

Proletarian Youth Movement

The Tasks of the Congress of the Y.C.L. of Great Britain

By Harry Pollitt (London)

The coming Congress of the *Young Communist League* of Great Britain is not to be looked upon as simply the gathering of delegates from the branches of the Y.C.L. who are only concerned to have some discussions on topics affecting only young Communists. On the contrary, the whole character of this important congress of the revolutionary youth must take on a mass character, and its discussions, speeches and resolutions be framed in such a way as to attract the attention of large masses of the working-class youth and win them for Communism.

Never were conditions so bad for the young workers as they are to-day. What with low wages; brutal and callous speeding-up; taking cunning advantage of the unorganised character of large sections of the youth; long hours; bad workshop conditions; lack of effective safety precautions, especially in mines and shipyards; thousands of young lads serving their time to a trade, with the dreadful knowledge before them that already thousands of others have served five and seven years, been sacked at the end of their apprenticeship, and never done a hand's turn since. They now wonder what will happen to them as they become 21 years of age.

Thousands suffering through the application of the Means Test, and, above all, the whole of the working-class male young workers menaced by the shadow of new wars, in which they will form the cannon-fodder required by the capitalists who attempt to solve the crisis of capitalism by new wars.

That this is so is proved by the many and varied efforts made by a thousand and one capitalist youth organisations to divert the attention of the young workers from the real situation, its meaning and solution, by turning their attention in all sorts of directions, and by perverted educational and sports methods, the sum total of which aim at distracting the young workers and preparing them for the use of the capitalists in future wars.

We see this being done on a scale never witnessed before in England. The types of lectures in training centres; the glorification of war; the daily persistent recruiting for the armed forces—all done to try and damp down the fighting spirit of the young workers, employed and unemployed alike, against the system which ever-growing numbers now understand is their real enemy.

This growing fighting spirit of the young workers and their active participation in all working-class struggles is one of the most encouraging signs of the times. Changes are also taking place amongst the young workers who are organised in the reformist youth organisations, of the Labour Party, League of Youth, and the I.L.P. Guild of Youth. Here, too, the crisis and the policy of the reformist leaders is bringing disillusionment and a searching after some other way forward on the part of growing sections of the reformist youth. No one can read the discussions of the Conference of the I.L.P. Guild of Youth, held at Whitsuntide, without realising that here is a very important movement in the direction of Communism and co-operation with the Young Communist International as a practical step in this direction.

This is the situation in which the Congress of the Young Communist League takes place. Never were the conditions for winning the working-class youth so favourable or the necessity of speedily doing this so urgent. If the Congress sets itself this aim and addresses itself to the finding of the ways and means to do it, then its whole discussions will be of such a character as will immediately attract thousands of young workers to the ranks of the Y.C.L.

This means that the Y.C.L. should take the foremost part in all the daily struggles of the young workers and in all their

activities that take place in their leisure time; at the same time, attention must be paid to educational and cultural work. By daily attention to what is going on in the factories, and at the Labour Exchanges and in the streets, the Y.C.L. can easily become recognised at the best defender of the interests of the young workers.

In the *trade unions*, to which every member of the Young Communist League should belong, there are many special opportunities for the Y.C.L. to take up the grievances of the young workers, to demand full rights within the trade union branches, and to win the branches for actively supporting the fight of the young members of the branch and in this way proving that trade union organisation can be made into a powerful weapon exercised by the workers in their struggle against capitalism.

Never let us forget the words of *Comrade Lenin* in a speech he delivered to the Youth at the Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1920, where he said:

"The Young Communist League will justify its title, will prove that it is really a League of the Young Communist generation if it will connect every step of its studies, its training and its education with participation in the general struggle of all toilers against the exploiters."

And running like a red stream through all this daily work of the Young Communist League must be the ceaseless personal recruiting of new members to the League. Let the present numerical membership of the League fill every member with shame and a burning desire at once to bring about a great change, a desire that will reflect itself in every phase of our activity and bring thousands of new recruits into the League, so that in very truth our Young Communist League will become the reserve army of Communism.

Special attention will of course be given to the question of the building up of the *united front* against the capitalist attack on the conditions of the employed and unemployed young workers, against fascism and imperialist war.

Let us at this Congress pay attention to the methods of our propaganda and agitation, frankly to discuss what is wrong and harmful amongst some of our present methods. Ours is a great task and a great ideal. Cannot we try and carry it out with that spirit, boldness and imagination that characterises the daring revolutionary spirit of growth; that attracts and holds, that breeds the spirit of emulation and calls forward new forces and leaders and members.

Let us get colour, brightness, and daring into the work of our Young Communist League. I wish all our comrades in England could see the splendid uniforms and bands that our comrades have built up in Glasgow, how they give an entirely new tone and character to working-class demonstrations and encourage workers to participate who otherwise might never be attracted.

The Young Communist League is not a dry-as-dust organisation, but the only revolutionary organisation of working-class youth, whose message and principles alone show the way forward to a new social order, in which unemployment has been abolished, in which craftsmanship once more has a place, in which aimless hanging about the street corners has gone, in which sport is free, clean, and open to all to take part, developing clean, healthy bodies and physical fitness, in which the terror of the future has been removed, and in which peace reigns and the horrors of war have for ever been removed from the order of the day. Then let this Congress mark a decisive turning point. Let it be inspired in its work and by its approach to the fulfilment of its tasks by the examples of the young Communists of the Soviet Union, whose immortal deeds of industrial heroism, whose conquests in backward villages, mark such a proud age in the building up of Socialism.

The Communist Party from top to bottom must help in this work, must give practical co-operation and guidance, give its best members and its advice to our young Communists, so that we can really have a mass Young Communist League established in Great Britain.

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