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TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND REGIONAL ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a transcript of the report presented by Betsy Farley to the YSA Regional Work workshop at the YSA convention. This report outlines the regional work proposals that were adopted at the convention. It focuses on the regional travelling teams to be fielded jointly by YSA chapters and SWP branches.

In order to make sure that the regional teams are well-organized, chapters should begin now to collaborate with SWP branches in planning the itinerary and assignments for the teams. As soon as chapters have finalized these plans they should contact the YSA National Office so that orders can be placed for additional bundles of the Young Socialist, the Militant, and Perspectiva Mundial, which will be provided to the teams free of charge.

Comradely,

*Susie Berman*

Susie Berman  
YSA National Office

## YSA REGIONAL WORK

By Betsy Farley

I think comrades are familiar with the experience that we had last fall with the regional travelling teams. That is, the teams almost totally fell through. This prompted the YSA National office to begin some discussions reevaluating how we do regional work in general and the question of regional travelling teams in particular.

What I want to do first is explain some of the history of the YSA's regional work. Most comrades in the YSA today just joined in the last couple of years and aren't familiar with the changes our regional work has gone through.

For the past ten years, regional work has been the main way that the Socialist Workers Party and the YSA have expanded. Most of the party branches and YSA chapters that exist today were formed as a result of this kind of work. We've come a long way from having only a handful of YSA chapters when we were founded in 1960 to having YSA chapters in 44 cities today -- and SWP branches in 41 cities.

Until the past two years, regional work was a regular part of the activity of nearly every SWP branch and YSA chapter. This work took a lot of different forms. In the early days, YSA regional work was carried out by sending a carload to this or that campus over a weekend to sell Militants and Young Socialists, or sending individual comrades able to take time off from work or school to tour several campuses for a week or two weeks and meet new people and recruit them to the YSA. Then in 1970, when the YSA had grown to about 1,000 members, we decided to systematize regional work on a national level. We divided up the country into several "regions." Each region had a "regional center" based in a city where there was both a YSA chapter and an SWP branch. These regional centers worked very closely with at-large YSA members and YSA chapters in their region, and they organized to reach out to new campuses and recruit new people to the YSA. It started to become a norm that every regional center would assign and finance a full-time regional organizer to direct this work.

In 1972, at the peak of the SWP presidential election campaign for Linda Jenness and Andrew Pulley, the movement nationally decided to coordinate travelling YSA teams of three or four comrades all over the country. These teams were on the road for eight weeks in the spring and fall, and they made big gains for the YSA both in terms of recruiting hundreds of new members and in terms of spreading our socialist ideas to many new campuses.

However, during the past couple of years it has become more and more obvious that some adjustments need to be made if we're going to continue to carry out this work.

Today we have a situation where both the YSA and the SWP are more spread out than ever before. Party branches and YSA chapters are in twice the number of cities we were two years ago. And each chapter and branch are smaller in size than they used to be. This has meant that financially and organizationally it has been impossible to sustain a full-time regional organizer, except in New York City, which has the largest YSA chapter and the largest SWP local. But the main difference is that we've found it's no longer possible to field the same kind of regional travelling teams that we have in the past.

I think it's important in light of these problems we've run up against to consider how crucial regional work is for the YSA and what we suffer by not adequately organizing regional work.

First of all, the YSA is a national organization, and although the bulk of the work each chapter carries out might be on one campus in one city we can't allow ourselves to slip into a mode of operation whereby we look at politics in a provincial fashion. YSA chapters and party branches have got to become political centers for the entire area surrounding them. We want to know about and participate in activities that take place on other campuses and in other cities. We want to take our political campaigns, to the extent it's possible, to places outside of the main cities where we are now based.

Second, through regional work we make big gains in recruitment to the YSA. On a lot of the campuses nearby, there aren't any other radical groups on campus that we have to compete with -- at least not national groups. But the same kind of radicalization exists there, and we can often recruit people more easily. On other campuses the opposite is the situation. Our opponents, especially the RCYB (Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade, formerly Revolutionary Student Brigade), have been able to grow on these campuses just because the YSA has no public face there to offer students an alternative. A lot of the largest chapters of the RCYB exist on regional campuses where the YSA does not exist.

Third, of course, our regional work today will lay the basis for the establishment of new branches of the SWP. This isn't any small thing: of the twenty or so branches of the SWP that have been set up in the last two years, all were set up in a city where YSA at-large members or a YSA chapter already existed.

Regional work only makes sense for the YSA if we can integrate it into our overall work. In the past couple of years, for the reasons I mentioned before, this has been difficult. The travelling teams were especially difficult to organize. The teams had to cover a big geographic area encompassing several branches and chapters, and no single branch or chapter felt responsible for

providing the necessary leadership to get a team on the road and direct its work. Each team has been the joint project of many -- sometimes ten or twelve -- different branches and chapters. And you get a situation where a team in the Southwest region is supposed to cover an area all the way from Southern California to East Texas. In an eight-week period these teams can't possibly cover all of the important schools in the area, and so for a lot of YSA chapters the team will go nowhere near their city. Some chapters never even get a report about what the team has done.

So the National Executive Committee is proposing that we take a fresh look at our regional work now; that we begin from the standpoint of what is most useful for YSA chapters and SWP branches as they are today -- not from the standpoint of how we used to organize regional work when we had fewer chapters and branches that were much larger. We stand to gain a lot from beginning to reach out to campuses in the region. We need a way to get out our socialist propaganda, to build activities like the April 15 anti-Bakke demonstration, and to recruit to the YSA. We need to find a form that will help us integrate regional work into the regular activity of party branches and YSA chapters.

What we're proposing is that every YSA chapter in a city where a party branch exists field its own regional travelling team sometime during the months of February, March, and April. These would be three or four person teams made up of members of the YSA and the SWP. The goal would be to get the teams on the road for two weeks each. Where this isn't possible, branches and chapters may want to consider fielding two teams for one week each, or one team for one week, or several weekend teams like the ones that went out this fall during the Militant subscription drive. Team members would be party and YSA comrades who could arrange to take time off from school or their jobs. This might include SWP candidates and party and YSA organizers who are available full-time and who can arrange their schedules so that they can be out of town for a week or two.

We think that the shorter time for the teams will help to overcome the problem of freeing up comrades to be team members. Comrades won't have to quit jobs or give up apartments, as often happened in the case of the eight-week teams. And chapters won't have to find cars they can drive half-way across the country.

The political and financial responsibility for these teams will rest with the individual YSA chapters and SWP branches -- not the YSA or SWP national office. The literature the teams use will be provided by branch bookstores and all proceeds will go back to the bookstore. Bookstores, of course, will have to make sure they place special order ahead of time so that there will be enough literature on hand. Militant, Perspectiva Mundial,

and Young Socialist bundles will be provided to the teams nationally at no cost to help defray expenses. All sales will be credited to the branch and chapter sales goals. In some cases, a comrade may need to have their income supplemented while they are on the team, but this is a decision that each branch and chapter will have to make.

One of the things that is going to be important this spring in terms of regional work is that follow-up contact be made with Militant subscribers. Out of the 15,000 Militant and PM subs sold this fall, 4-5,000 were sold on campuses and half of these were sold at regional campuses. In addition, the regional teams can help to launch the SWP statewide election campaigns, especially if a candidate is available to be a part of the team and speak on campuses, get media interviews, etc.

The teams can be a big help in getting endorsers for the Marroquin defense among student leaders and professors. They can help build the anti-Bakke actions in February and April.

Also, some branches and chapters will be sponsoring socialist educational conferences this spring on various topics, and if the timing is right the regional teams can help build these conferences on a much broader scale.

Approving this perspective for YSA regional work will mean that we begin to look at regional work in a new way. It will mean making regional work a regular part of the activity of YSA chapters and SWP branches. The regional teams can be organized locally so that they mesh with the political work of chapters and branches, rather than being a financial and personnel drain.

One important thing to keep in mind is that this project will not work unless it is organized as a joint project of both the YSA and the SWP. The Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party has already discussed a report on regional work along these lines, and the party will be discussing this further at its National Committee meeting in February. We're confident that the party will also see regional work this spring as a tremendous benefit to its work and that it will work closely with the YSA in making it a success.

It will be important to begin discussions right away with comrades about being a member of a regional team. Plans should be discussed out as soon as possible for where the teams should go and when, so that other adjustments in assignments and activities can be made well ahead of time.