lack of conscious social aspirations was presented by the coal miners in West Virginia when they were earning \$20 a day, and lived in the most miserable shacks, worse than many



in the ghettos—because the union and the miners did not have the social aspiration that they should escape. Other workers have associated economic gains with social achievements.

HARRINGTON: There is practically no analogy between the Negro poor and any other poor there have ever been in the United States. There's a danger of looking for a repetition of the forms of the Jewish or other immigrant experiences in terms of the Negro movement. The form of self-help imposed upon the Negro, his past and present, is the civil rights movement itself.

HOWE: What you're saying, Mike, is very interesting. There is a whole aspect to the Negro movement that doesn't get into the papers, which consists of the sustaining educational and cultural work.

HOROWITZ: People in the East River Core will tell you that they have two alternatives. They can either be in the streets or in the movement, and to be in the movement means to be a man. But if you called it self-help, they would punch you.

HOWE: I'm talking about self-mobilization as part of the way in which leaders lead a movement.

HOROWITZ: But there are things which are intrinsic to people in motion. Something wonderful happens to people when they are somehow determining their own destiny and beginning to control and change their own conditions.