

Radical sociologists' rebellion disrupts ASA meeting

By ART GOLDBERG
The Guardian

SAN FRANCISCO — Academic sociology has long been used in the U.S. to justify the policies and actions of the ruling class.

With research money coming largely from the Defense Department, the CIA, the State Department, the Agency for International Development and the Ubiquitous Ford and Rockefeller foundations, university sociologists have "studied" things like Latin-American universities (for the CIA) and Vietnamese peasant life (for the AID, which plays a leading role in the pacification program in Vietnam).

Sociologists have also "studied" black militants and life in black communities in the U.S. for various government agencies and sociologists like Lewis Feuer and Seymour Martin Lipset have tried to use their liberal facades to defuse and confuse the radical students.

There are distinct signs, however, that the role sociologists play in serving the needs of the power structure will be seriously challenged in the future. Here is what happened at the 64th annual meeting of the American Sociological

Association (ASA) at the San Francisco Hilton two weeks ago:

Without this action, the convention would have been a stultifying bore.

The blacks walked out the second day, during a panel on "The ASA and questions of public policy." Albert Black, Jr. of the University of California, Berkeley, denounced the association for "systematically excluding the black community" and for using blacks as "guinea pigs."

Black said he and his colleagues intended to start a new and separate organization, to be known as the Black Sociological Association.

The white radicals waited until the third day to finally walk out to form the Union of Radical Sociologists, but not before they had held dozens of alternative seminars, forced several strongly-worded radical resolutions before the convention's plenary session and disrupted the presidential address.

Wearing brightly colored buttons that read "Revolution — Not Counter-Insurgency" and "C. Wright Mills Lives!" the radicals held workshops on subjects like, "The sociologist as spy," "Power

(a former Berkeley Free Speech Movement activist) were scheduled to debate Seymour Martin Lipset of Harvard on "conflict on the campus," but Lipset, a leading opponent of student activism, never showed up.

Instead, Jacobs and Petras talked about the ways in which sociological research and funding serves the interests of the ruling class, how it fails to take into account the questions raised by the student movement which are a threat to imperialism and how it supports the status quo.

The radical sociologists actually managed to convince the convention to pass a resolution on counter-insurgency research which read:

"Whereas most research by U.S. sociologists is funded and controlled by corporate interests, military-political elites and the welfare bureaucracy and has been oriented towards studying oppressed peoples for the purposes of their oppressors, we move that sociologists start studying these oppressors and make their sociological knowledge easily accessible to the oppressed."

The sociologists turned down the rest of the resolution, howev-

er, which would have obliged the association to condemn participation by sociologists in research funded by the Defense and State Departments, the CIA, AID and certain foundations.

A similar resolution stating that "the prostitution of academic sociology to the institutions of corporate imperialism is clear to all who care to see" and which would have committed ASA to advise its members to discontinue classified research and research funded by

the above government agencies and private foundations was narrowly defeated. Had the younger, nontenured members of the ASA been able to vote this resolution would have passed.

The radicals actually walked out of the convention on the issue of voting, arguing that since they couldn't vote on association policy, they wouldn't participate.

They returned several hours later 100 strong and took over the stage and microphone, chanting "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" and began a memorial service for the late Vietnamese president.

An outraged academic tried to regain the microphone but was beaten off. One woman got up and began singing "God Bless America." In the end, however, the conservatives had to leave their own

meeting, (they reconvened in the Imperial Ballroom of the Hilton) while most of the convention remained for the tribute to Ho.

The women's caucus preferred not to even ask the convention to deal with its proposals by voting for or against them. "The real battle will be waged in your departments this year," said Dr. Alice Rossi of Johns Hopkins University as she read the statement from the women's caucus.

The convention voted nearly unanimously to support the "sense" of the woman's motion, which among other things called for greater hiring of women by sociology departments, establishment of daycare centers, teaching the subject of sexual inequality as well as racial and religious inequality, and encouraging women to pursue academic careers.

'Ho' chant ends meeting

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