



**YOUNG SOCIALIST
DISCUSSION
BULLETIN**

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The discussion articles and resolutions contained in this bulletin were written for the Young Socialist National Convention to be held in Chicago at the University of Illinois (Circle Campus) November 28 - December 1, 1968. They were written by members of the Young Socialist Alliance across the country.

Resolutions drafted by the National Executive Committee of the Young Socialist Alliance have also been circulated to the entire membership. These four resolutions, which will be voted on at the convention, are "The New International Youth Radicalization," "The '68 Campaign and Beyond.. Socialist Youth Politics in America," "On the Revolutionary Struggle of Black America for Self Determination," and "Young Socialists and the Fight Against the Vietnam War."

The resolutions and contributions to the discussion are being circulated prior to the convention to assure the fullest possible discussion on political perspectives and activities before the convention meets.

Young socialists from around the country are invited to participate in the written discussion and urged to attend the convention. Contributions to the discussion and inquiries should be sent to the Young Socialist Alliance, Box 471, Cooper Station, New York, New York 10003,

Black Trotskyists and a Black Party

by Tony Thomas

Leon Trotsky wrote in the program of the Fourth International that "the world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis in the leadership of the proletariat." This has been the most important analysis of the world relationship between revolution and reaction between the time of the degeneration of the Communist International and the present day. The construction of a strong revolutionary Marxist leadership on an international basis to counter the Stalinist, liberal, social democratic, new left, and other non-Marxist leaderships is the question of the day.

In this country the job of building the world revolutionary party is the building of the Socialist Workers Party, the only revolutionary party in the United States, and the building of the YSA, the revolutionary youth vanguard in this country.

It is the task of the YSA and SWP to build the revolutionary leadership which will lead the American revolution. It is of the foremost importance that the revolutionary socialist movement in this country build not only within the white oppressor nation, as the vanguard of the white workers and student radicals, but also that the revolutionary movement develop its cadres within the oppressed Black Nation as well.

The Bolshevik movement, since the time of Lenin, has always recognized the need of building a revolutionary party that would coordinate all revolutionary elements within the boundaries of any capitalist state--a team based on a common revolutionary program and a common democratic centralist organization.

Within nations such as Tsarist Russia, where the majority of the population belonged to oppressed nationalities, as well as in nations like the United States and Canada where the question of oppressed national groups plays a key role in the revolutionary struggle, revolutionary Marxists have always seen the need of coordinating the struggle among the various nations within the state through one central revolutionary leadership. Only in this way can the centralism of the capitalist government be countered with the revolutionary centralism of the revolu-

tionary masses.

It is because of the especially crucial role that the Black Nation within the U.S. will play in the American Revolution that extra importance must be paid by revolutionary Marxists to the extension of the Black Marxist cadre within the YSA.

Afro-America constitutes both a nationality oppressed by American imperialism and the most cruelly exploited section of the American proletariat. The demand for black control of the black communities, which springs from this dual oppression will be a major component in the struggle that will lead to the destruction of American capitalism.

Concretely we see that the struggle of black people for community control of the schools, the struggle by black workers in certain unions against the racist bureaucrats, and above all the struggles of black students in the colleges and high schools, stirring up, shaking up American society, only foreshadow the vanguard role which blacks will play in the American revolution.

By a vanguard role, we mean that blacks will be the first and most militant in taking up the anti-capitalist struggle, playing the most advanced role in the development of the revolution, from beginning to end.

Besides striving for the development of a black Marxist cadre within our own movement, we support the establishment of a mass black political party to help bridge the gap of organization and leadership within the black nation.

We advocate a mass black party because it is necessary to organize the massive nationalist sentiment and potential of the black nation outside the confines of the politics and organizations of the ruling class.

We support the formation of a black political party because a political party is an organization to take power.

We call for a separate black party because we understand the vanguard role that the black nation will play in the revolution.

We support the formation of a black political party as a way of organizing the broad masses of blacks in a revolutionary direction. However, a black political party is no substitute for the construction of a black Marxist cadre.

The relationship between a revolutionary vanguard and a general party of a class or a nation is an important one. The revolutionary Marxist party is based on the program of Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism. Its task is to unite the most politically conscious elements around its revolutionary program and to serve as the vanguard of the revolutionary struggle.

A black political party serves as a mass formation for breaking the black nation away from capitalist politics in order to pursue the struggle for self-determination. The initial program of such a party will be necessarily limited, based around the general demand for black control of the black community. Such a demand and such a program are essential if a black party is to speak to the level of political consciousness of the mass of black people.

On the other hand, the political program embodied in the revolutionary socialist movement is more complete, based on the heritage and experience of the past one-hundred years of anti-capitalist struggle.

This program, as expressed through the transitional demands of the socialist movement, must be carried to a black political party by black Marxist cadres. The struggle for such transitional slogans will win many blacks within the black party to the program of revolutionary Marxism and to our movement.

A comprehension of the revolutionary socialist program will be necessary to understand the complicated development of the North American revolution. An understanding of the character of various social forces at play, the need for a revolutionary leadership, the role to be played by black and white workers, and a multitude of other questions will be necessary for the forces of black liberation, necessary for the development of a black party that will be able to win the allegiance of the black masses in a revolutionary confrontation with the exploiter class and its oppressive government.

Such an understanding can come only with the acquisition of the revolutionary Marxist program, only through the involvement of revolutionary black socialist cadres in the black party.

The formation and education of this cadre will not be an over-night matter. In general the development of the cadres of our revolutionary socialist movement

depends on acquiring the experience that has been accumulated over the past 50 years by the revolutionary Marxist movement in this country. Revolutionary black cadres will be built by drawing on this history and experience. Such an education can best take place within the revolutionary socialist youth organization, the YSA, and the revolutionary socialist party, the Socialist Workers Party.

Not only is the development of a black cadre within the revolutionary socialist movement important to the black struggle. The task of coordinating the development of the North American revolution makes the centralist unity of black, Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, Indian, and white revolutionaries essential.

The description of Black America as the colony and white America as the mother country is a useful one, but this viewpoint can lead to a few misconceptions.

The black nation is in all fundamental senses a colony of U.S. imperialism, but instead of being thousands of miles away and totally separated, the mother country and the colony are intertwined, occupying the same territory.

The struggles of black workers and of white workers can not be seen as two separate entities. They will take place in the same factories and in the same unions.

Indeed, the conception of the working class struggles as something appropriate to "white workers," or seeing the labor struggles as divorced from the development of a black party, is an incorrect one.

Black workers, as the most oppressed sector of the working class, will play the key role in the heightening struggle against the bosses and the bureaucrats. The formation of Drum in Detroit and the Chicago Concerned Transit Workers is just a harbinger of future struggles that will be led and organized by black workers.

In addition, incidents like the New York Teachers strike show how struggles against the racist union bureaucracy will be precipitated by the struggle of the black nation for self-determination.

The development of these closely intertwined struggles means that the action of the white revolutionary vanguard and the black vanguard can not be separated. The full coordination of these struggles within the revolutionary movement is essential if the struggle against North American imperialism is to be successful.

The construction of a black, Puerto

Rican, Mexican-American, and Indian Marxist cadre is essential if the revolutionary movement is to build a combat team to conduct the struggle on the many fronts on which the North American revolution will be fought.

In line with the need for such a multi-national revolutionary team, several misconceptions on the part of many white YSAers must be shed.

The first is that the YSA is a "white" organization whose sole task is to organize white radicals, while abstractly supporting the black liberation struggle from afar. The YSA is the organization of all the revolutionary socialist youth in the U.S. It includes revolutionary youth from the oppressed black, Indian, Oriental, and Spanish-speaking nations, as well as the revolutionary youth of the white oppressor nation. The YSA as an organization and through its Afro-American comrades, fully participates in the revolutionary struggle for black liberation.

Secondly, the necessity of building a black cadre within our movement is often seen as something less concrete than the propaganda for a black political par-

ty. The building of a black cadre within our movement is just as important as the formation of a black political party, and in the last analysis can not be separated from it.

Black Marxists are much more politically aware than other revolutionary black nationalists, because we understand Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism, the only consistent revolutionary theory of our time. This theory will be necessary for the movement of the black nation toward a socialist revolution.

Thus it is the task of the whole organization, not just black comrades, to build the black cadre of the YSA by recruiting black militants from the schools, colleges, and streets of our nation, wherever potential black Bolshevik cadre is located. Every YSAer should be able to deal with the questions a revolutionary black will have about joining the YSA.

Only through the development of a black Trotskyist cadre can the most complete development of the revolutionary struggle for black self-determination take place.

October 25, 1968

Draft Resolution on YSA Structure

by John Hansen

The New Turn

In the past months we have seen the Young Socialist Alliance take a significant new turn, a turn opening itself up to a far broader strata of socialist youth than was previously thought either possible or in the best interests of the organization.

The new turn meant abandoning to a certain extent the previous role of the YSA as the cadre youth organization of the Socialist Workers Party. No longer were the ranks of the YSA to be filled only with "Trotskyists," i.e., those who had considered and accepted the formulations of the SWP. Now layers of revolutionary socialist youth, those who were in broad agreement with our movement but who might hold views contrary to the Party in certain areas, or who might not, for various reasons, wish to connect themselves with the SWP, were invited to join the organization on the basis of their agreement with and commitment to the concept of building a socialist America, one free of war, poverty and racism. Of course, it was hoped that in the process of the struggle, YSAers would come to see the need of a Marxist-Leninist cadre party, with the forms of democratic centralism which that party entails, and as a result join the SWP as well.

The two organizations were to perform a different function, then, in this new period. The YSA as an open, broader-based revolutionary socialist youth movement, the SWP as a Leninist cadre party. This is, at least, our own conception of the changes which have occurred in the past months, changes which have already begun to reap wide benefits for the YSA. Under the new policy we have been able to recruit an increasingly larger number of dedicated young socialists. In only a few months these comrades have imparted a new sense of energy and creativity to our movement. Further, the new approach has done much to dispel the attitude previously held by many toward our movement as a narrow, sectarian organization, one more interested in hair-splitting moot ideological points than making the fight against American imperialism and its many manifestations. This "opening up" is one of the most important steps ever undertaken by the YSA. If continued, the likelihood of building a truly significant revolutionary socialist youth organization

in America could finally be removed from the realm of merely wishful thinking. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that this new turn be continued and broadened.

The Altered Conception - How Deep?

Such a continuation could be ended abruptly, however, if the internal organizational structure does not reflect the altered conception of the YSA's new role. Unfortunately, this lack of continuance at a deeper level is presently the case. Although large numbers of new comrades have joined the organization, this influx of non-SWP YSAers has yet to be reflected in any meaningful way in positions of authority and leadership. Almost without exception, organizational control and authority rests with comrades who are both YSAers and members of the SWP.

On the local level, Berkeley provides a good example. Here every single member of the twelve-man executive committee is a member of the SWP. On the national level, the pattern is nearly duplicated in the National Executive Committee, while the editorial board of the Young Socialist, the organ of the YSA, is composed entirely of SWPers.

Now it should be stated that this is not the result of either a conspiracy or of conscious manipulation. Such a pattern merely reflects the former organizational form of the YSA. Nevertheless, in this new period, the continuation of such a pattern could have disastrous consequences.

First, it has the potential for blocking the development of non-SWP leadership among those comrades who do not wish to join the party. Whether we like it or not, Executive Committees tend to perpetuate themselves. SWP-YSAers will naturally tend, as a rule, to consider more favorably EC candidates who are members of the SWP. This is not done for the conscious purpose of exclusion, but simply because members of the party will tend to have more homogeneous views. It is a very human tendency as well and must, therefore, be recognized.

Secondly, such a procedure could, if carried on for any length of time, alienate new comrades from the YSA. We live in a society which increasingly denies to the individual a meaningful part

in the decisions which affect his life. We can hardly ask comrades for the commitment to an organization fighting the incredibly difficult task of transforming America, if that organization reflects in any substantial way that alienating society. We are speaking here not only of positions of leadership, but the belief that decisions reached by the membership are arrived at by a true democratic process, with each member contributing to that process equally.

YSA Freedom

There is another and even more important aspect which must be considered in the relationship of the SWP to the YSA. Namely, the degree to which the YSA is independent of the SWP.

The Young Socialist Alliance must have the freedom to take positions which its members feel necessary, even if that position is in opposition to the stance or wishes of the SWP.

It is well known that questions concerning the YSA are discussed, analyzed, and voted upon in SWP meetings. Those positions which the SWP wishes the YSA to take are then relayed through its SWP YSA members. These comrades are bound by SWP party discipline. They must advocate the position taken by the Party whether they agree or not. If SWP members constitute the overwhelming majority, as they presently do, on practically all of the decision-making bodies, decisions reached by the SWP assume the level of mandate for the YSA. With the weight of the EC's, national or local, backing a proposal, the likelihood of opposing views being seriously considered are greatly reduced.

Non-SWP members of the YSA must have a means by which their views carry at least equal weight with those of the SWP in the presentation to the YSA as a whole. To deny this would be to create a sham organization, one expounding the concept of openness to a broader spectrum of revolutionary socialist youth, but, in reality, operating as the SWP's youth arm, with real control resting in the Socialist Workers Party. Such a situation would be directly analogous to the ill-fated W.E.B. DuBois Club. Constituted as a broad-based socialist youth movement, it was, in fact, the creation of, and under the control of, the Communist Party. As this became apparent, members abandoned the organization in droves. It would be indeed tragic if the SWP and the YSA were to repeat that same mistake.

It Never Happened Before

Now it can, and indeed will, be argued that such a major disagreement has never arisen before between the YSA and the SWP.

Although this point is arguable, we shall let it pass. What must be recognized is that between the younger SWP YSA members, those who have radicalized on the campuses, and those older SWP comrades, those whose histories date to the 50's and 40's, there is considerable variation in attitude toward much that is happening in the movement today. The recent conflict within the San Francisco-Berkeley SWP over the critical support of local candidates is an excellent example of this divergence of view, primarily along age lines. With all SWP members, including younger SWP YSA comrades, bound by democratic centralism to push, once formulated, a single position within the YSA, views which might be essentially antagonistic and, indeed, against the actual wishes of the majority in the YSA could, in fact, become policy. This is especially true if SWP YSAers constitute the overwhelming majority on local EC's, as is now the case in most areas, and on the National Committee, which they presently do.

Before such a problem arises, it is crucial that the YSA adopt measures which will ensure to non-SWP members that they, not the SWP, will control the organization.

To this end, the following resolutions are offered. It is done so without bitterness and without the desire to create factions, but with the hope that such resolutions, if adopted, will help overcome potential difficulties and, thereby, further the YSA in its primary task, making the revolution in America.

RESOLUTIONS

BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That a new National Executive Committee of the Young Socialist Alliance be constituted at the November 28-December 1st convention, and that this committee be elected in such a manner to insure that at least 50%, or a reasonable approximation thereof, be non-SWP members.
2. That all YSA local executive committees be constituted on the basis of 50%, or a reasonable approximation thereof, non-SWP members. New elections to such effect should be held as soon as possible, or, at the latest, by the next regularly-scheduled election.

(Both of the above resolutions are with the consideration that the required number of non-SWP comrades for these positions can be found. Elections must be held in such a manner that non-SWP members are elected until the 50% total is reached or until those expressing a desire to serve is exhausted, whichever comes first. YSA comrades who become mem-

bers of the SWP after election shall not be removed until the next regularly-scheduled election.)

3. That the editorial board of the Young Socialist magazine contain at least three non-SWP members, and that two of these reside on the West Coast. Each issue must be approved by at least two thirds of the editorial board, while three votes shall be considered sufficient to include any single article in a proposed issue.

No Panacea

The above resolutions will not solve all the problems which will arise as our organization continues to grow. We do believe, however, that they do go a great deal of the way toward completing the new conception of the YSA's role as it has recently evolved. The resolutions will, we believe, encourage comrades to become more fully committed and will insure the real functioning of democracy within the organization at all levels.

October 30, 1968

What Role for Young Socialists in the Labor Movement by Sid Nickerson

(The following contribution is submitted as an amendment to the Young Socialist Alliance National Executive Committee's draft resolution, "The '68 Campaign and Beyond... Socialist Youth Politics in America.")

Our constitution defines the YSA as a nation-wide revolutionary socialist youth organization, uniting young workers and students around the banner of socialism and dedicated to the building of a revolutionary movement which can lead the working people to socialism. The YSA at present, though, is oriented almost exclusively toward work with students and fails to intervene in struggles of young workers. We are told that the workers are not "in motion," but a mounting strike wave shows the working class to be moving on the economic front, and political polarization is evidenced in the popularity of Wallace among white workers, in contrast to the formation of militant caucuses of black and young white union members. We recognize the expanding radical consciousness on the campus and do not propose abandoning our activities there. But just as the YSA reaches out to radical students, it must also begin to seize opportunities to organize and lead the working class youth. The time to agitate among our contemporaries of the American working class is now!

Devaluation of the dollar, a possibility though no certainty, will temporarily alleviate stagnation of the U.S. economy at the expense of others and in long-term effects will strangle world trade.

Indications of recession are frequently reported in financial newspapers. The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), for example, in October wrote about rising excess capacity in steel production and the start of a domestic steel price war. The desire of the capitalist class to exchange the present inflation for mass unemployment is seen in WSJ's report (10-21-68) of a meeting of the Business Council (composed of some 100 executives of important corporations). The Council's panel of economists warned "that for a year or two years the economy must be held to the slack pace widely agreed to be in store for the first half of 1969. Unless the 10% surtax is extended and Federal outlays kept tightly limited beyond mid-1969, they declared, a new surge of inflation will send the economy reeling into a major and deep correction in late 1970 or early 1971. Noting the fervent agreement among the executives with the position, a ranking (government) Administration official here expressed alarm at their impatience to reduce inflation decisively. What the business leaders apparently seek, he said, is to keep the economy growing only about half as fast as it has been lately... Particularly disturbing to Administration men is that they found the blue-chip business leaders talking behind closed doors of the desirability of letting unemployment soar from September's 3.6% to a persistent 5.5% or even 6%; that would mean adding about 2 million people to the 2.8 million already unemployed." The Business Council also projected "that profits in 1969 would either hold close to the 1968 and 1967 level or drop by as much as 10%, and that industrial output would advance by only 2% after a 3.8% rise expected in 1968, with little or no improvement expected in

The Economic Perspective

Currency devaluation in England, increasing frequency of large corporate mergers, the appearance of cutthroat competition among international corporations, the British recession, and the decline in the growth rate of most capitalist economies in the last half of the 1960's are signs of a coming capitalist recession which will achieve a severe and world-wide character by the early 1970's. The general and simultaneous development of this recession will deepen its effects and defeat all efforts at early recovery. In the United States the attack on wages through currency inflation will give way to higher levels of unemployment and higher taxes on workers' incomes. International competition will force employers to try to lower American wages to meet the low wage rates of Europe and Japan.

capital outlays next year." Another report in the WSJ (same date) listing the economic program of Nixon, the most likely next U.S. President, shows close agreement with the aims of the Business Council, including "settling for a slightly higher unemployment rate temporarily in hopes that lessened inflationary strains would bring about bigger job gains over the long run...Indeed, the idea that Mr. Nixon may deliberately opt for a recession to drain the inflationary steam from the economy is one that isn't dying easily."

We, as Marxists, should base our actions on the objective conditions rather than waiting for the subjective conditions to develop. Trotsky stated his position clearly in the 1938 letters to the SWP. In answer to Cannon, Shachtman, and other leaders of the SWP who were arguing about the degree of sentiment for a labor party among the American working class, Trotsky stated, "I cannot judge whether sentiment for a labor party exists or not because I have no personal observations or impressions, but I do not find it decisive as to what degree the leaders of trade unions or the rank and file are ready or inclined to build a political party. It is very difficult to establish objective information. We have no machine to take a referendum. We can measure the mood only by action if the slogan is put on the agenda. But what we can say is that objective situation is absolutely decisive...The problem is not the mood of the masses but the objective situation, and our job is to confront the backward material of the masses with the tasks which are determined by objective facts and not by psychology...We claim to have Marxism or Scientific Socialism. What does 'Scientific Socialism' signify in reality? It signifies that the party which represents this social science departs, as every science, not from subjective wishes, tendencies or moods but from objective facts, from the material situation of the different classes and their relationships."

In another section of his letters Trotsky explains, "That is the objective situation, not created by us, and in this sense the agitation for a working-class party becomes now not an abstract but a totally concrete step in progress for the workers organized in the trade unions in the first instance and for those not organized at all."

Do the objective conditions change from one city to another? I ask then why does the Minneapolis branch of our fraternal organization, the SWP, call for a national labor party as a major slogan along with "Bring the GIs Home Now" and "Black Control of the Black Community." We are told that the SWP has a base in the Minneapolis trade-union movement.

Are the trade unionists in Minneapolis different than in Detroit, Chicago or any other industrial areas in the U.S.? Are we supposed to justify the impressionist outlook of a base the way the reformist Stalinist PLP does? No, we must not lose sight that we in the YSA must use the science of Marxism to determine our actions. As Engels wrote in going into "any real general working class movement, accept its faktische (actual) starting point as such and work it gradually up to the theoretical level by pointing out how every mistake made, every reverse suffered, was a necessary consequence of mistaken theoretical orders in the original program; they ought, in the words of the Communist Manifesto: "to represent the future of the movement in the present of the movement." (Letters to Americans)

The Political Perspective

Where is the working class at? Throughout this paper we have discussed the objective conditions. We would like now to state some of the symptoms which show the ever-growing contradictions in the capitalist system.

A new right-wing movement, the Wallace phenomenon, and the Alliance for Labor Action are two organizations which have sprung from the contradictions of the system. Why has the Wallace movement received mass support among the workers? Are they all racists? Alienation from society, Wallace's right-wing populism, the inflationary spiral, and fear of the black liberation struggle are just four of many reasons for the growth of this proto-fascist movement.

When Wallace states "There is not a dime's worth of difference between the Democratic and Republican parties" his audiences, which are, unfortunately, largely workers, cheer. When Wallace states "I think there is a backlash in this country against the theoretician who look down their nose at the steel worker and the paper worker and the communications worker and the beautician and the barber and the policemen and the firemen and the little businessmen and the clerk and the farmer and say that you don't have the intelligence enough to decide how to get up in the morning and when to go to bed at night, and people are tired of theorists running their country," he is pointing the workers to a break from the two large capitalist parties, and they are following him. When he talks about Washington, D.C. as the "hypocrite capital of the world" and advises his audience that only three liberal congressmen send their children to the public schools in Washington, he is talking to the workers of America, and they are listening... When he attacks tax-exempt foundations like Ford and Rockefeller and asks for an increase from \$600 to \$1,000

deduction for each dependent, he is addressing himself to the workers. When he admonishes his audience that "the people aren't sick--it's the politicians, the judges, and the newspaper editors that are sick," he is asking for the support of the workers. The workers are, to an ever-growing degree, being attracted by his deception. Latest polls show Wallace receiving as high as 21% of the popular vote. When an UAW local in Flint, Michigan, endorses Wallace, it is time for the left in general, and the YSA in particular, to become more involved in the working class. (Recently this Flint decision has been reversed. However, Wallace is still considered the strongest candidate among the auto workers in the local.) When about 8% of the delegates of the International Association of Machinists and 10% of the UAW leadership openly vote for Wallace there is something to worry about. This is not to say that we should be afraid of what some bureaucratic hacks believe. The voting, however, is a reflection of the extent of Wallacite influence among rank and file members of the unions. A large number of workers are moving--yes, they are, but not to us, to the proto-fascist Wallace and the nuclear madman, LeMay.

Do we just watch the workers and their organizations become captured and ultimately destroyed or do we pose an alternative to the form of proto-fascism being mouthed by Wallace-LeMay?

What alternatives can be posed to the American working class? There is only one form: a labor party. A party based on the trade unions and for the interests of the working class. The calling for a labor party must be our central task in all our struggles! Trotsky realized in 1938 that the workers would not come streaming into the revolutionary vanguard party. And so he advised the American Trotskyist leadership to call for and emphasize the slogan of a labor party. "American capitalism is very strong, but its contradictions are stronger than capitalism itself...in the USA the situation is that the working class needs a party, its own party. It is the first step in political education."

Positive movement in the labor unions is shown by the creation of the Alliance for Labor Action. Walter Reuther, head of the UAW, split from the AFL-CIO this year due to rank and file pressure. In order to maintain his bureaucratic leadership he formed the Alliance for Labor Action which linked the UAW and the Teamsters. The UAW has 1.6 million members. The Teamsters have organized 1.9 million workers. Reuther states that the ALA has been created in order to revitalize the labor movement and to organize the unorganized. Reuther calls this "community unionism." He calls for a broad-

based social action and attacks Meany and the AFL-CIO as "complacent defenders of the status quo."

Although Meany has threatened expulsion to any union becoming involved in the ALA or its programs, interest has been shown by many unions. The International Chemical Workers with almost 100,000 members are getting ready to join the ALA. The United Rubber Workers (200,000 members) Oil-Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, United Mine Workers, Newspaper Guild, Building Service Employees, American Federation of Teachers and the Hotel and Restaurant Workers are showing some interest in the ALA.

Workers are seeing their gains eaten away by inflation. The ruling class is attempting to bust the unions. The rank and file must exert pressure to make the ALA work in behalf of our class. We must fight the bureaucracy and put no faith in its hacks. We must fight for an alternative leadership to revitalize the trade union movement. The ALA is a fantastic opportunity for campaigning on the question of a labor party. We must not overlook this potential.

Another positive action is the boycotting of the national elections by several trade unions. The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union, the SSEU, the Drug and Hospital Workers Union - Local 1199, the ILWU and District 65 are unions which have not endorsed any presidential candidate. These unions still support "progressive capitalists" like O'Dwyer. We must fight for a class alternative in these unions as well as other unions, a labor party.

The YSA in the Trade Unions

In our work in the unions we must fight for trade-union democracy. We must call for complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relationship to the capitalist state. This will mean turning the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of the labor aristocracy (Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay-Leon Trotsky). Our other demands must be: a shorter work week as an answer to unemployment and automation. (This will alleviate the fears of the white workers losing the jobs to the Afro-Americans); we must insist that all workers fight for the betterment of all sections of the class; an escalator clause to counter the impact of inflation; workers control of working conditions in order to counter speed-up; job training at union wages; a vote at 18; end the draft; no discrimination against Afro-Americans and youth; immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and the rest of the world. We must use the above demands in order to raise the class consciousness of

the workers. We must fight for this program in a labor party. To quote Trotsky, "I believe the most fighting elements in the trade unions should be our youth."

TASKS FOR THE YSA

1. Create local trade union fractions to coordinate and discuss tactics in the union.
2. Representation of this fraction on all leadership groups dealing directly or indirectly with trade union work.
3. Agitation for an independent labor party in the context of union day-to-day struggles.
4. A reassessment in emphasis of YSA activity from 100% commitment to campus activity to a greater degree of direct contact with young workers, i.e., distributions of leaflets dealing with union struggles, and, more information on struggles in our magazine the Young Socialist.
5. Full mobilizations of the YSA and its periphery when needed to demonstrate our support of the working class or against anti-working class forces. An example of such an action is the Wallace demonstration on October 24, 1968 in Madison Square Garden.
6. In our student work we should point to the political struggle for a labor party. By fighting for a labor party,

we are struggling against the imperialist war in Vietnam. To end imperialist wars, we must end the capitalist system. We must interconnect our work between comrades on the campus and in the trade unions. This struggle can only be linked politically through a labor party.

In Trotsky's discussion in 1938 with leadership of the SWP he advised, "We underestimate the revolutionary movement in the working masses. We are a small organization, propagandistic and in such situations are more skeptical than the masses, who develop very quickly...There is not in the U.S. a revolutionary situation right now. But comrades with very revolutionary ideas in quiet times can become a real brake upon the movement in revolutionary situations--it happens often. A revolutionary party waits so often and so long for a revolution that it gets used to postponing it."

The time to pose an alternative no matter what our numbers are is now and not in two or three years. Fred Halstead stated on the Buckley TV show, "If they come into existence we will participate in them" (meaning independent black and labor parties). We must not wait for a labor party to come into existence. We must reach out to the working class. We must agitate for an independent labor party now.

Forward to the Socialist Revolution!

Long Live Trotskyism! October 27, 1968

The Puerto Rican Struggle in the United States

by Sirvo Martine

The leadership of most minorities is in the process of crystalizing: the Afro-American has the Black Panther Party and the Mexican-American has the Brown Berets. Yet the Puerto Rican, one of the biggest minorities in the eastern section of this country, has yet to produce any type of objective organization.

The Puerto Ricans living in the United States number somewhere between one and two million. The major portion of Puerto Ricans are unskilled workers employed either in factories or on migrant farms. In New York State eighty percent of the Puerto Ricans earn less than \$5000 annually. In New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut over 86% earn less than \$5000.

The majority of Puerto Ricans came here from 1948 through 1955. With some success a tiny layer returned to the island affluent enough to invest in land and in business. Many came to the mainland for the sole purpose of earning enough money to return to the island but with a better standard of living. Through its "Operation Bootstrap," that was to be the vehicle to counter the oncoming struggle for independence, a campaign of propaganda promoting the United States as a utopia generated the flow of thousands of Puerto Ricans to mainland shores. The press began to use the Puerto Rican as the scapegoat for all the economic problems that already existed. In some instances Puerto Ricans desperate for work were used as scab labor. As Puerto Ricans moved to new areas they were confronted by Americans who lived in those areas. The smears and racist attacks on Puerto Ricans by the press perpetrated a polarization between white and Puerto Rican workers. Today the exploitation is not as naked as it was in the past, but is more intensified.

Although the Puerto Ricans in the United States have been a persecuted section of the population they have not been able to produce a leadership or an organization based in the community with an ideology developed around the circumstances of the mainland Puerto Rican. There are groups of community bureaucrats who make up the Democratic, Liberal and Republican Clubs but there has never existed an independent Puerto Rican organization with revolutionary principals. In the last two years there has been some motion from rebellions that

have erupted in Chicago, New York City, New Jersey and Connecticut. It is interesting that in Connecticut, in 1967, Puerto Ricans in New Haven joined with Afro-Americans in an uprising. This was the first time that this has occurred.

Lately there are two developments which may well combine in the production of an active cadre: the rebellious, militant movements within the high schools and the elimination of antipoverty projects. Antipoverty workers who were hired on the assurance of a secure and steady job only to find themselves summarily eliminated turn more to the left. In Boston a chapter of MPI was opened in Cambridge which has a large Puerto Rican community. In Chicago there have been cases in which Puerto Ricans, with no ghetto organization of their own, have joined the Black Panther Party. In New Jersey and Connecticut there are numerous organizations that could become the beginnings of a militant cadre, but at present they are still tied up in the Anti-Poverty Program.

In New York City a group of high school and college students, working class young people, and former antipoverty workers formed the Young Puerto Rican Confrontation Committee (YPRCC). The group has already given an indication of its tremendous potential in its call for unity among all minorities, its support of community control, its advocacy of the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, and the naming of its office the Ernesto Che Guevara Chapter. Even so, its lack of political consciousness and organization make it easy prey for the Democratic Party and/or Stalinist organizations. This basic weakness is probably typical of all the sprouting Puerto Rican groups throughout the nation.

The difficulty of organizing a Puerto Rican cadre, while great, is no greater than the need and present opportunity for developing one. Militant commitment cannot be expected from the older people or workers with families, but the youth in the high schools and factories are both conscious and rebellious.

The struggle of the Puerto Rican in the United States did not begin in the slums of the mainland cities but had its roots in the struggle for national independence in Puerto Rico. There is no better way to advance the struggle for liberation of the island than for Puerto Ricans

to organize in the United States and unite with other oppressed minorities and extend the struggle for a socialist revolution in the belly of the beast.

This year, 1968, marks 100 years that the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico has been fought, first against the Spanish, then against American imperialism. The fight for the freedom of Puerto Rico is perhaps the world's oldest struggle against American colonialism.

Under Spanish colonialism the Puerto Rican was forced to move off his land and work on the hacienda for slave wages, sometimes just for room and board. The system of the Spanish regime was a medieval land policy, combined with the clerical goal of Christianizing the natives, and mother Spain's need to use Puerto Rico strategically as the gate and guard to their other Latin American colonies. The system implemented by the colonial regime in Washington and its stooges in San Juan is based on the policy of profiteering from the resources of the island. In order to consume its quota of capital, the American power in Puerto Rico had to strip the island of every vehicle and outlet of profit. Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, as applied in Puerto Rico was able to transform profit from the island into its own interest, adding another element to the stabilization of its own economy. The disrobing of Puerto Rico of its economic and political faculties brought a social deterioration to every section of the population. The contradictions in the economic, political and social system begin to disrupt the equilibrium of the society.

The struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico which is making gains at every turn today was generated by the past struggles of the '30s. The vanguard then was the Nationalist Party, an organization with an army, and a youth and nurses corps. Under the leadership of Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos it was perhaps the strongest Latin American organization since the Cuban Liberation Army of the previous century.

The failure of the Nationalist Party to lead a revolution in a country where the conditions were definitely prerevolutionary was due to its lack of political consciousness. Without a program or orientation to the workers or peasants, in ignorance of agrarian reform, and with no political theory they were helpless in the face of American imperialism which destroyed them.

The Puerto Rican Communist Party which had been playing a role inside the Nationalist Party, shifted its forces to the right in 1938. The Socialist Party, the Communist Party and a number of liberals banded together to create the Popular Democratic Party. During the war the Na-

tionalist Party called for the independence of the island, while the Communist Party called for supporting the American colonial government in its war against Germany. These differences brought about a number of clashes between the two organizations in which the Communist Party lost its influence over its small rank and file.

The realization by Washington that a head-on clash was coming induced them to start a campaign to develop a pseudo middle class to act as a buffer. They introduced intensified capitalist industrialization to Puerto Rico in the form of "Operation Bootstrap" which had a strong effect on the working class.

With the bones that were being thrown by the colonialists from the U.S. and the con job that was being pulled by the press media, the Popular Democratic Party ran the island's first Puerto Rican for governor, Munoz Marin. The masses, still inclined toward independence, voted almost unanimously for Munoz Marin on a platform symbolized by a peasant and the slogan, "Land, Bread, and Liberty." By 1949 the promises made by the puppet government were already tabled until the next election. On October 29th in the town of Hajuja during island-wide demonstrations for independence the people of the town took over with armed force and declared the first Republic of Puerto Rico. The next day the town was bombed and a witch-hunt began which lasted until 1958. The Nationalist Party's leaders were jailed, its rank and file harrassed, and the slander of the press media intensified until the destruction of the organization was accomplished.

Today the struggle continues in the hands of the Movimiento Pro Independencia (MPI) an organization of sundry radicals. The MPI has produced a transitional program and has a leadership which is far more aware and capable than its predecessor. It has the support and solidarity of other organizations of national liberation. The MPI and FUPI (Federation of University Students Pro Independencia, MPI's student organization) if they can be said to be anything are an organization of Fidelistas. They are the leading Puerto Rican exponents against the war in Vietnam and have working pacts with both SNCC and the Black Panthers. They have taken the correct position on such international events as the Middle East crisis and the Czechoslovakian intervention.

Since MPI's inception, the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance have treated MPI as a brother organization. FUPI and the YSA have collaborated many times. It is the hope of the YSA, MPI and FUPI that a bridge of relationship and work can be constructed between them. Such a relationship will

serve the advancement of struggle in Puerto Rico, the community, to Rico, on the American campuses, and in

November 5, 1968

Suggestions for Bringing the Young Socialist Up To Date

by Roger Rudenstein

The purpose of this report is to raise the contradiction between the present character of the YSA and the character of our principal publication, the Young Socialist. In Cleveland, we have found that the YS is 1) hard to sell, 2) many comrades, even, do not read it, and 3) it does not reach out to radicalizing youth.

The Young Socialist originally started out as a newspaper around which young revolutionary socialists gathered during the "regroupment" period of the late 50's. After the founding of the YSA the YS became a magazine "designed to provide young people with more facts on more general issues than a small newspaper can" (quoted from Oct., 1964 issue -- first magazine format issue). There is no doubt that the YS has fulfilled this obligation. We have seen it improve in format and expand in pages in the intervening years.

However, in the present period, a magazine which has simply an abundance of facts is not adequate to meet present opportunities. With the radicalization of youth in the high schools and campuses the YSA has been given the opportunity to reach out to hundreds and thousands of receptive kids. Our spectacular recent growth is really an indication of the possibilities we have for gaining hegemony in this sphere. In considering the tone and character of our major publication, therefore, we must take into account the character of the radicalizing youth.

It has been noted in our movement that one important characteristic of the student revolt is its anti-authoritarian character. Translated into realities this means that students question everything that's been handed them. In cultural terms they seek for wider and freer means of self-expression in the arts and letters. Underground newspapers, in terms of format, reflect this to some degree. Imagination and creativity tend to mark student publications even in the political field (see HSSMC Mobilizer, most SMC material).

In contrast to this aspect of the youth revolt, the YS continues in the mold set for it in 1964 (albeit with considerable technical improvements). It is spartan in format. Articles are written in a very stodgy style. Unfortunately we are not aware that catchwords that have mean-

ing to us are not in current use on campuses (and probably won't be till the revolution). Also, much of the writing tends to be unexciting and academic in tone.

This general tone is reflected in the choice of contents. Although it is politically necessary to include articles on certain topics, is it also politically necessary to exclude stories, poems, satire, cartoons, etc? Part of the dryness of the YS stems from this exclusion.

Another problem with the YS is that the contents tend to be redundant to anyone who follows the Militant. The articles which seem so timely in the Militant are not as interesting in their rehashed form one month later in the YS. We've done much to take the YS out of the bag of being a "junior ISR," but we must go further and prevent it from being a "junior Militant."

Since the time of its inception, the layout of the YS has become more professional and imaginative. However, the layout still reflects a conservative approach to design. It is not imaginative enough to sock it to a radical kid. We must attune ourselves to the psychedelic style which is attractive to our milieu (and to many of us, too!). The same goes for the cover. Even the lettering of 'Young Socialist' should reflect this. We have exciting ideas and these should be reflected physically in the layout of our magazine.

In conclusion, I'd like to make some concrete suggestions to start the ball rolling.

1. That we broaden the range of the YS to include stories, poems, satire, cartoons, comic-strips, reviews of all kinds of books, films, etc. (not just straight political ones).

2. That the tone of political articles be free of cliches (e.g., what those who are not yet convinced young socialists regard as cliches). Style of writing should be freer, less academic.

3. Articles which simply rehash Militant articles should be avoided when possible (same subject could be covered if a very new slant is developed for article).

4. Artwork and layout should be psy-

chedelic, i.e., use more freeform lettering, more daring use of column positioning, color. Much can be learned from the format of underground newspapers which appeal to young people.

read, intellectually challenging, revolutionary in political and cultural ways, broad enough to appeal to all radicalizing youth, and just plain exciting, like the YSA is today!

The Young Socialist should be fun to

November 8, 1968

On the Labor Party Question

by Larry Seigle

Comrade Nickerson raises quite a few points on which he disagrees with the resolution of the National Executive Committee on "The '68 Elections and Beyond... Socialist Youth Politics in America." He has an entirely different understanding of the Wallace movement, a lack of understanding of the importance of the antiwar movement, and numerous misconceptions about what the YSA is, and what it has been doing. On many questions, Nickerson is simply confused; on others he is absolutely wrong. However in this reply I am going to confine myself to dealing with the main question that is raised: the proposal to make agitation for a labor party now the "central task in all our struggles." To straighten out every political error in Nickerson's amendment would take more time than we have available.

The Trotskyist movement in the United States, ever since 1938, has been in favor of, and fought for, the development of an independent political party, based on the working class and organized through the trade unions. Such a labor party would represent the working class in the political arena, as the trade unions do in the economic arena. The formation of a labor party would mark a significant advance in the development of the class consciousness of the American workers, and would give them a powerful new weapon in the fight against the ruling class. Such a party would also be an important area of work for revolutionary socialists since the discussion over what program the labor party should have would raise all the issues of concern to workers as a class, including the question of social revolution.

The labor party would not be a substitute for the revolutionary party, which alone can provide the leadership for the working class in revolution. But neither would it necessarily be a competitor. Through the struggles around a labor party, many workers could learn from firsthand experience the validity of the program of revolutionary socialism, and join the revolutionary party.

Prior to 1938, American Trotskyists left open the possibility that the course of the labor radicalization that developed in the 1930's could bypass the labor party stage and lead directly to the growth of a mass revolutionary party. They did not put forward the labor party slogan in the manner in which it is advanced today. By 1938, however, it became clear that the

labor upsurge of the 1930's was being stopped short at the trade union level; the new movement that took form around the CIO had been restricted politically to a policy of collaboration with the capitalist class through a labor coalition with the Democratic Party. In view of the actual course of developments the SWP made a tactical shift in its line, and came out for a labor party. The slogan for a labor party was a tactic, not a principled question. There is no historical imperative that will inevitably lead to a labor party in the United States. We continue to view the question as a tactical one, and if changed conditions should lead us to believe that a labor party would not be a positive development we would abandon the position in favor of a more appropriate one.

The tactical shift was made after a series of discussions on the question in collaboration with Leon Trotsky. A transcript of the discussions that were held with Trotsky in Mexico has been published under the title "The Labor Party in America." This pamphlet provides a clear example of the application of the Marxist method to a concrete question in a concrete situation.

It is from this discussion that Comrade Nickerson quotes Trotsky on the labor party question. (Nickerson mistakenly thinks the source is letters from Trotsky.)

One can only assume that Nickerson hasn't read the pamphlet. His quotes are intended to show that Trotsky was arguing that the labor party demand should be the "central task in all our struggles" under any and all conditions. The discussion was actually about something quite different: the correctness of the demand for a labor party. The call for a labor party has been part of the Trotskyist program in this country ever since. It was part of the platform of the SWP in the 1968 presidential elections -- the platform which YSAers helped to distribute in the hundreds of thousands during our campaign in support of the SWP candidates.

But how the demand has been utilized has varied with the period since 1938. In that year, in the middle of a sharp downturn in the economy, on top of the general situation of the depression decade, and the rapid growth of the CIO, the slogan for a labor party had a broad appeal.

Shortly after the demand was adopted, however, the economic situation began to improve, and the masses of the workers continued to support Roosevelt. The slogan was changed from a slogan of agitation to a slogan of propaganda. From 1943 through the post-war labor upsurge an agitational campaign around the question was launched, and got a considerable response from ranks of trade unions. The post-war prosperity and the ensuing ebb of radicalization forced another change in emphasis. The labor party demand was not dropped, but again treated as a slogan of general propaganda.

Do we expect a growing economic and political crisis for the U.S. ruling class that will once again make agitation around the labor party possible? Of course. But that is quite a bit different than to say, as Nickerson implies, that the situation in 1968 is identical to that of 1938, or of 1943-1946.

Nickerson's proposal that the slogan "build a labor party now" must be the "central task in all our struggles" is a far cry from what Trotsky was arguing for in 1938. His confusion stems from the fact that he doesn't understand the necessity of choosing, on the basis of a concrete analysis, which parts of the Marxist program should be emphasized and put forward on a day-to-day basis within the broader movements in which we function, and which parts should be held on the level of general education (propaganda). The former are demands around which people are in motion, which have an appeal to broad layers of society, and around which fruitful action can be carried out. The demand for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam is an example of this kind of demand. Black control of the black community is another example.

A good illustration of how a demand around which there is motion can be put forward is the call for a black party. This was a key part of the SWP election campaign, and was an important part of the work of the Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle and the Afro-Americans for Halstead and Boutelle. The need for a black party has been discussed in the Young Socialist, as well as in The Militant and several pamphlets. YSAers present the case for a black party on the campuses and in high schools, through local black student associations, and at national events such as the recent Philadelphia Black Power Conference. The growth of various local Black Panther parties across the country is evidence of the correctness of this approach. Although Nickerson doesn't see it this way, the call for a black party is a demand directed at the most oppressed section of the working class -- a section which is in motion right now.

But we don't give equal emphasis to every part of our program, although we certainly hide none of it. For instance, the demand for a workers' government is part of our program, but we don't make agitation around this demand the "central task in all our struggles." At some point in the future this will be the central demand. But to confuse some future stage of development with the present would lead to dissipating our energies in fruitless and meaningless work.

That is certainly what would happen to the YSA if we were to accept the proposal to make the call for a labor party now the central focus of all our work. In this period there is no significant movement in the working class towards the development of a labor party. It is not a question of what we would like to see; it is a simple fact of life, evident to anyone with even a marginal understanding of American politics.

But Nickerson attempts to provide "evidence" to the contrary. "Positive movement in the labor unions is shown by the creation of the Alliance for Labor Action." The ALA was formed this year by the alliance of the United Auto Workers, which broke from the AFL-CIO, and the Teamsters Union, which was expelled from the AFL-CIO in 1957. There is no evidence whatever that this development reflects "positive movement" towards a labor party, as Nickerson implies. ALA policy, which has been bureaucratically laid down by Reuther of the UAW and Fittsimmons of the Teamsters remains within the framework of collaboration with the capitalist parties. The "fantastic opportunity" that Nickerson sees in this development is nothing but a delusion.

But Nickerson has more "evidence" of mass movement towards a labor party: what he refers to as the "boycott" of the national elections by the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union, and a few other trade unions. Far from calling for a boycott of the national elections, these unions merely decided not to endorse any of the presidential candidates. While the refusal to endorse Humphrey was a positive step, the bureaucrats who made the decision (the membership wasn't consulted) are no more interested in building a labor party than Eugene McCarthy was when he opposed Humphrey. These bureaucrats supported "peace" Democrats like Paul O'Dwyer in New York, and other Democratic Party politicians.

"But," Nickerson goes on, apparently aware that his "evidence" of mass movement towards a labor party is somewhat less than convincing, "we should base our actions on the objective conditions rather than waiting for the subjective conditions to develop." In other words, since the objective situation calls for a labor party

(we agree -- this has been the case for 30 years) therefore it doesn't matter what the level of consciousness or interest is among the workers! It's hard to believe this is a serious statement. For the YSA to disregard the subjective conditions would be to completely destroy our ability to participate in and help direct real struggles, and relegate ourselves to the sideline role of those who are so obsessed with the "correctness" of their slogans that it makes absolutely no difference to them what the response is. In fact, when nobody listens, they merely turn up the volume on their endlessly repeated formula. This is not the kind of organization the YSA is, and certainly not what we want to become.

If Comrade Nickerson rejects the logic of all that has been said, I can suggest one final point to consider. We don't have to speculate on what would happen to the YSA if we were to follow his proposed course. We have some real evidence of what this would lead us to. There is a group in existence that follows exactly the line he proposes. The Workers League (Wohlforthites), an ultraleft, sectarian grouping has been making the campaign for a labor party now the "central task" in all their activity for several years. This little group is made up of a few people, mostly in New York City, who were expelled from the YSA in 1964 after almost two years during which their primary activity was to oppose the development, growth and convention decisions of the YSA and carve out an opponent organization from the YSA.

These indefatigable campaigners for a labor party maintain only the most tenuous contact with the real world. They march in antiwar demonstrations (although they are too busy to build them) carrying banners calling for a labor party now; they speak to antiwar groups not about the war, but about -- you guessed it, a labor party. The result of all this work has been to isolate themselves from any real struggles and to confine them to the menagerie of oddball little groupings without influence, and without the perspective of gaining any.

And this leads us to the fundamental error in Nickerson's position. The ongoing revolutionary struggles that the YSA is part of are hardly mentioned in his proposal. He totally disregards our campaign of international solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution, our energetic work among GIs and students to organize antiwar sentiment into action, our work among high school students, our work in defense of and to advance the Afro-American struggle for self-determination, and, above all, our efforts to build the YSA into a mass socialist youth group of the caliber that can play a key role in future stages of the American revolution, includ-

ing the building of a labor party. To be sure, he refers in passing to the Afro-American struggle (a fight against "discrimination" is how he sees it), and the war in Vietnam. He mentions them at the end of a list of demands we can work for -- where? In a labor party! But how do we fight for them now? By making the call for a labor party the "central task in all our struggles," of course. "By fighting for a labor party we are struggling against the imperialist war in Vietnam," is how Nickerson puts it.

Comrade Nickerson makes it perfectly clear that he has a fundamental misunderstanding of what the YSA has been doing in the past period. To say that the YSA has a "100% commitment to campus activity" can only mean that he has been asleep while we have been engaged in a massive socialist election campaign; involved in the deepening struggle of Afro-Americans for control over their own communities; supported revolutionary black workers in the UAW in Detroit, and the Transit Workers Union in Chicago; participated in and aided the truly heroic struggle of the GIs against the war and against the denial of their basic civil liberties by the military brass; been part of, and recruited many young activists from the explosions in the high schools; and been the strongest defenders of the world revolutionary movement in France, in Czechoslovakia, and above all in Vietnam. Our main task is to build a revolutionary socialist youth movement that can play a decisive role in the American socialist revolution, and our main area of recruitment to revolutionary socialism remains on the college campuses and high schools. But to see this as "100% commitment to campus activity" shows a complete lack of understanding of what it is all about.

Leaving campus to work in factories is not necessarily the best way to "reach the working class." In some periods such an approach may be useful. But the student struggles in France last spring prove that in some cases a large revolutionary student movement, by its example in action, can have an impact on young workers, draw large numbers into joint cooperative action, and begin to create organizational ties between revolutionary students and militant young workers. While conditions in France and the U.S. are hardly identical -- either in the student movement or the working class movement -- it is important for us to keep the French experiences in mind and draw the correct lessons from the struggle there.

"We are told that the workers are not in motion," says Nickerson. Who told him that? He doesn't say. The NEC resolution on socialist youth politics in America certainly makes no such statement. On the contrary, it points out specifically where the working class is in motion,

and directs our energies there, while at the same time pointing to the increased potential for recruitment among black and white student youth.

Nickerson's proposal is not a shortcut to reaching the working class, and certainly not to building a labor party. It is a dead-end approach, as proven by the experiences of those who have already put it into practice, and a sure way to change the YSA from a growing and dynamic revolutionary force into a group of useless and irrelevant sideline kibitzers.

November 10, 1968

The YSA's Attitude Toward the SWP

by Charles Bolduc

"The revolutionary youth are well aware that by themselves youth cannot lead the American working class to power. That is the historic task of the working class revolutionary party. The YSA recognizes that only the Socialist Workers Party, of all existing parties, is capable of providing the U.S. working class with political leadership on class struggle principles. The YSA finds itself in basic political solidarity on the principles of revolutionary socialism with the SWP." (From WHERE WE STAND, adopted by the YSA 3rd National Convention, September 1963.)

A statement similar to the above was one of the basic points of the original "Where We Stand" document adopted by the YSA at its founding convention in April 1960. This founding position was not arrived at lightly, but came after two and a half years of political evolution on the part of the Young Socialist supporter groups that existed around the country.

Young Socialist supporters recognized from the start that a revolutionary party and a revolutionary youth organization were not in competition with each other but two complementary instruments in the struggle against the American ruling class. They also recognized that it was a fallacy to pretend that a youth organization could stand "above" or "outside" the three major currents in the world working class movement -- Stalinism (in either its pro-Moscow or pro-Peking variations), social democracy, or Trotskyism, i.e. revolutionary socialism. In that sense there is no such thing as a "new left." Radical youth organizations can hide their affiliation with one or another tendency. They can, over time, and unknowingly, flounder into basic agreement with one or another. Or they can openly evaluate the different tendencies and decide which they agree with.

The Young Socialist was founded by a fusion of individuals. Some came from the Communist Party, some from the left-wing social democracy, and some from the Socialist Workers Party. During the two and a half years between the first issue of the Young Socialist and the founding of the YSA, YS supporters tested all these tendencies, followed their press, participated with them in actions, discussed the opposing political positions. In the end they rejected the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and what was even then the embryo of the Progressive Labor Party, an ul-

tra-left offshoot of the CP, and came to the political position of fraternal solidarity with the SWP as the only revolutionary party in the U.S. today. All these conclusions are codified in the original "Where We Stand." Thus, basic political solidarity between the YSA and the SWP was one of the cornerstones on which the YSA was founded and on which it has been built.

While John Hansen, the author of "Draft Resolutions on YSA Structure" does not state that he is in disagreement with this basic position of the YSA, or suggest that it be amended, the logic of his structural proposals implies that he does disagree. A proposal to reduce SWP members in the YSA to junior citizens (at best), with sharply curtailed rights, certainly indicates some more basic political disagreement with SWP members.

John Hansen bases his assertion, that structural changes must now be made to eliminate SWPers from leadership positions, on what he calls the "new turn" of the YSA. Unfortunately, both his description of what the YSA used to be like, and his definition of what it is today, are incorrect. This rather weakens his case.

He describes the YSA of several years ago as one composed only of Trotskyists, or people in agreement with the "formulations of the SWP." The assertion is almost humorous. I can say with full confidence that I, for instance, was certainly no Trotskyist when I joined the YSA in 1964, and I didn't have a good idea what the SWP was or whether I agreed with sections of its program or not. I didn't have a good idea of what the YSA program was, either. But I liked what the organization was doing, and I joined. The most important difference between the YSA that I joined and the YSA today is that there are today hundreds and hundreds of others who are like I was then, and who want to join the YSA and build the American section of the international revolutionary socialist youth movement.

The so-called "new turn" of the YSA does not, as Hansen seems to think, represent any fundamental change in our attitude towards membership, leadership, program, or a disciplined and loyal organization that is not just playing around with politics. The "new turn" is decidedly not a change in our basic organizational principles. Membership in the YSA remains a function of agreement with our program and

willingness to actively contribute to building the organization.

What has changed, what has "turned," is the objective situation in which the YSA exists. The radicalization of our generation has deepened to such an extent that there are now unlimited opportunities for recruitment and growth. While five years ago we often spent weeks and weeks convincing one or two individuals to join the YSA, today we can hardly keep track of all the applications for membership. That is the fundamental difference between the "old YSA" and the "new YSA."

Does this change in the objective situation and the growth of the YSA mean that now our attitude towards the SWP should be changed? Does our expansion stand to be hampered or destroyed by our fraternal ties with the SWP? No. I think the contrary is true.

The deeper the radicalization and the sharper the world contradictions between the socialist revolution and the capitalist class, the more the need for a revolutionary Marxist party in the heart of world imperialism becomes evident. The need to help build and collaborate with such a party remains a cornerstone of the YSA program. The larger our movement becomes, the more important the lessons and traditions of the past experience of the Trotskyist movement will be. Of course, if John Hansen wants to argue that there is some party other than the SWP that we should be helping to build, that is another question which it would be very fruitful to discuss.

Many leaders of the YSA are also in the SWP. And there is an obvious reason for this. Leadership in our organization is not based on personalities, or personal friendships, or simply a person's ability to talk or write well. We have a different attitude toward leadership.

For us, leadership is based on political principles, and on political understanding -- after all, we are a political organization. It is natural that many of the most serious and politically experienced YSAers join the SWP, because they come to see that the only way out of the world historical impasse is to build a revolutionary party capable of leading the world working class to power. If other YSAers look to these people as leaders it is precisely because they often have the best grasp of the political tasks before us, i.e., they give political leadership.

John Hansen's example of the ultimate evil, a Berkeley YSA executive committee composed exclusively of SWP members, is an excellent example of precisely this point. Whether the Berkeley exec is composed of 12 SWPers or not, I have no idea. But, if it is, the question must be asked, how was the exec chosen, why,

and who elected those individuals?

They were elected not by SWPers but by the Berkeley YSA, the majority of whom are not in the SWP, and who felt that those individuals were best qualified to compose the YSA leadership. It would be undemocratic, as well as practically foolish, for the YSA to deny itself the right to chose the best possible YSA leadership, just because many of those leaders may be members of the SWP.

Now, does this mean that non-SWPers are excluded from the leadership or prevented from becoming leaders? Hardly. Our founding "Where We Stand" declaration states clearly that "The YSA is an independent organization which elects its own officers and works out its own political views. The YSA bases itself on the principle of the organizational independence of the revolutionary youth organization..." We hold our own conventions where we decide our political positions, and elect a national leadership to implement our decisions.

Further, it is important to note that the SWP also agrees that the only way for a viable revolutionary youth organization to grow, develop and recruit the best of its generation is to be organizationally independent. Only by working out their own positions, electing their own leaders, and making -- and correcting -- their own mistakes can the future leaders of the revolutionary movement develop.

There is absolutely no way for a minority of the organization to force a majority to take any position that the majority does not agree with. Any member is free to present and fight for any position he thinks is correct, and all decisions are made by majority vote. Any person who demonstrates to the majority of the comrades that his positions are often correct and that he is able to lead will rapidly be elected to a leadership position.

It is possible, as Hansen points out, that significant differences could develop at some time between a section of the YSA leadership and the SWP. This did happen once in YSA's history, when the majority of the YSA National Executive Committee, contrary to the SWP, held the position that revolutionary Cuba was not a workers state.

But this example also serves only to disprove John Hansen's arguments. That disagreement was settled not by the SWP imposing caucus discipline on its members in the YSA, but by the majority of the YSA -- composed predominantly of non-SWP YSAers -- rejecting the position of the YSA leadership and electing a new leadership.

The divisions took place not along generational lines, but cut sharply across

generational lines. The movement divided along political lines which inevitably reflected different class interests and pressures, and that will be the case with any major dispute that develops in our movement.

Now, what about Executive Committees? It is true that proposals made by Executive Committees usually have more weight than those made by individuals in the local. But why? Because the local has elected the Executive Committee as the leadership of the local, empowered to make all necessary political and organizational decisions between meetings of the local. They have chosen the individuals in whom they have the greatest political confidence to lead them. And when those individuals as a body make a proposal, it obviously carries weight with the membership. If that were not true, they would not be the leadership, and new elections should be held so that the formal and actual leadership of the local would coincide.

John Hansen raises one other important question that should be discussed, and that is the analogy between the YSA-SWP relationship and the DuBois Clubs-Communist Party relationship. There are fundamental and very important differences.

First is the question of program. The DuBois Club was founded ostensibly as an organization that was not even necessarily socialist, but open to all "progressive-minded" youth who were against war and poverty and racism. They denied not only any affiliation but any fraternal relationship with any existing political tendency. The reality, as soon became apparent to all, was quite different. While they tried to avoid defining their program, it was clearly a pro-Moscow, peaceful-coexistence program of capitalist reform, and in reality anyone who disagreed with that program was not welcome in the organization. That was clearly demonstrated when YSAers were excluded from the organization at the DuBois Club founding convention.

The YSA has never claimed to be open to any and all "progressive-minded" youth. We have a very definite program, and we have never hidden it, nor invited people who disagree with that program to join. Many individuals who join may not be sure about this or that aspect of our program, some may disagree emphatically with one aspect or another, but all who join agree to support the program publicly and loyally and participate in the building of the YSA.

Even in our brief history, we have had to deal with individuals and organized groups who disagreed with our program, democratically arrived at by convention decisions, and refused to build the YSA, but still tried to remain inside the YSA to obstruct our growth. The ultra-left, sectarian tendencies today constituted as the

Sparticist League and the Workers League were inside the YSA in the early sixties. (They were the grouping which held that Cuba was not a workers state and opposed our concentration on work in defense of the Cuban revolution.)

After two years of factional, disloyal activity inside the YSA, and numerous instances of publicly carrying out a position contrary to the YSA official policy, some individual members of the tendency were expelled, and by convention decision membership in, or collaboration with, the Spartacists or the Workers League tendency was made incompatible with membership in the YSA.

This was done not because of differences between the SWP and those groupings, but because we discovered through our own experience that these organizations, far from wanting to build the YSA, were more interested in blocking our growth and development.

The second important difference between the YSA-SWP relationship and the CP-DuBois relationship is that the YSA has never hidden its political solidarity with the SWP, or tried to pretend that SWPers were not members of the YSA. Our strength has been that we openly and publicly state that we look to the SWP as a fraternal organization, and collaborate with them.

Of course, there is a third difference which cannot be brushed aside. The reformist program of the DuBois Clubs was not very enticing to those of us who were looking for an answer to the social and economic problems of the world today. When the DuBois clubs couldn't see the revolutionary character of black nationalism and Malcolm X and when they concurred with the concept that negotiations were the answer to the Vietnam war, the organization entered a rather sharp decline.

There is another aspect to John Hansen's proposals which I want to take up before ending. Many of us have gone through experiences in antiwar committees and other organizations where similar motions to his on SWP members were made to exclude YSAers from leadership positions. The most recent example on the national level was the red baiting attempt to exclude Syd Stapleton and Kipp Dawson from the staff of the Student Mobilization Committee because they were YSAers.

Whenever such motions are made in the antiwar movement it is by groups or individuals who have political differences with us on how to build the antiwar movement. They invariably want to avoid a political debate and hope that political differences can be solved by organizational maneuvering and exclusion.

We have always responded by demand-

ing a political discussion and a decision on general perspectives. Secondly, we have always pointed out that there is no contradiction between being YSAers and being the best builders of the antiwar movement.

The same points are equally valid in regard to John Hansen's resolutions on structure. The only serious way to approach his resolutions is to first discuss

whatever political differences he has with SWP members that make him want to exclude SWPers from leadership positions. Once such a clarification is made, YSAers around the country will be able to determine for themselves whether SWPers are among the most serious builders of the YSA or not. I think the answer will be obvious to all.

November 11, 1968



ATTEND THE NATIONAL YOUNG SOCIALIST CONVENTION CHICAGO NOV. 28-DEC. 1, 1968

A National Convention of young socialists from throughout the United States will be convened in Chicago over the Thanksgiving weekend. It will meet in the midst of a year of unprecedented revolutionary activity—from Prague to Paris, from Vietnam to Bolivia, and from Columbia to Berkeley. The Convention will discuss: the international revolutionary youth movement; the Vietnamese revolution and how to defend it; the 1968 election campaign waged by the Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle and the Young Socialist Alliance; the Afro-American struggle for the right to self-determination; the perspectives for the revolutionary socialist youth movement in this country, and the fight for a socialist America.

Reports will be given at the Convention by representatives of revolutionary socialist youth abroad, by antiwar and socialist GIs, and by participants in the Afro-American struggle, the antiwar movement, and campus rebellions across the country.

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