

DRAFT -- Letter to Dan and Dot Rubin -- February 19, 1958

Your letter of February 8, 1958, addressed to the members of the YOUNG SOCIALIST CLUB was an important guidepost in defining the stage of development of our club as well as raising questions and criticism which, in my opinion, will prove vital to the further operations and growth of the Club.

The YOUNG SOCIALIST CLUB should be of, by and for the youth. We can only thank you for emphasizing the importance of this characteristic of our Club, which cannot be overstressed. For example, our last series of panel discussions, which were unique in providing a platform for the major radical and socialist groupings, did not succeed in attracting nearly enough of those rebellious and dissident youth we were trying to reach. Any suggestions you may have for doing this are, as always, welcome.

Some of your other criticisms, which would have been more timely had they been raised by you within the YOUNG SOCIALIST CLUB, are not within the realm of this letter. I hope we can get together and discuss them with you at a later date.

Your letter connects the organizational deficiencies of the Y.S.C. to the presence of "Trotskyists" and the influence of their politics. The facts contradict this connection which you attempt to establish. For example: The New York Young Socialist Alliance, where the youth of the Socialist Workers Party joined hands with the Left Wingers from the Young Socialist League and others to initiate a club having, essentially, the same principles as our own YOUNG SOCIALIST CLUB, has proven its ability to grow to the point where the originators are in a minority. This is similar to what occurred in Philadelphia. On all major points during the discussion of the Club's statement of principles, your point of view, Dan and Dot, carried a majority. This was not in the least disturbing to myself and others of us who instituted the project in Philadelphia. In fact, it is a healthy sign -- a sign of growth! If, in every organization where we participate, we had to have a majority as a pre-condition, those organizations would be eternally doomed to minuteness -- and right now the socialist movement has too much minuteness to make that a unique characteristic worth striving for.

The ability to attract youth runs parallel with the ability to accurately assess the world about us and, as youth, to participate in changing that world through the creation of organizations adequate to accomplish our task. The formula of broad, militant and independent as a description of the type of youth organization we need is proving itself in other areas; but the formula is useful only if it serves as a guide to those building the youth movement. And to the extent that we have not mastered the guidepost which we have developed, the YOUNG SOCIALIST CLUB has been impeded in its growth.

When we began constructing a non-exclusive and fighting socialist youth club, we did so with the recognition of our political differences. The question of how to win the fight for peace is one of those differences. We both want peace and we both want socialism. This conjuncture of agreements, in my opinion, overrides the differences we have on how to fight for peace -- at least in terms of working within the same youth group.

The Peace Question is one which we must continue to discuss, for the sake of deepening our understanding of the problem and widening those areas of agreement which give us a common basis for action. .

Our last meeting of the YOUNG SOCIALIST CLUB included a place on the agenda which gave me an opportunity to report on the proceedings at the Mid-West Conference of Socialist Youth (in Chicago, February 1st and 2nd). In the opinion of the many participants and observers the Conference definitely proved the attractiveness of a broad socialist youth grouping. In addition to this, the success of the heavily-attended panels, which allowed for the airing and discussion of diverse viewpoints on a half-dozen issues including Peace, Juvenile Delinquency and Civil Rights, indicated a lesson being learned by young socialists: that their differences need not keep them apart. This was underlined by the ability of the conference, despite the varied political composition, to pass virtually by unanimous agreement several resolutions dealing with Peace and the H-Bomb, Civil Liberties and Civil Rights. Furthermore, a motion presented by Steve Max of the Young Socialist Alliance of New York proposed a continuation of cooperation and controversy through a non-exclusive discussion bulletin now in the planning stages which would be supported by local clubs all over the country.

The principles of the Young Socialist Club included the important provision for common action where there is common agreement. And I believe this to be a principle which provides an important unifying and strengthening force for a weak and divided radical movement. The Chicago Conference stressed those points on which socialists can agree. Thus, the ability to pass unanimous resolutions and to take resolute stands on outstanding questions facing the world in general, and American youth in particular. One of the resolutions which was adopted was a demand that the U.S. State Department return to the students who went to China, the passports which were seized from them upon their return to this country.

This issue -- which is one also raised by Dan -- provides an arena where we can cooperate and fight on the same team, along with all other interested young socialists and non-socialists in Philadelphia, linking up with the youth forces across the country who are supporting this fight. On this, as well as other matters, we would like to have as close affiliation as possible with you and your associates. Whether you work within our club or with our club, the YOUNG SOCIALIST CLUB would like to propose a meeting, to be held at your convenience, at which we can discuss the possibilities of activity to put into the foreground of youth activities the fight to obtain the right for everyone to travel where they wish, in the spirit of academic freedom and inquiry. Won't you kindly contact us to let us know your feelings in the matter.

It was our first hope that we could work and discuss together in the same group, building it in such a way that young workers and students could be attracted to the ideas of socialism -- and yet, while presenting the opportunity to act where we agreed, also creating an atmosphere in which we could discuss those things where differences exist. I am more convinced than ever that such an arena can and must be created. Moreover, while up to now, we have not been "up to snuff" in meeting this task, I must report the overriding and most important fact of my trip to Chicago: that in other parts of the country, young socialists from different political backgrounds are getting together, and are laying the basis for building the movement we spoke of. It is with this in mind that I ask you to consider the doors of our Club open, and the minds of our members ready to consider every and any proposal which aims at achieving this goal. As a first step: Let's work together on the RIGHT TO TRAVEL issue.

Fraternally,

/s/ Art