

YSA

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CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
BUILDING THE YSA, Report to YSA National Committee Meeting, June 5, 1976	2
ON NORMS AND LEADERSHIP, by Bruce Lesnick, Madison chapter	12
CAMPAIGN BILLBOARDS, by Linda Thalman, Tallahassee chapter	15

BUILDING THE YSA

By Ilona Gersh

Approved by the National Committee, June 5, 1976

So far, we have discussed all of the political openings before us -- in the Black, Chicano, and women's movements; in colleges and high schools; to win respect and political authority for the YSA through our suit against the government and our involvement in the Camejo-Reid campaign; to win new members to the YSA, and train and educate both new members and more experienced leaders of the YSA.

The new political developments that we've been discussing, and first took note of at our Milwaukee convention, mean that we have to look for new and fresh ways to organize our forces and build the YSA. A lot of changes have taken place in the YSA. This is why so much time has been scheduled for discussion of this report.

There are four main sections in this report.

First, a look at how far we have come in implementing the reorganization of our forces onto the campuses and high schools, which we projected at our convention. And an initial balance sheet of its success.

Second, some of the new questions and problems that have come up in the process of reorganizing many of our chapters.

Third, the major activities that we can project for the summer months and fall to carry through the reorganization, consolidate and educate our membership, and win new members.

And fourth, I want to deal briefly with new developments among a few of our left-wing political opponents.

This report is not an organizational report or a tasks and perspectives report. It won't cover every one of our activities, or present a balanced view of our priorities.

When the National Executive Committee had an initial discussion on the outline of my report, we thought that its two main purposes should be to report to you our observations and thinking on some of the new questions that have come up over the spring, and also to initiate a discussion here on how to answer these questions and push through all the changes we've begun to make.

Because of this, a lot of my report has to take up things that relate only to chapters in cities where there are Socialist Workers party branches, rather than chapters in the region. This is because it was in these chapters that the most changes had to be made. In a lot of ways, these changes have begun to model some aspects of center chapters after experiences of our chapters in the region, which have mostly been oriented totally to the campuses all along.

So I hope in the discussion comrades from chapters in the region, as well as centers, will contribute their experiences in all aspects of their activity.

Sink our roots on campuses and high schools

At our last convention, we decided to take the step of reorganizing our membership into chapters that relate

directly to the campuses and high schools where we carry out activity. We decided to transform our chapters from city-wide units to chapters that are centered on particular campuses and high schools. Our goal is to build separately-functioning chapters at each of these schools as we grow.

We made this decision for political reasons.

The new stage of the radicalization that we recognized meant that the YSA had new opportunities to deepen our work in much broader movements -- and especially among Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and women. It means taking our YSA activities, as they develop as a result of the radicalization as a whole, onto the campuses and to wider layers of the student body. As other reports have pointed out, we are now involved with forces in many cities on the campuses that were beyond our reach just a short time ago -- activists in campus organizations of Blacks and Chicanos, women's groups, and international students.

The steps we took this spring were based on all the work we've been doing up until now in the anti-Vietnam War movement, around desegregation, the abortion and ERA fights -- which has led us deeper and deeper into the student movement, although of course not without our ups and downs. It was based on the campus membership and leadership that we've built up and developed through hard work over the past years.

Our reorganization into college and high school chapters does not reflect a totally new political orientation -- it's a sharpening of the student orientation that the YSA has always had. We're not saying that we made some big mistake that we've got to correct now. Our reorganization was based on the present political opportunities before us, and the direction of the student movement that we can expect to see in the future.

What we called the "reorganization" was not just an organizational shift out of SWP headquarters and onto the campuses and high schools. Or away from selling papers in the community on Saturdays and selling more to students instead. It is really a reflection of a political turn we've been making towards new layers of students -- especially towards Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and high school students. Our political orientation towards these students has always been there, but the opportunities to implement that orientation have never been as great as they are today.

The big organizational shift we made this spring has begun to put us further down the road of implementing this orientation and deepening and sharpening our roots among these students and the student population in general. All the contributions to the discussion at this meeting are proof of how much activity we're carrying out on campuses.

At the convention, we also recognized that our shifts were complementary to the turn that the Socialist Workers party was taking, which I'll want to take up later.

I began with these general points because I think that it's important for every member of the YSA to look at the changes

we're making through political glasses. There has been a dramatic shake-up that you could almost describe as an upheaval in many chapters this spring -- and this has affected a lot of our campaigns and activity. It's raised all sorts of new questions for us, and forced us to look at everything we do in a new and fresh light. What will make sure that we push through these changes, and adjust our work to the new opportunities and demands before us, is a sharp understanding of the political basis for our reorganization and our long-term goals.

I think that we can say that the immediate benefits of our reorganization have borne out the correctness of our decision.

It brought the political discussions and decision-making to the campuses, where our activity is carried out. And as a result, a layer of both new and more experienced student members who couldn't participate fully in off-campus meetings and activities have been brought into the center of planning and YSA projects.

Our move onto the campuses was met with enthusiasm from the membership.

Our work this spring has shown that the YSA has opportunities to grow on just about every campus and high school across the country -- if we move out, sink our roots there, get involved in struggles, and take all of our campaigns to the students.

Our experience has been that we have no reason to hold back once we get onto the campuses. We should be audacious and bold, as well as experimental, in throwing ourselves into struggles that bring us into contact with broader forces.

We are now much more in touch with political life on campus. Many more chapters, for instance, utilize women's, Black, and Chicano studies classes for a political forum. We are more familiar with all the different groups -- including BSUs, MEChAs, women's groups, the student government, and in many cases we're active participants or builders of these organizations.

We've also learned more about the activities and membership of political opponents on campus, which makes it easier for us to try to draw these groups into activities we're involved in, get into political discussions with them that pose our alternative to students, and win people to our political perspective and away from theirs.

We have more political respect on many campuses as a result of participating in all these activities. This is partly reflected in the significant number of large student activity budgets campus YSA chapters have received for next year, and the increased support we gained in many of our student government election campaigns.

New chapters and locals

What does the YSA look like today?

We established a total of fourteen locals over the spring, with more than one chapter each. During the spring, the number of chapters reached ninety-three.

The composition of our membership has changed since the convention. The percentage of students is higher than a year ago -- 56 percent of our members in regional centers are

college students, and 6 percent are in high school, compared with 34 percent and 5 percent last year. This doesn't include the large number of members in chapters who are not students but regularly go onto the campus. And the student composition of chapters in the region is usually higher than that in centers.

The YSA is more Black and Brown than before. These members account for 18 percent of our membership in chapters, compared to 11 percent a year ago -- 12 percent Black, 3 percent Chicano, and 1 percent Puerto Rican.

We are a younger organization than before.

In the last year, 48 percent of our present membership joined the YSA, which is a higher figure than ever before.

While we are smaller than we were at the time of our convention, we are stronger on campus as a result of members going back to school and recruitment of students.

The reorganization took place very rapidly this spring. Once a couple of steps were taken in most chapters, like moving out of the SWP headquarters, or releasing a couple of members who were also SWP members and couldn't participate in our campus activities, all the other steps were necessitated and carried through logically. We found that we couldn't throw out just a few of the old forms and keep all the rest. They all had to be thought through thoroughly.

The reorganization took different forms in every city. Some new chapters were created through dividing our forces that had previously been in one chapter but carried out activity in totally different cities. Berkeley/Oakland became Berkeley and Oakland; Denver became Denver and Boulder; Washington, D. C., became Washington, D. C., and College Park, Md. And then Washington, D. C. divided into two chapters and set up a local organization.

The Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York locals -- which already had more than one chapter each before the convention -- redivided into chapters based on the campuses where they carried out activity. In New York, three chapters became five; in Chicago, two became three; in Los Angeles, two became four. And during the spring, an additional chapter was set up in Los Angeles and in New York.

Other chapters that found themselves strong enough divided into more than one chapter, and set up local organizations -- two in San Diego, San Francisco, St. Louis, Cleveland, Seattle, and Milwaukee; and three chapters in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia.

Still other chapters moved out of the SWP headquarters and onto campus or, if there was no SWP in their city, began to focus their activity more and more towards the campus or high school where they were active.

Some chapters were set up on campuses where there had been no YSA before -- like in Pasadena, Richmond, and Northridge -- with the help of the Socialist Workers party and because of the new opportunities for the YSA when the SWP built new branches in these cities.

The trend was for YSA chapters to move out of most SWP headquarters, which tended to draw our activists and activities off campus, and find ways to function like every other student group on the campuses and high schools -- with an office, a locker, focusing around a literature table, or in the cafeteria.

Increased activity at commuter colleges

Especially in cities where we established more than one chapter, as well as in some cities new for the YSA, the turn meant an increased amount of attention paid to our work on community college campuses or other campuses that are predominantly Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and working class. In several cities, the YSA now has separate chapters on these campuses, or have organized fractions with the intention of establishing chapters as soon as possible. This is something that we want to continue.

Consistent activity on these commuter campuses is relatively new for the YSA. Up until a couple of years ago, our activity was mostly confined to work on the more expensive, residential colleges and universities.

These commuter schools are often located in the Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican communities. And even if they're not, the students who attend them live and usually work in these communities. This means two things. First, they are more directly affected by the issues that we organize students on campus around -- like cop brutality, cutbacks in services and jobs, desegregation, union strikes. Second, the Socialist Workers party has bookstores and headquarters in many of these communities, and can be a big help in bringing some of these students in touch with our movement through their community sales, campaigning, and sub drives.

While we are finding that it is necessary to wage fights for the right to sell and distribute literature, hold meetings, and get recognized at these schools, especially the ones new to the YSA, we have also found tremendous receptivity to our ideas. Our ability to take advantage of this receptivity and begin carrying out ongoing activity on some of these campuses has been partially responsible for the changes in our membership's composition.

While a large layer of students at these schools are high school graduates or young students returning to college after a year or so of working, a layer of them are also workers in their thirties and forties, who are going to school for extra credits to get a wage increase or a higher job classification. While they will be helpful allies and should be encouraged to work closely with the YSA, in many cases they are people who are more likely to be prospective members of the SWP rather than the YSA.

High school activities

The reorganization of the YSA has also made it possible for us to turn our attention more towards carrying out regular and well-rounded work at high schools where we have members. Like the commuter colleges, high schools in many big cities are predominantly Black, Chicano, or Puerto Rican. An entire generation of working class youth are in high school and jr. high school today. And although we are very weak in the high schools, as you can see from the membership statistics, our small presence there gives us a foot in the door to winning new members.

In addition to continuing regular sales of the Young

Socialist, and campaign literature distributions, we have also

been able to carry out other activities -- such as helping to build the Student Coalition Against Racism, participating in anticutback protests, challenging restrictions on the political rights of students, and educational activities. Building support for the ERA can probably also be a fruitful activity in the high schools.

The "Right to Sell" handbook that we compiled with the Militant Business Office has proved very useful in legal or political fights for the right to sell, hold meetings, or get recognized. Winning these rights makes us more legitimate in the eyes of students and makes us more a part of school activities.

In Cincinnati, the YSA holds regular discussions on socialism over coffee and doughnuts in a corner of the school cafeteria. In Milwaukee, the YSA sponsors weekly "alternative classes." We had to fight for the right to hold these classes. In San Francisco, a YSA member won student government elections twice in a row at George Washington High School on a socialist platform.

Several chapters have begun to organize classes and study groups on socialism near or in high schools. The Houston YSA, for example, held some classes after school in a comrades' house near the jr. high school where we have two new members.

We now only have one high school chapter -- at Cass Tech. High School in Detroit, which will no doubt provide us some valuable lessons for future high school chapters.

What we should continue to do throughout the summer and next fall is provide the leadership attention we've been giving to our high school work and the activities of our high school members. We will also want to keep our eyes open for special opportunities to present ourselves at schools where we don't yet have members -- high school struggles, campaign openings, or schools where we have an especially good response from sales. The Berkeley YSA, for instance, took out time from activities on campus to participate in a struggle of Black students at Berkeley High School.

New leadership

The impact of our work on the commuter campuses and in the high schools where we have members has been the most exciting aspect of our reorganization, along with the general increase in the amount of campus work we've been able to accomplish.

But along with every big shift come new questions to answer and problems to grapple with. So in this part of the report, I want to turn to a few of the big questions that have been raised as a result of our turn. I'm going to talk about the development of our leadership, our relationship to the SWP, regional collaboration and expansion, and finances.

In order to completely turn our faces to the campuses and high schools, and base our chapters there, we found that a large number of members, who were also SWP members, had to be released from YSA membership. They included both new and more experienced members who had been in the YSA for some time.

than ninety chapters now, it is impossible for the national office to continue to collaborate directly with every chapter. This means that when a new opportunity breaks on a national scale, or when the national office needs information on sales, or the fund drive, or any of our other national campaigns, we will tend more and more to consult directly with city leaderships, rather than the individual chapters in locals.

The city leadership has the responsibility of discussing out the opportunities in the city as a whole for our national campaigns. The growing dissimilarities between chapters' activities, even in the same city, means that every chapter will have different priorities at different times. One chapter might be able to organize a meeting for a national USLA tour, while the opportunities on another campus might be smaller. One chapter might have more opportunities to do ERA work. One might have a special angle to publicize a disclosure from our suit against the government. The job of the city leadership is to make sure that all of our national campaigns are getting the right attention in the city as a whole, recognizing the differences between all the chapters.

And sixth, the city leadership in cities where there are SWP branches can collaborate with the city-wide SWP leadership on joint city-wide activities or political campaigns, and discuss out how to relate to new projects of the SWP, like the establishment of a new SWP branch in part of the city near an important school, or regional work that the party is carrying out that might relate to ours. And in cities where there are both YSA and SWP locals, the city leaderships of both organizations will probably want to discuss how each chapter and branch should relate to each other.

Before I go on to the next question, I want to add a few more things about the character of local executive committees. And I hope that in the discussion, comrades who have had experiences in city leaderships will add to the discussion.

City leaderships can not substitute for the leaderships of each individual chapter. Most of our activities are carried out through the chapters, and should be discussed out and decided by the chapters. The role of the city leadership should not be to cut across the decision-making abilities and authority of chapter leaders, but to promote it. We don't want to take political discussions, especially on important city-wide and national issues, out of the domain of the chapter leaders and membership.

The city leadership is not an apparatus. It has no membership. It can't take on all sorts of projects and tasks by itself. If it did, it would just be a drain on the chapters. It's only role is to politically lead the YSA in that city. So it doesn't have to be very big; it should be small enough so that it can meet on call. It doesn't have to have someone on it heading up every area of work. It should be the central political leadership, capable of drawing on comrades with certain experiences to participate in one or another discussion. We don't have to have city-wide directors or fractions for every area of work. They can be discussed out politically in the LEC and then discussed and implemented on the campuses by the chapters.

So our experience over the spring is that small, regularly functioning LECs, composed of the central political leadership

of the local are the best. This is the type of LEC that can think in terms broader than the needs and activities of a single chapter, and at the same time, draw on the leaderships of the chapters to come to the best decisions.

A lot of these same characteristics and functions can apply to executive committees of single chapters where there is no local, too.

One related question that a number of locals have consulted the national office about is what to do with the chapters during the summer. Transfers and long leaves of absence during the summer for vacations has made it necessary for some chapters to be dissolved or united with another chapter temporarily over the summer. But generally, because we want to continue to develop the chapter leaderships that we just recently established this spring, and because we should look to the future when our chapters will be bigger, more stable, we should think very seriously before chapters are dissolved or unified.

Of course, the pace of activity will be different this summer. Our priorities will change. We may decide to have chapter meetings once every two weeks, instead of weekly, to make time for educational activities and petitioning that will take place in many cities. But each local will have to judge their situation individually, and then consult with the national office before making a final decision.

Collaborating with the Socialist Workers party

The second question I want to turn to is the relationship between the YSA and the Socialist Workers party. We have different arenas for our work -- the SWP in the working class and with oppressed nationalities, and the YSA in the student movement. We don't work out of the same headquarters in most cities. But the basis for consistent political collaboration on all our major campaigns is still there -- we have the same general strategy of building the revolutionary movement, and we participate in many of the same united front activities.

The political questions that confront the student movement are directly connected to the big issues that face the working class today -- finding a long-term strategy for fighting the economic, racist, and sexist attacks on our lives. And the solutions we pose, as we've discussed already, are the same -- independent political action.

The activities of the YSA and SWP complement each other. The impact of the SWP on the political activities of the working class -- in the Black, Chicano, and women's movements -- will make it easier for the YSA to take these issues onto the campuses, win student allies for these struggles, and win the best activists to our ranks. And at the same time, students continue to play an important role in city-wide coalitions involving broader forces. We've also seen that the issue of education is a central one among the national minorities and working class as a whole, as attacks on education get worse. So the deepening of the party's roots in the working class, and the sharpening of our student activity, shouldn't draw our two organizations farther apart. The opposite is true. We complement each other more.

The SWP has a lot of resources that we can use to the hilt

A total of 238 members were released between the convention and April 15, when the membership statistics were compiled.

We knew that this would happen at the time of the convention, although in some chapters I think we probably ended up releasing more than we had originally anticipated, and at a faster rate.

At the convention, we noted that having a large number of SWP members in the YSA who didn't go to school and who couldn't be active on campus created norms in regional centers that were intimidating to new and prospective members.

Working members, for instance, paid extraordinarily high sustainers and fund drive contributions in order to make up for the growing number of student members who didn't have full-time jobs.

A large full-time staff and apparatus was necessary to organize the complicated regional centers that not only oriented to three or four campuses and high schools, but also had the responsibility of organizing the off-campus activity of non-student members.

A new layer of members -- mostly on campus -- have taken on leadership responsibilities. The majority of our organizers and executive committee members are now on the campuses and in the high schools, where we carry out our activity. In the long run, even if it does put a little pressure on this new leadership, it will speed up the development of our members on campuses and high schools. In the immediate sense, many chapters have found that this new leadership is most capable of looking at all of our activities in a fresh light.

This shift affected our national leadership too. Since the convention, eighteen national committee members have been released, and we expect more will be before our convention comes next fall.

A significant layer of YSA leaders who were released are Black. But at the same time these comrades left the YSA, a new layer of Black leaders developed, both on a national and local level.

This change has been good for the YSA, both nationally and locally. Our leadership now more accurately reflects what is needed to lead a campus-based, young, revolutionary organization. The development of this new layer of leadership is a tribute to the YSA. We will always find that opportunities will always come up faster than we are able to take advantage of them. Our leadership, as well as our entire membership, will always be stretched from now until the revolution. That's why the development of leadership has always been such a big question for the YSA.

Reflecting these changes in our membership and leadership, the national office staff has changed, too. It is now younger, with more recent campus experience.

This summer as campus activity slows down, education

is a priority. We have several programs available to us, including socialist summer schools, the SWP pre-convention discussion, and the SWP convention August 8-14, which will include classes, panels, and workshops organized by both the SWP and YSA.

In addition, YSA chapters can organize classes of their own to take up day-to-day issues that we have to deal with in our work.

Building chapter and local leadership

I want to take up one aspect of leadership in more detail, because it's new to the YSA -- that's the construction of the city-wide leadership that is necessary when there is more than one chapter in the same city, and a local organization is set up. It's new to the YSA because this is the first time in our history that we've ever been organized on anything but a city-wide basis. There were some exceptions, of course, like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Boston (between 1970 and 1974). But those chapters had a city-wide character, and were divided because they grew too big and were not based on specific campuses or high schools.

A central aspect of this turn is that we want to turn our chapters loose on their campuses. So there will be a tendency for individual chapters to become more and more involved in the political life on campus. That's exactly what we want to see. But the other side of it is that by becoming totally involved in activities at their school, there can also be a tendency for them to be less in touch with what's happening on other campuses, in high schools, and with city-wide issues that we want to relate to on our campuses.

So the first purpose of the city leadership is to politically discuss out and orient the local towards big political questions in the city: issues like desegregation plans, job layoffs or cutbacks in social services, union strikes. A city executive committee can discuss our orientation to issues like these in a broader perspective than most chapters can.

A second role of the city leadership is to politically take charge of activities and interventions that aren't in the domain of any one chapter. For instance, observing and distributing literature at a city-wide YWLL rally, an anticutbacks action where we have no members, or city-wide events that all chapters are relating to, such as an ERA or antiracist action.

A third function could be to organize broad discussions of a city-wide campaign tour, an educational weekend, or a Militant blitz week, which are all really organized by the chapters, in order to generalize the experience of every chapter and maximize the number of ideas the chapter can make use of.

A fourth role is to politically coordinate our work in the region, including the priorities and itinerary of the regional team, the regional organizer, planning out regional conferences, as well as week-to-week political collaboration between chapters in the region. The regional organizer is responsible to the local executive committee.

Fifth, city leaderships will increasingly play the role of transmitting national campaigns from the national office or National Executive Committee to their local area. With more

to build the YSA, including the Militant, bookstores, election campaigns, Militant Forums, and experienced educators who can give classes and forums on campus. But we utilize these institutions in different ways than the party. Sales is a good example -- while we sell the Militant and YS primarily at colleges and high schools, where we're building the YSA, the party concentrates its sales in the communities of national minorities, in shopping districts, and at workplaces and unemployment lines. The same goes for our use of the election campaigns, Militant Forums, and Pathfinder literature. In addition, we don't have any direct responsibilities for these institutions -- the only responsibility we have is to think out how best to utilize them.

There are many opportunities for joint efforts in struggles we're involved in, like the antiracist fight, or ERA drive. But even though we will find it convenient to set up joint fractions to plan our activities, we'll direct our energies toward our different arenas.

Not functioning in the same headquarters, the fact that most YSA chapters and SWP branches don't have full-time organizers now, and the sharpening of our two different orientations all have tended to make collaboration harder. Both our organizations have been implementing our turns, and there have been big shake-ups in the appearance and organization of both the YSA and SWP. Now, after we've spent this spring concentrating on our own turns, we have to stop and make sure that the gears mesh. But if we understand the political basis for continuing and deepening collaboration, it will be easier to find ways to do it. And what will help is the conscious organization of collaboration through one form or another.

Regional expansion and growth

Next, I want to take up the question of regional collaboration and expansion. Forty-five percent of our membership is in cities where there is no SWP branch, as opposed to 35 percent last year. There are thirty-six chapters in these cities. The fact that almost half of our membership is in the region increases the importance of stepping up collaboration between all of our chapters and organizing our work so that expansion and growth will continue.

Regional expansion has always been important to the YSA. The broad geographic spread of the YSA gives all of our campaigns more of a national character and impact -- there are more cities where SCAR is active, where ERA actions take place, or where people are spreading the word about the SWP candidates. More chapters mean more recruitment to the YSA, and a bigger organization.

Sometimes our plans for regional work coincide with the plans of the SWP. Our activity in several cities has continued to make it easier for the SWP to establish new branches -- like in Albany, Louisville, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati.

But in addition to these important cities, there are many campus towns and smaller cities where there are important campuses -- like Bloomington, State College, Ann Arbor, and Austin -- where the party doesn't have the perspective of building branches right now. This makes these campuses no less important to the YSA. In some cases, they are the largest state

schools, where we've been able to recruit steadily.

In some regions, the reorganization forced us to take a temporary step back from the amount of regional work we have carried out in the past. In some areas, the YSA was forced to pull full-time regional organizers off the road in order to put together a leadership team strong enough to carry through divisions a set up city-wide leaderships. Personnel, either from the YSA or SWP for the regional teams was difficult to find because our memberships were in flux this spring. As a result, several teams went out for less than eight weeks or had only two team members. This lowered the accomplishments of the teams, as you can see from the fact sheet in the plenum kits.

Because of the importance of regional expansion and the development of the YSA in the regional areas, it would be a mistake to step down our efforts. Especially in this political period, when struggles take place on virtually every campus and there is an opportunity to build the YSA just about everywhere.

Two factors make it a little easier now for us to pay more consistent attention to our work in more parts of the country.

One is the development of more regional centers. Last fall, for instance, Newark took the responsibility for northern New Jersey out of New York's hands. Baltimore is paying more attention to Maryland, which used to be in Washington, D. C.'s region. A new branch in Indianapolis will take some responsibility for Indiana off Chicago's shoulders. Soon Kentucky will separate from Ohio, with the establishment of a branch in Louisville. The establishment of SWP branches in these central cities makes it possible for the YSA, with the branches' resources, to reach out to new territory.

Secondly, there are now more YSA chapters and SWP branches in many of these regions. This means that they can all pool their financial and personnel resources.

This summer, the national office wants to discuss perspectives of building the YSA and collaboration between chapters with every regional center, so that at Oberlin, concrete projections can be made for our regional work.

We'll have to be flexible in our approach to everything. Some regions may change. Smaller and newly established regions may not need to sustain a full-time regional organizer, and will carry out their work through short trips, phone calls, and writing letters, although we don't want to project a general retreat from the number of regional organizers available to do full-time work.

Some regions may decide to combine their efforts to put a team on the road. Others may put out their own team, like they have before.

There's no doubt that with the wind-up of the campaign next fall, along with the women's liberation and antiracist activities we'll be participating in, that the potential for building the YSA on a broader geographic basis is there.

Finances

Fourth, I want to take up our finances. Chapter finances, on the whole, have been much easier to organize this spring and much smoother than in the past. The biggest factor that

has simplified chapter finances is that in regional centers, there are now only a handful of full-time chapter organizers. As a result, these chapters have not had to depend on spending large amounts of energy on fund-raising projects. Sustainers have been sufficient to finance chapters' activity, along with income from YS and Militant sales, YSA literature, and occasional socials that tie in with the chapters' political priorities and outreach work.

In addition, several campus chapters have obtained student activities budgets, which pay for leaflets, posters, ads in the campus newspaper, and honoraria for speakers.

But the reorganization has presented problems for our finances on a national scale, which we have to solve now.

The national office budget is totally dependent on the fund drives that are organized twice a year. There is no other sizeable source of income to finance our staff, phone bills, mailings, travel (both international and within this country), and literature. All of these things are totally necessary for the functioning of the YSA as a national organization. Without them we could not run nationally coordinated political campaigns, or put out a newspaper. The amount of the fund drive is based on two things. First, the amount of money that is needed to finance our national apparatus. Second, the capabilities of the YSA to raise that much money. So what follows is that if we are unable to meet the fund drive, or if it is impossible to project a fund drive goal that is adequate to finance our activities at the present level, then cuts have to be made in the national office budget.

Because of a number of factors, this spring's \$25, 500 fund drive goal will not be met. The National Executive Committee has decided to lower the goal to \$23, 000, which we feel can be met, taking into account the abilities of all the chapters. These are the factors that have made it impossible for us to meet the goal:

First, our membership is smaller, as a result of the large number of YSAers released from YSA membership who are now active in the SWP. This has meant that there are fewer members to make pledges to the fund drive.

Second, more than half of our chapters were reorganized in the middle of the spring, causing a temporary break in the attention they paid to the fund drive, along with some other projects. As a result, some chapters slipped behind so far that it has been impossible for them to catch up in their fund drive payments. Or some began organizing the drive too late.

And third, many chapters found that the members most experienced with finances were the ones who were released from the YSA. These members, because they couldn't take assignments that involved activity on campus, since they weren't students, generally were assigned to tasks like finances, which could be organized from a headquarters off campus. As a result, financial directors this spring have been new, and chapter leaderships newer to politically thinking out our finances.

In addition to being the single largest category of income in the national office budget, the fund drive is the most stable source of income. Regular payments for the fund drive coming in means that the national office can pay bills at a regular pace. When the fund drive is not on schedule, the national

office gets behind in its bills, or has to postpone making expenditures for projects. This is why there is always a lot of emphasis put on keeping the fund drive on schedule by the national office.

There has been a shift in our financial priorities this spring. A larger proportion of our resources, rather than staying with the chapters, goes to the national office. This is a reflection of the reorganization. We decided to chop away at our apparatus in local areas, and eliminate it all together in most cities, while we maintain a strong national center to coordinate the activities of our more numerous chapters. It's going to be important that our membership understand these priorities. This means that we should explain how our finances work in all the chapters, to make sure that every member knows what the fund drive is for, what the national office does, and the importance of every YSA member's participation in our finances.

As a result of not receiving the full \$25, 500 national fund drive goal, there will have to be some adjustments in the national budget. We'll especially have to take a close look at our needs and expectations for the fall. So at Oberlin, there will be a financial workshop that all financial directors and as many organizers as possible should attend, where these new perspectives will be laid out.

Spreading socialist ideas

This summer, and especially next fall, we can expect that the national election campaign will heat up and open the door to many new possibilities for spreading socialist ideas to more people and winning new members to our movement. So now, over the summer, is the time to begin using all of our propaganda, centered on the election campaign, to tool up the YSA, serve as a way of focusing our work and consolidating our new chapters in the beginning of the fall, and sinking roots on the campuses and high schools.

In this election year there is no candidate that has been able to attract radicalizing students like the liberal George McGovern of 1972. In fact, neither party has even really tried to pull out the student vote in any of the primaries. Both parties are waging "underdog" campaigns. No one wants to be too much connected to big-time Washington politics and the Watergating, layoffs, tax increases, and military adventures that are seen as part of the seat of power. So as a result, the ruling class has had a hard time painting a glossy spirit over this year's race.

As Russell Baker of the New York Times said in a recent opinion column:

"There's no business like show business, Irving Berlin once proclaimed, and thirty years ago he may have been right, but not any more. Nowadays almost every business is like show business, including politics, which has become more like show business than show business is. Both parties suffer from a dearth of stars who can pack them in the way Gable and Roosevelt, Monroe and Eisenhower, Gary Cooper and Kennedy used to do. And so we have this search for new stars." But they haven't found any.

While this puts our candidates more in the limelite among

radicalizing students who want to work for a vote for candidates they believe in, it also means that there is no ready-made, organized milieu of radical students to approach with our campaign the way we did with the McGovern supporters in 1972.

The Socialist Workers candidates continue to be a major drawing card for people beginning to turn towards radical politics. Camejo and Reid are seen by many students as the only alternative to the line-up of humdrum Republican and Democratic candidates. On some campuses, the meetings organized for Willie Mae Reid and Peter Camejo have been the largest radical meetings to date this year. This is an indication that as the campaign gets hotter with the approach of election day, the YSA will want to think out ways of stepping up our work to build youth support on the campuses and high schools.

There will be a shift this summer in the pace of the campaign. The campaign will quicken, it will be more and more in first place news, and more on the top of everyone's mind. This means that we should shift our gears too.

A large proportion of our new members first came into contact with the YSA through campaign activities we organized. The national campaign committee continues to get large numbers of letters requesting literature and information. Many of these are students who got a copy of the Bill of Rights for Working People, see a poster, or hear about us in the media. A total of 618,000 copies of the Bill of Rights have been distributed, many on campus. This is one aspect of the campaign that we'll want to step up next fall, and even this summer.

We got a report in the national office from the regional organizer in the Ohio-Kentucky region. "The Camejo tour was probably the biggest boost to our regional work this spring," it said. "The national campaign projected him going to Louisville and Cincinnati. We decided to add Lexington, Columbus, and Kent. The comrades put a lot of work and enthusiasm into building the meetings and they came off very well. Ninety people in Louisville, 150 in Lexington, 55 in Cincinnati, 125 in Columbus, and 40 at Kent. Camejo got several standing ovations, a number of people joined, and at Columbus close to \$65 was raised in the collection and \$50 in Lexington. In Lexington the comrades taped the speech and students who missed the meeting are always asking to hear the tape. In Columbus, the Udall supporters kept on asking for the truth kit. When we finally got it, they said if Udall does not get the nomination, then they're supporting Camejo -- but from the looks on their faces in reading Udall's voting record, it might be even sooner."

The same report described the response in the region to their local congressional candidate, Mike Alewitz. "Mike's campaign yielded some unexpected results. While petitioning at the University of Akron we ran into three students who were very much interested in setting up a chapter. Two of them have joined and two others will probably join shortly."

While it's true that many campaign supporters will join the YSA, there are others who won't. Many Blacks, Chicanos, women, and other people support our candidates because they champion their causes, not because of their socialist politics. This is reflected by the endorsement we've gotten from the New Mexico Raza Unida Party, or of Caracol, a San Antonio-

based Chicano magazine, and the support Reid and other Black SWP candidates have received from many Black students. So we want to open the doors to support on every level that it's given. We want this campaign's support not only to include agreement with our socialist ideas, but also with simple agreement that a fighting, independent alternative is needed to the Democrats and Republicans.

We want to involve every campaign supporter -- whether they're a socialist or not -- in campaign activities. Passing out the Bill of Rights on campus or in a high school, going with other campaign supporters to a plant gate or shopping center on a Saturday, building meetings for national and local candidates, and gaining new supporters are activities that activists in agreement with the goals of this campaign can carry out.

In order to broaden the support that the campaign has already received, the national campaign plans to organize a fall drive to obtain prominent representatives of the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, women's, union, and student movements as endorsers of our campaign. This will not be a massive drive to get thousands of new endorsers. It's purpose will be to gather names for a big "Vote Camejo and Reid!" ad that will appear in a national newspaper, and can be reprinted in local media. We will want to participate in this drive next fall by getting leaders of student organizations, student governments, student newspaper editors, and representatives of different movements on campus to endorse the ad. A possible activity for some of the chapters might be to get large numbers of student endorsers on their campus for an ad or letter in the campus newspaper.

Next fall we'll want to pull out all the stops on the campaign -- and get it out as broadly as possible on campus. One activity that has been successful where it's been tried is debates between all the candidates running for a local office. At Portland State University, 450 students came to a debate between the Democratic, Republican, and Socialist Workers candidates for mayor.

On some campuses and high schools, our candidates may be on the ballot in campus-wide mock elections, as they were at the University of Minnesota.

At Oberlin, the last leg of the campaign will be mapped out in detail.

A focus of our summer activity will be the petition drive to get Camejo, Reid, and some local SWP candidates on the ballot. This year, we will be collecting more than half a million signatures. Mammoth drives have been organized for Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Texas, in addition to California, where we are attempting to get on the ballot for the first time. There, our goal is to collect 175,000 signatures for the national ticket, and another 175,000 for Omari Musa, the senatorial candidate. The aim is to get on the ballot in thirty states plus Washington, D. C., compared to twenty-three states and D. C. in 1972.

Getting on the ballot increases the campaign's legitimacy. We've also found that petitioning is an activity that campaign supporters can be involved in. When combined with well-thought-through campaigning, it can be an exciting project to publicize the campaign. For example, in Berkeley, the YSA plans to announce the petition drive in classes and get people to sign

up there to help in the effort.

As part of our fall propaganda offensive, we will be discussing at Oberlin launching a big drive to gain Militant subscribers. This subscription drive can be organized hand-in-hand with our campaign activities. At Oberlin, we'll be able to project the size and scope of this sub drive, along with with how the Young Socialist fits into it.

This offensive is more than just an opportunity to broaden our hearing on campus. In the context of where we're at with the reorganization, and our turn, it gives all of our chapters an opportunity to sink roots on our campuses and high schools -- including a chance to approach Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican students with our ideas. I hope if comrades have ideas about these activities, they'll give them in the discussion.

Opponents on the left

Before I end up, I want to briefly take a look at two of our opponents.

The Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL), associated with the Communist party, is still our strongest opponent, and they still have many more Black members than any other group on the left. More than a year ago, they estimated that their membership was 2,000.

Reports they published from a national leadership meeting last August confirm that they are primarily oriented to non-student youth, not to the campuses and high schools. Last August, for instance, they set the goal of having fifteen functioning campus branches of the League by the end of December, with a total of only 250-400 members. This means that we have a considerable head-start on them as far as our total student membership and our presence in the student movement.

But this doesn't mean that we are necessarily stronger than they are. As part of the major Stalinist tendency, they have considerable impact on most mass movements we participate in. And so while they generally don't have as strong a profile on campus as we do, although we have noticed a slight step-up of their work on a few campuses, they still have influence in city-wide coalitions and struggles that students participate in.

Last December, the League announced plans for a 1976 recruitment drive to recruit 1,976 new members this year in commemoration of the bicentennial. Their major recruitment activities were projected as a series of New Year's Eve parties across the country, three regional Youth Rights Festivals to celebrate their 6th anniversary, the April 3rd jobs action in Washington, D. C., May Day marches, and the 1976 Communist party election campaign.

February 15 was the first deadline for the drive, when they were supposed to have recruited 500 new members. But the Daily World hasn't yet reported on their progress since they began in December.

As other reports have pointed out, our political line gives us a headstart over them in both the antiracist and women's liberation movements. We want to continue to use this to our advantage.

The Maoists continue to be our most visible opponent on

the campuses. They aren't as well organized as the CP and YWLL, and don't have the same roots in the trade union and Black movements, but they will continue to attract radicalizing students because of the appeal of the Chinese revolution.

I want to deal briefly with the Guardian, which is not an organization, but represents the largest milieu of radical-minded people in this country who consider themselves Maoists. The Guardian tends to reflect the political discussions going on in this milieu, and is less hardened and sectarian than the organized groups like the October League and Revolutionary Student Brigade.

A May 5th interview with William Hinton, the national chairman of the U. S. -China Peoples Friendship Association blindly defends China's policy of allying with the most reactionary forces in the capitalist countries to defeat the Soviet Union, which they say is China's main danger.

In an editorial, the Guardian expressed its disagreement with this policy, and called for a discussion, which has already begun within the Guardian's pages on this question. This discussion in the Guardian will open the minds of a broad layer of radical-thinking people. It is an opportunity for us to point to the connection between China's foreign policy and their domestic policy -- the Chinese bureaucracy's need to protect itself by helping to maintain the world balance of power. The Militant is beginning a series on this question which sets a comradely tone of discussion between our movement and the Guardian's readers and supporters.

At the same time, the Guardian is taking a new look at politics in this country. They criticized the Maoists who refused to support both the April 24th antiracist action and the May 16th ERA demonstration. They interviewed Maceo Dixon, and agreed to further coverage of NSCAR's activities. They came to the Militant office to get pictures and facts for their May 16th coverage. They have also begun to cover news about our suit against the government.

These shifts in the Guardian's policies represent attempts by them and other forces on the left to get into the mainstream of American politics, and they are looking to us to one extent or another because we're already there.

New chapters and new tasks

Finally, I want to end up on the same note I began -- we have done more than just institute a few changes here and there in the way we carry out activities.

This spring, through the reorganization of our chapters onto the campuses and high schools, we have begun a deep-going transformation of the YSA. The kind of people joining the YSA and the changes in our composition, along with some of the activities we've been involved in at high schools and on campuses give us a glimpse of the future YSA.

Because of these changes in the political situation, we can't organize ourselves in the same way that we used to. The new form of campus and high school-based chapters is needed to maximize our growth and influence in the student movement. So everything we do must be thought out in a new light, and planned to drive through the turn we're making.

A lot of things will be different -- like our meetings, which can be more informal and include free-flowing discussion in our smaller and more focused chapters. Chapters may not be able to sell regularly at the variety of colleges and high schools we used to. But instead, chapters will consciously focus their work at one or two schools, only going to other campuses or high schools when there's a special opportunity there. This doesn't mean a step backward, just that we have different priorities.

Especially in this transition, it's important for all the locals and chapters to keep in regular touch with the national office. Reports on activities, new questions, including organizational questions, and ideas for other chapters or the national office will be useful and can be shared by the national office with all the chapters. It's especially important that we continue the practice of approving chapter divisions and new chapters through the NEC. Minutes, sales and financial reports, and other reports requested by the national office, are all important to watching our reorganization closely.

With all the opportunities in front of us, including our antiracist work, the ERA campaign, the elections, growing interest in our literature and papers, in support to the UFW,

CAIFI, USLA, and the other activities we're involved in, it will be difficult for many of our chapters to juggle them all and keep them all flying at full speed all of the time. This means that chapters will have to weigh the opportunities available, figure out their priorities, and weight those priorities so that some stay at the top, while others are held down for a while. It doesn't mean that some YSA chapters will be antiracist chapters, some will be ERA chapters, and some will be campaign committees, or that sales will be left on the sidelines for a week or two, while the fund drive gets underway. But it does mean that we can sometimes put one area of work on the slow-belt, while we speed up the work in another area of activity.

We can neither base our projections on the past, nor on what we'll expect to look like in the future. Where we have chapters that are too small now to take advantage of every opportunity, we'll have to figure out how to throw the forces we do have into these movements, reach out to other activists, and win them to the YSA.

If we do this, then our turn to the campuses and high schools will be successful. But we should start from where we are today.

ON NORMS AND LEADERSHIP

By Bruce Lesnick, Madison chapter

Laying a Foundation

Philosophers have spent thousands of pages, countless ages, and an untold amount of verbiage in their persistent polemic on the components of "human nature". Throughout this timeless discussion, frightful little has been decisively resolved. It is for this simple reason that we, as Marxists, find it most constructive to reject the concept of human nature altogether. We are what we are taught. From this basic postulate we can go on to explain the forces that mold society. But this method is essential also in focusing more closely inward—for it is a fact that revolutionaries themselves, before they have mastered the science of applying dialectics to the world around them, must be educated by those who came before. It is for this reason that in a discussion of the traditions that make up our movement, one must heavily rely on the experience of those who made up its earlier layers. To those who reject these hypotheses I do not address myself, for they are not Marxists in the first place and would not claim to be.

It is important to treat the subjects of norms and leadership together since the one greatly influences our understanding of the other. In a broad sense, this will be done here. However, for purposes of clarity, I will take each up in their turn.

Origins of principles of organization

What are our norms? Where do they come from? What purpose do they serve? To begin with, things we see as norms in our movement today—things such as the role of the executive committee, the way we select our leadership, and even the way we carry on preconvention discussion—have not always been handled the way we handle them today. Currently we conceive of an executive committee that has the authority to speak for the chapter between meetings; we nominate our national leadership through a nominating commission which meets during conventions, presenting its proposal to the delegates of the convention as the final agenda point; and in order to clarify points of view within our ranks, we have established a three-month oral and written preconvention discussion. Now simply because these examples of our norms are accepted today does this mean they are sacred and cannot change? No. But changes are never made hastily, and in actual practice, very few changes are made at all.

An understanding of why this is so is gained simultaneously with an understanding of where the norms came from in the first place. In short, they are the product of experience. We have a full, open preconvention discussion, not for any moral reasons, but because this has historically been the best way to arrive at decisions. The fuller discussion insures that fewer mistakes will be made in practice. Many of our opponents on the left minimize democracy in decision making—pick most any one. This reminds us that there are in fact other ways of doing things. The fact that the Revolutionary Student Brigade has its outgoing leaders appoint the incoming slate does not mean that this *a priori* prevents the RSB from being a left-wing group. But we reject this policy because experience in the history of the workers movement shows that a revolutionary organization is much more effective when its members have faith in the leadership, and this faith is

curtailed by RSB's nomination process. Herein lies the key: we adopt the norms that we do because at the given historical period *they have proven through testing to most greatly facilitate the carrying out of the tasks of building the organization.*

Only a few examples of what are known as norms in our movement have thus far been cited—still these examples illustrate the processes that apply to all. Some others seem less significant—for example the procedure we use to select a chairperson for each chapter meeting—but in actuality, even this simple process has proven empirically to be the best.

When comrades set out to change the norms by which we function they must be very careful, again, not because they are sacred, but because of years of testing and experience went into arriving at even the simplest of them.

Trotsky had this warning for those who questioned organizational norms:

"You want to experiment? But permit me to remind you that the workers' movement possesses a long history of experiments. . . . Before giving you the right to experiment, the party has the right to ask: What method will you use? Henry Ford would scarcely permit a man to experiment in his plant who had not assimilated the requisite conclusions of the past development of industry and the innumerable experiments already carried out. Furthermore experimental laboratories in factories are carefully segregated from mass production. Far more impermissible even are witch doctor experiments in the sphere of the labor movement. . . ." (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 82-83.)

Here Trotsky is addressing himself to a faction that existed within the Socialist Workers party in 1939-40 headed by Max Shachtman. It so happens that those in this grouping had some of their own ideas for changing the party's political and organizational foundations.

Experience—past and present

Since the norms of our movement affect how we function every day, it is important that all comrades become familiar with them. In general we publish little material that deals specifically with our movement's norms, though the things that are published provide a very important framework. Most of the written discussion of our organizational structure is bound up with the narrations of the historical experiences that gave birth to them. Indeed it could not be otherwise. As excellent examples of this, I refer comrades to *Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by Cannon, and an Education for Socialists bulletin by Farrell Dobbs entitled, *The Structure and Organizational Principles of the Party*. In both of these works, the authors explain developments and changes in the party's organizational framework, and the political events that justified them.

But apart from writings such as those mentioned above, the question is still posed: How are comrades to learn about the extensive organizational norms of our movement? Many of the most basic and important ones are printed in the bulletin, *Organizing the YSA*. But a few are not clearly documented anywhere.

Take for example the conception that has come to be

accepted in the YSA of the way we carry on discussions in a chapter meeting. There are several norms that apply, and to most comrades these are quite instinctual. For example, we call on everyone once before people are called upon a second or third time. In addition, the chairperson has no special right to comment on each point that is brought up in discussion, except on an equal footing with all other participants. Now any comrade who has been to a united front meeting knows that this method of organization is not universal. But every chapter of the YSA functions under these guidelines. What's more—these procedural methods are not documented clearly anywhere, to my knowledge, in the writings of our movement.

This, though being a simple example, illustrates an essential point. To wit: There is no substitute for experience in attempting to learn about our norms. Following the above example, it is by participating in one or two chapter meetings that new comrades get a feel for how they function.

Importantly, even norms that *are* clearly documented can only be fully understood in practice. If it is true that a picture paints a thousand words, then it is equally true that real life experience portrays ten thousand pictures. One may be capable of following detailed diagrams of the procedure involved in riding a bicycle, but one cannot truly know how to ride until they have sat in the seat and pedaled for themselves. And even then, once one has learned how to move forward, there is no substitute for experience when it comes to mastering the numerous hills and corners.

Using a slightly different analogy, Cannon in *Struggle for a Proletarian Party* had this to say about how historical lessons are learned:

“... We have often had occasion to say that one can't learn how to lead a trade union out of a book. From books he can learn the history and theory of the trade union movement, but its actual leadership he must learn in practice. The same thing holds true in regard to the party. One cannot learn how to lead a party out of a book either. If that were so there would not be such a poverty of political-party leadership everywhere.” (p. 94)

On leadership

The above paragraph by Cannon indirectly illustrates another very important point. That is, the methods and guidelines we employ in selecting our leadership compose nothing more than a specified group of organizational norms, and hence, all that applies to norms in general also applies to methods of choosing leaders. Mathematically speaking, the one is a subset of the other. Naturally, however, there are important problems that pertain specifically to the question of leadership. It is these that I want to take up at this time.

First it should be observed that the question of experience, which applies to our understanding of all norms, weighs especially heavily here. This, more directly, is what Cannon is addressing himself to in the quotation cited above. This particular role of experience in the making of leadership is widely dealt with in various writings. Trotsky sums it up succinctly as he states categorically: “Members of the party untested in the class struggle must not be placed in responsible positions. . . .” (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 94.)

But this whole concept must be developed further because what we have so far leaves unanswered, except in

the broadest sense, where leaders come from and how new ones are integrated. (It should be noted in passing that there are several different levels of leadership— from leadership in a chapter, to leadership on the National Committee. Here, I am dealing only with those characteristics which are common to all. It is sufficient to note that the role of experience and the seriousness of mistakes that can be made both become amplified as the level of leadership gets higher.)

The first thing to note about changing leadership in a revolutionary organization is that we don't do it without reason. It is true that, in approaching the question of selecting leadership, no current leaders are given special consideration simply for having previously served. We do, at the same time, not simply change leadership as if we were rotating the chairperson at business meetings. Our movement flatly rejected this formula which, through historical testing, has proven to be inadequate. This is explained by Farrell Dobbs in *The Structure and Organizational Principles of the Party*:

“On the leadership question, a lesson was drawn from an old mistake once made by the IWW, which at one time required that a leader holding an official post in the IWW had to return to the ranks after a single term in office. A leader could not be re-elected. This practice was conceived as a safeguard against bureaucratism. What it led to, in fact, was the disruption of stability and continuity in leadership. . . .” (p. 8)

The method we use, in contrast to the above, is to judge all candidates for leadership equally, upon their abilities. There has been no lack of debate on this question in our movement. Returning again to the factional struggle of 1939-40, we see that this was one of the points raised by the Shachtman-Abern group. They proclaimed that Cannon, the current national secretary of the SWP, should be removed—that he had simply held the position for too long. Trotsky answered as follows:

“From the ranks of the opposition one begins to hear more frequently: ‘The Russian question isn't of any decisive importance in and of itself; the most important task is to change the party regime.’ Change in regime, it is necessary to understand, means a change in leadership, or more precisely, the elimination of Cannon and his close collaborators from directing posts. These clamorous voices demonstrate that the tendency towards a struggle against ‘Cannon's faction’ preceded that ‘concreteness of events’ to which Shachtman and others refer in explaining their change of position. At the same time these voices remind us of a whole series of past oppositional groups who took up a struggle on different occasions; and who, when the principled basis began to crumble under their feet, shifted to the so-called ‘organizational question’—the case was identical with Molinier, Sneevliet, Vereecken and many others. As disagreeable as these precedents may appear, it is impossible to pass over them.”

Now all of this is not to imply that our organization becomes monolithic and sterile. We put a high priority on developing and integrating new leadership. We do this because one of our main tasks in building toward a revolution is to train our ever-growing ranks in the skills that will be needed to lead the workers in a struggle for power. Still, we never get so absorbed in our objective that we forget our methods. That is, in advancing people to positions of leadership we keep in mind that *it is the person that makes the position*. The mere advancement of

a comrade does not make that comrade a leader; the process happens in just the opposite way. The conception that it is a leadership position that makes that person a leader really substitutes organizational fiddling for the process of developing through experience. You can paste paper wings on a caterpillar, and you may be able to fool some unperceptive passer-by into thinking it is a butterfly. But when, through the inevitable unfolding of real events, a gust of wind blows the caterpillar off its branch, its paper wings will be shown for the useless things that they are. There is no substitute for patient evolution—and so it goes with developing leaders.

A clear explanation of this point is found in what may seem an unlikely place: *Teamster Rebellion*, by Farrell Dobbs. He approaches the question in this way:

“. . . In their approach to this problem the comrades made a distinction between formal and actual leadership.

“Holding an official post does not automatically make one a leader. A semblance of leadership authority can be maintained for a time through bureaucratic abuse of official powers, but in the long run one must actually meet the responsibilities of a given post or a leadership void will be created. In the latter case someone else can step into the void and begin to exercise actual leadership authority without necessarily holding an official post. A contradictory situation develops, the outcome of which has to be determined by the course of events. In the end the more competent leader, as proven through performance, can wind up with the official authority as well.”

While Dobbs in this passage is referring to the leadership of a trade union, the explanation is meant to apply also to the revolutionary party. And in fact it could not be otherwise since the party, as an instrument of struggle for

the working class is in that sense similar to a trade union, while being at the same time far more complex and advanced.

* * *

In conclusion it should be obvious that in this contribution I was not attempting to discuss all aspects of norms and leadership. I set out instead to emphasize several particular points which are less directly treated in much of our movement's literature on the subject. Much of the material printed about our norms answers the more common assertion that a democratic centralist organization is, by nature, monolithic. These writings then proceed to indicate, by historical example, situations in which our norms were changed. I, by contrast, emphasized the other end of the spectrum. The argument I was dealing with—one that comes up less often but one that is no less serious—is that since we are not monolithic our norms can be taken lightly. To this I attempted to show how our norms are only changed for good cause.

The problem associated with leadership which is most often discussed is the one of integrating newer layers—truly an important objective in our movement. Yet again I was addressing myself to the problem encountered less frequently; that of advancing individuals artificially.

In each of these points I made an attempt to draw from the lessons and experience of our movement. It can be said that the most ambitious goal of this contribution would be to interest comrades in reading further on the subject—remembering at all times to tie their reading into their day-to-day experience.

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