

RESOLUTION ON TASKS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE BUILDING
OF A REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH MOVEMENT

General Perspectives

1. Our fundamental task for this period is the building of a revolutionary socialist youth movement in this country. Such a movement will enable young people to develop in their own way and at their own tempo — to come to Marxism by their own path. It will provide an instrument for advancing the struggle for the particular needs of the young working people and student youth of this country. Finally it will be the best vehicle for bringing the ideas of revolutionary Marxism to a new generation of young people and by so doing help to build the cadres of a revolutionary socialist movement in this country.

2. Such a movement should be independent from the revolutionary party. Only a movement truly under the control of the young people who come to it and who make it up can carry through the tasks listed above. However, such a movement necessarily develops in fraternal cooperation and complete solidarity with all revolutionaries in common action against the ruling class and opponent petty-bourgeois tendencies.

3. The task of building of a revolutionary youth movement in the present period is sharply different from this task in other periods. Dominating our whole perspective must be a full understanding and use of the opportunities now open to us in the regroupment process. The organized Stalinist youth movement, the Labor Youth League, has dissolved, leaving us a clear field to work among young people formerly under the influence of the CP. Many of these young people are open to our ideas; and our fundamental task is to remove any formal or organizational barriers standing in the way of these young people moving toward us politically. In addition we must bring together in a common working body those youth already holding a revolutionary socialist orientation. These include the young members of the SWP, the former YSL-LWC members, those coming over from the Stalinist milieu, independent left Marxists, and elements new to socialism. And finally we must reach out to new youth, especially leftward-moving elements on the campus. However, this latter task is not our major one in this period and is subordinated to, but not replaced by or unrelated to, our overriding task of regrouping young people who are already socialists. The intimate relationship enters because the campus is the scene of part of the actual working out of regroupment among young people.

4. Our vehicle for reaching the Stalinist youth is the IBM clubs. So far these clubs have been extremely successful and contain a significant section of the former members of the LYL in their ranks nationally. Our general slogan of forming clubs truly independent of all existing tendencies and open to all viewpoints has been our most powerful weapon in bringing these youth into common organizations with us and in preventing the CP from regaining its hegemony over its former youth followers. The building and expanding of these clubs must remain for the coming period our major task.

5. However, in exactly those aspects which are the main strength and appeal of the IBM clubs lies their basic weakness. Fundamentally these clubs are a political and organizational meeting ground for revolutionary socialist

elements and youth who in one fashion or another hold to Stalinist politics. For this reason these clubs are unable to take positions on a host of important class struggle issues. To attempt to force these clubs to take stands on such issues would in effect force out exactly those elements we wish to cohabit with at the present time — and would thus destroy the basic appeal of the IBM clubs. However it is also true that exactly those aspects of the IBM clubs which make them attractive to Stalinist youth make them repugnant to non-Stalinist youth. This factor limits the ability of these clubs to reach out to new, previously uninvolved elements, in any large-scale way. Inevitably this basic contradiction in the nature of the IBM clubs will lead to their disintegration. But for the time being they play an extremely valuable role which far outweighs their weaknesses.

6. In addition to the IBM clubs we have created the Young Socialist. The Young Socialist from its very beginning has been different from the IBM clubs. Where these clubs were unable to take positions — such as on the Hungarian revolution — the YS took basically revolutionary socialist stands. Thus the YS has stood and still stands in a vanguard relation to the IBM clubs. It does not represent a unity of Stalinist-reformist and revolutionary Marxist forces but rather is the spokesman for the revolutionary socialist tendency functioning within the IBM's. As such it supports the IBMs without asking the IBMs to support it. It allows all elements in the IBM clubs to contribute their views in its pages and is thus a partial reflection of the IBMs; at the same time, as a paper it speaks out for one section of the IBMs, the revolutionary socialists. However it seeks to speak for revolutionary socialism in its broadest definition and is therefore not an explicitly Trotskyist (SWP) youth publication. So far it has been extremely successful in reaching both the Stalinist youth and the broader student audience.

7. In addition to the regroupment arenas as such, there exists the second most important arena for revolutionary socialist youth, the campus. The campus differs from "mass" arenas — the Negro organizations, trade unions, etc. — in that a socialist can function openly both propagandistically and as a participant in student issues. Currently the campus scene is gaining in importance. The response to YS sales and suppression at UCLA, Colorado, and Michigan, the formation and struggles of the anti-fraternity party SLATE at Berkeley, and the springing up of student Sane committees throughout the country are signs of the favorably changing atmosphere on the American campus.

8. A natural form for functioning on campus is the broad discussion club. This is organizationally similar to the IBM club. However it differs usually in political composition, as it is a coalescence of organized socialists with a broader, more amorphous grouping of young people breaking to one degree or another from bourgeois ideology.

9. The student movements and activities as they are now unfolding do not stand apart from the regroupment process. In the presence of live activity on campus, the socialistically-inclined children of radical parents and the ex-LYL former high school youth are frequently brought into contact with revolutionary socialists, not on the basis of fellowship as socialists, as in the IBMs, but as common participants in the nuclear protests, civil rights and academic freedom fights, opposition to fraternity domination and the like now taking place.

10. Finally another element of crucial importance to our perspective must be considered, the revolutionary youth forces themselves. Presently in addition to functioning in the IBM clubs the revolutionary youth have maintained some sort of independent organization or grouping. In some areas this is simply an SWP caucus or youth committee. In others it is a broader revolutionary youth caucus. Finally in others it is openly organized as a committee for the Young Socialist. These forces are in communication with each other through the national youth center and are the only national cohesive force at work within the IBMs.

11. Quite naturally in most areas these revolutionary socialist forces have tended to group around the Young Socialist. In fact the Young Socialist depends for its existence upon the work of these groupings in each locality. In addition to selling the paper, raising fund drive contributions and discussing the paper's policy, these groupings on occasion hold open functions either to raise money for the paper or to present some activity the IBM can't or won't carry on.

12. It is clear that presently there exists no revolutionary socialist youth movement. On the one hand we have broad clubs too amorphous to function as a national entity or to engage in fraction work in other arenas, and on the other hand we have the revolutionary caucus -- at present not fully organized and far from being a youth movement in a real sense. The question is therefore posed: How do we get from where we are to where we want to go -- to a revolutionary socialist youth movement? We must choose one of the two basic ways to do this:

a. We can take the IBM clubs as they are presently constituted and by raising and forcing through one point after another of our program turn these clubs into a national revolutionary socialist force. This orientation is in our opinion fundamentally false and can lead only to a long series of demoralizing splits as one group or another, one individual or another, leaves the IBM clubs as some pet point of view is overruled. Such a process would destroy the main function of the IBMs -- that of an organizational meeting ground between the basically opponent tendencies of Stalinism and Trotskyism.

b. We can continue along the tack we have been following up to now and preserve the IBM clubs as they are. In addition we can build our revolutionary forces around the Young Socialist -- spokesman for revolutionary youth -- in the form of local and national committees for the Young Socialist. These committees will give us an organizational vehicle within which to conduct our revolutionary Marxist educational work. It will provide something to recruit leftward-moving elements to instead of being forced to recruit them prematurely (and provocatively) into the party. It will provide a more formal structure that will make the financial support and promotion of the YS far easier. Finally it will provide in combination with the IBM and campus clubs a flexible apparatus and organizational form to fit the present highly fluid situation.

Concrete Tasks

13. Our first and primary task is to build the IBMs as they are. We should definitely not attempt to force these clubs to adopt any position which even a small minority could not fully accept. We should keep these clubs organizationally independent of the YS, and separate them from the YS where they

are presently tied, so as not to limit the broadness of the clubs or put undue pressure on the YS to change its principled positions.

14. While it is difficult to estimate clearly, it is certain that we have yet to penetrate fully into the layers of youth formerly in or around the Stalinist movement, especially is this true in the very largest metropolitan centers and in certain outlying areas where we lack forces. Hence if we are to deepen and extend the IBM club approach we must continue a program of activity and discussion not only with an eye to those now in the clubs, but also toward attracting those yet hesitant or uninvolved. Therefore from this consideration too we need to avoid "tightening up" the IBMs, and as well we should emphasize those publicity and contact measures calculated to reach those youth indifferent to or unaware of the existence of the IBM alternative to the defunct Stalinist-led youth organizations.

15. We must preserve the nature of the YS as the spokesman for revolutionary socialism among youth. In order to do this it is necessary to clarify the politics of the YS which have been put into doubt by the presence of Steve Max and Gil Turner on the editorial board and by their joint anti-socialist article which appeared in the May-June issue. In order to do this we must end the unanimity rule on editorials and print at once an editorial militantly supporting the united socialist ticket. Until such an editorial appears the point of view of the YS will remain under a cloud. In addition we should adopt a minimal statement of principles similar to the ones formulated by Shane Mage and Tim Wohlforth which were rejected by Max and Turner.

16. With the line of the YS clear we must proceed with the organization of our forces in every area around the banner of the Young Socialist in the form of local committees for the YS. We should work together toward a national convention of all Young Socialist Committees to establish definitively the line of the paper and the tasks of revolutionary socialist youth for this period.

17. Our greatest weakness at present is on campus. This is true both abstractly in terms of the overall distribution of our youth forces, growing out of our high average age levels, and relatively as compared with our Stalinist and especially social-democratic and pacifist competitors. With our forces better organized in YS Committees we can more forcefully enter the campus arena, creating fractions and building new campus clubs which can be extremely fruitful sources for recruitment to the YS Committees. Such a program coupled with a nation-wide barnstorming tour can place us in the dominant position among students and push the Stalinist and Shachtmanite youth to the sidelines in as effective a way as we have already done in the direct regroupment field.

18. In summary: by continuing an extremely flexible and "soft" policy toward the IBM formations and simultaneously clarifying the role of the YS and building our forces around it we can accomplish our major task of this moment, laying the groundwork for a nationwide revolutionary socialist youth movement to replace the former dominance of the Stalinist youth and keep the social-democratic youth in their deservedly impotent state.

— Tim Wohlforth
James Robertson
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