

ATLANTA COORDINATING

Last Thursday night, May 18, about 90 people formed an anti-imperialist antiwar coalition called the Atlanta Coordinating Committee (ACC). This is the same coalition of groups and individuals who worked with the Atlanta Peace Action Coalition (APAC) to build the antiwar march and rally held Saturday, May 13 (see May 22 *Bird*). While most people present were white, some of the groups have black members. Also, the Black United Front Against the War, a broad antiwar coalition in the black community, sent representatives. The ACC hopes to work together with the Black United Front on various antiwar actions.

The Atlanta Coordinating Committee views the war in Southeast Asia as a part of the imperialist

policies practiced by the United States around the world. That war was no accident of history, but intimately connected with what is wrong in America today—racism, sexism, oppression, exploitation, poverty. Thus, the group wants to work against imperialism in the course of working against the war—the two things cannot be separated in its view. It does, however, want to work with other groups which aren't anti-imperialist to plan and carry out antiwar activities.

The first concrete activity of the ACC is to work toward antiwar activities on June 19 when President Nixon is scheduled to speak to the National Jaycee Convention here in Atlanta. The group decided: (1) to join with any and all antiwar groups in Atlanta to issue a mass statewide call for the June 19 demon-

stration, and (2) to form an anti-imperialist contingent for June 19 to educate and raise the political consciousness of all participants in and observers of the demonstration through slogans, posters, literature, etc.

Thursday's meeting began with the chairwoman calling on three groups—APAC, the October League (formerly the Georgia Communist League [Marxist-Leninist]), and the Sunday Night Committee which is a loose grouping of socialist individuals opposed to imperialism but not presently in any organization—to present proposals to the meeting of how to form the ACC. APAC representatives did not have a proposal. It seemed as though there was some misunderstanding—the chair thought they were going to



photo by roger

We propose the formation of an Atlanta Coordinating Committee whose purpose would be to coordinate activities of the various groups and individuals involved in activities against the war.

1. This committee would have an anti-imperialist perspective. Broadly defined, this means that we see the war as no accident but as a logical extension of the past policies and present nature of American society; that we see the war as intimately related to the other wrongs and injustices in our society—racism, sexism, poverty, oppression and exploitation—as well as the actions of the US government in other parts of the world.

2. We see the need for a multi-issue, multi-tactic

approach in our organizing and actions.

3. Because of the divisions and differences which exist within antiwar and anti-imperialist forces we feel that it would be best to adopt a structure which requires the minimal amount of participation and energy to have united action against the war and its domestic injustices. All our efforts should be directed at outreach and not at disputes among ourselves.

4. The Coordinating Committee should be a means of coordinating our various activities and a means of communicating among the various groups and tendencies in Atlanta. It should involve a minimal organization.

5. Specifically, we suggest that the committee

as a whole should meet infrequently (maybe once a month) and that day-to-day activities be carried out by a steering committee consisting of representatives from the various groups and tendencies as well as a limited number of representatives elected at large.

6. This committee should reach out to other groups and forces not involved at present and invite their participation in the steering committee, the larger committee and any actions we endorse or organize. This committee would also engage in any negotiations with other forces or groups in Atlanta or the country that would like our support.

7. This committee is not in opposition to the broad antiwar movement.

COMMITTEE

propose that the new coalition work within APAC, but others I spoke with had understood that they were not going to make a proposal. The October League had drawn up a proposal to form an anti-imperialist coalition which included a list of points of unity-political points which they hoped the group would agree on. However prior to the meeting, they discussed their proposal with a number of people involved in the coalition and decided not to present the points at this time. They saw that the people working in the coalition did not have a very clear idea of each other's politics and had not worked together long enough to be able to debate the points in a positive way. Instead, many felt that working on the points now would split the group and tend to exclude people. Thus they withdrew their proposal in favor of the one brought forward by the Sunday Night Committee. This proposal had been printed and distributed to everyone at the meeting. A copy of it is reprinted here.

The meeting up to this point was quite confusing. Because the chair had originally said there were three proposals, some people thought that three proposals had actually been presented, and tried to discuss them. Also, rather than discussing the one proposal point by point, the floor was open to discussion of any or all points at once.

The discussion basically centered around whether the ACC should be anti-imperialist. Representatives of APAC spoke against this because they believe that going beyond saying that a group is against the war will exclude people from antiwar activities. Most of the others who spoke wanted the Committee to be anti-imperialist. APAC is already a broad grouping of people who are against the war, and another group which goes one step further didn't seem to be in conflict with that.

Many of the groups and individuals in the meeting had not participated very fully in antiwar activities over the past couple of years since APAC took over the leadership of the antiwar movement here. And one very strong reason for this inactivity was that people who were against imperialism, racism and capitalism were unable to present their politics in the demonstrations (through slogans, banners, speakers, etc.) and to try to raise the level of political consciousness of other participants. APAC was basically saying that the groups and individuals at the meeting should work within APAC and incorporate APAC's narrow antiwar position. However, it seemed obvious that this group could function as an anti-imperialist contingent in joint actions with APAC as well as possibly sponsoring other activities. When the vote was finally taken on the proposal, its acceptance was unanimous with about 15-20 people not voting. The APAC repre-

sentatives did not vote. By that time it was clear that the ACC would not include APAC but would work with it wherever possible. The confusion during the discussion about the relationship between APAC and ACC was clarified by adding a seventh point to the proposal: "This committee is not in opposition to the broad antiwar movement."

A disturbing aspect of the discussion to me was that "anti-imperialism" was not very fully defined. I felt that there were probably different levels of understanding of what that meant, but everyone seemed to be operating on the assumption that everyone knew what it meant and, further, agreed on what it meant. It is necessary that the various groups and individuals in the ACC devote some energy to developing their understanding of imperialism in order to build a firmer political unity in the ACC and to be effective in raising the political consciousness of others who participate in antiwar activities.

The meeting broke after the vote to hear speaker John Froines, formerly of the Chicago 7, currently with the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, speak about plans for antiwar activity in Washington, DC this week. Later the meeting reconvened to work out details of structure.

A steering committee was set up with representatives from all groups present: October League, Sunday Night Committee, Students for a Democratic Society, United Farmworkers, Progressive Labor Party, the *Bird*, Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence, Women's Community of Little Five Points, and other groups and some individuals. It was given the tasks of (1) beginning to implement the plans for June 19, (2) planning a meeting of everyone interested for more detailed discussion of June 19, and (3) getting a phone.

The steering committee of the ACC was to have met this past Tuesday evening and on Wednesday, May 24. APAC sponsored a meeting of the Atlanta antiwar movement to discuss June 19. Watch the *Bird* between now and June 19 for information on what is planned and how you can participate in the activities.

It's important for as many people as possible to participate in antiwar activities during this period in order to get the US out of Southeast Asia now and in support of the liberation forces there. People who are anti-imperialist should come to the next meeting of the Atlanta Coordinating Committee, Wednesday, May 31, at 7:30 pm at the People's Place, 433 Moreland Ave., NE (near Little Five Points). If you are against the war but not opposed to imperialism, you should work with APAC (876-0906). Both groups will be working on Nixon's visit, and will probably join forces at future times too.

anne jenkins

art burghardt

in solitary

Arthur Burghardt, Atlanta's most talented Black actor during the late 1960s, is presently in solitary confinement at Danbury Federal Prison. Serving a five-year sentence for refusing induction into the armed forces, he was placed in solitary for being involved in a recent work-stoppage at the prison.

No one who has ever seen or worked with Art Burghardt can easily forget him. He is big, tall, very loud, and thoroughly impressive as both a person and as an actor. His acting career in Atlanta found him doing a brilliant job in LeRoi Jones' *The Dutchman*, and in *Sleep or Prisoners*, both done in improvised theatres, and also excelling in super-slick productions put on by the Alliance Theatre in its super-expensive Kultural Center. His forceful personality often electrified audiences, and always exasperated directors and fellow performers.

Art's troubles with the draft started when he refused induction in 1967. He was tried and convicted on that charge, and began the long process of appeal. Meanwhile he kept up his acting. However, he quickly found that his refusal was hurting his ability to get jobs. In one case, a local theatre with heavy government grants was seriously considering Art for a place in its professional company. When the funding agency involved heard about that, a quick call was made to the theatre's director, who was told not to hire Art if he wanted to keep getting the government money. Art didn't get the job.

Eventually, Art left Atlanta and tried his luck in other cities. He spent a short amount of time working under the direction of former Atlanta actor Steven Bush in his Toronto-based company. In the end, he went to New York, where he played parts in several films, including *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, and eventually developed his own brilliant one-man production of *The Life of Frederick Douglass*. He took his one-man show to high schools, community groups, national educational television, and finally to two successful nights at New York's huge Town Hall. The day after his last Town Hall performance, he surrendered himself to federal marshals to begin serving his five-year term.

It will come as no surprise to anyone who knows Art that he is in the forefront of the struggle inside Danbury Federal Prison. His friends also know that no amount of solitary confinement, beatings, or anything else will make Art give up the struggle.

There are some people working to get Art out of jail. For more information and for petitions, contact Denise Spalding-Banks, 12 West 80th St., New York, New York 10023, (212)595-5936 or 873-2443.

—jon jacobs