

## YSA PUBLICATIONS

(The following are excerpts of the Fall Perspectives for Building the YSA report presented by Andy Rose to the YSA National Committee Plenum in Oberlin, Ohio on August 13, 1972.)

The main question I want to take up in this report is how the independence of the YSA can best be reflected in our publications. At the June plenum we discussed the importance of making the YSA more visible, with more of a "public face." As Geoff Mirelowitz pointed out in the Political Report,

"Everything we do this fall with the election campaign and all our other work has to be organized with the thought in mind of how we are going to bring these campaign supporters closer to the YSA and recruit them to the YSA....

"As part of this more aggressive approach we want to take, it's important that we look again at all our organizational norms with an eye toward eliminating any unnecessary barriers that might be keeping people from joining the YSA."

From that viewpoint we examined a number of different aspects of YSA functioning to see if any changes should be made. We looked again at how the YSA operates on the campuses and in the high schools, how we can make ourselves an integral part of the student movement. We looked at the basis on which we recruit people to the YSA, and the level of commitment and activity required to be in the YSA. And, as I've mentioned in talking about the convention, one of the main projections we made was to emphasize the YSA more in the big fall campaign effort.

But going beyond the specific projections for the fall, that discussion led us to reexamine the kind of organization we're trying to build--the nature of the YSA as an independent youth organization, how it is different from the revolutionary party, and how the two are related. The YSA is organizationally independent of the Socialist Workers Party. We consider the Socialist Workers Party to be the revolutionary vanguard party in this country. We look to the SWP for political leadership, but we arrive at our own political decisions at our own conventions and plenums. We sell the press of the SWP, we support its election campaigns, and we collaborate closely with it in many

areas of work. But at the same time we carry out many separate activities, in our own name.

We're building the YSA as an independent youth organization because we think that this is the type of organization that can best win the leadership of the radical youth in the spheres of both ideology and action, and that can best attract radicalizing young people to Trotskyism. The correctness of this perspective has been borne out over the last twelve years since the YSA was founded. We can say with certainty and pride that the growth of the revolutionary socialist movement in numbers and in political influence has been greatly facilitated because of the YSA.

The relationship between the YSA and the SWP is a unique and complex one, and it is continually evolving. It will be different at different times in our development.

We think that--particularly at the present time, because of the small size of the YSA and the SWP and the magnitude of the tasks facing us--there can be a tendency to fall into organizational measures that blur the distinction between the two groups, that make it look as though the YSA is not as independent as it really is. Sometimes it appears more efficient to combine the functioning of the two organizations, rather than to keep them separate. Lew Jones, in his greetings to our June plenum, mentioned one such practice: the fact that in nearly every city where there is both an SWP branch and a YSA local, they put out a combined weekly newsletter. On the surface that simply seems efficient--after all, some of the same people belong to both, if you put out two city letters you would have to put a lot of the same information in them, and send some people two letters, which would cost more in postage.

But imagine how it looks to a new person who has just joined the YSA. The first thing they get in the mail after they join is a letter telling them about when the SWP meeting and other SWP activities take place. They may very well get the feeling that rather than joining the YSA they've joined one big Trotskyist organization. Some of these city letters even say "SWP/YSA City Letter" across the top. But nobody ever joins the "SWP/YSA"! There isn't any such organization.

That's what our opponents always try to label us. They always attack the "SWP/YSA," trying to pretend there aren't really two organizations.

In fact, falling into any unnecessary practices that tend to blur the independence of the YSA, to make the YSA look like the youth arm, or auxiliary of the SWP, can hurt us. Because one important difference between the SWP and the YSA, which we discussed at the June plenum, is the way we recruit people. The YSA is much more open about recruitment--we are open to taking in all sorts of people that may not be ready to make the greater commitment of joining the SWP. And if it looks like by joining

the YSA you practically are joining the SWP, that can make the criteria for joining the YSA appear greater than we want them to be. That will hurt recruitment to the YSA, which in the long run will also hurt recruitment to the SWP.

Some of these practices, like the joint city letters, we can easily eliminate simply by being conscious of them. And we think there should be separate YSA city letters. Others reflect the reality of our strength right now and are unavoidable.

The main area we have looked at to see whether some adjustments are necessary to clarify the independence of the YSA is in our publications.

The existence of an independent Young Socialist newspaper was key to the formation of the YSA. The Young Socialist began publication in October, 1957, as a four-page monthly paper. It was put out by a group of young people from various political tendencies--including the dissolved CP youth group, the left wing of the Young Socialist League (Shachtmanites), SWP youth, and supporters of the National Guardian--as well as independent socialist youth. This was the period of "regroupment" of socialist forces over the crisis in the Communist Party, following the Khrushchev revelations and the Hungarian revolution. In the first days of the YS, the paper played a similar role to that played by Iskra in the life of the early Bolshevik party. That is, it served as a pole of attraction for scattered groups of young socialists. The political discussions that took place among the people putting out the paper, and in the socialist discussion clubs that sprung up around it, led to eventual clarity and agreement on a political program--the first prerequisite for a revolutionary organization. The organizational basis for the formation of a socialist youth group came from the "Young Socialist Supporter Clubs," and in April, 1960, the YSA was founded. The YS continued as the monthly newspaper of the YSA from its founding to October, 1964.

The early YS covered, analyzed, and was a tool for the YSA to intervene in the developing radicalization--the struggles in the South against segregation; the Woolworth boycotts, which marked the beginning of the student movement in the North; campaigns against the vestiges of McCarthyism; defense of the Cuban revolution; Malcolm X and the rise of Black nationalism.

In 1964 the format of the YS was changed from a monthly newspaper to a bi-monthly magazine. It was felt that as a monthly the YS couldn't really be a "news"-paper, and that as a magazine it would be able to carry more longer, analytical articles. The YS of that period carried crucial, pace-setting articles as the tempo of the radicalization increased--the beginning of the mass antiwar movement, and the rise of Black Power.

In 1967 the format was again changed, this time to a monthly magazine. An editorial in the May, 1967, YS explaining the change said that the monthly YS was intended to carry more about discussions and debates within the radical movement, a wider variety of features on music, art, political satire, history, etc., and more coverage of the activities of the YSA.

All these changes in the form of the YS corresponded to new stages in the growth and development of the YSA, and were tailored as nearly as possible to meet the needs of the YSA in each period.

The most radical shift came at the beginning of 1970. An experiment was undertaken with the reorganization of all of our movement's publications. The old YS and bi-monthly International Socialist Review were both discontinued, and a new monthly magazine and The YS Organizer were launched.

The new magazine was intended to be a popular socialist monthly, with some theoretical articles and some material similar to that in the YS. It was to be a joint publication of the YSA and SWP, which would both provide staff and financing for it. The magazine was to be the publication that would most serve as a public face for the YSA.

The Organizer was described as bearing the same relation to the YSA that New Left Notes did to SDS, that is, it was to be a publication by and for YSAers, but available to interested non-members. It was to carry news of YSA activities, reports on the general radical movement, as well as organizational material from the YSA National Office.

After nearly two and a half years of experience with these publications, I think we have to conclude that the experiment did not work out quite as it was planned. The ISR has clearly taken on the function of the party's theoretical journal. It's bigger, much more attractive, and better suits our needs than the old ISR--but it's clearly not a YSA publication, even though some articles are written by YSAers. It can't serve as the main vehicle for projecting the YSA to the public.

The Organizer, on the other hand, while it is formally the YSA's independent publication, is hardly circulated at all outside the YSA, and in fact even many YSAers don't read it.

In essence then, for the last two and a half years the YSA has not had any independent public voice, any publication of our own that speaks for the YSA and presents the YSA as an independent organization.

We began discussing this problem in the YSA-N.O. early this spring. We initially looked at the problem just within the framework of our existing publications, and we aimed at getting more material about the YSA into The Militant. By assigning a

comrade to this we made some progress. We had a few more articles about YSA activities, and features like the interview with the comrade from the radical collective in Bloomington who joined the YSA, and polemical articles like the open letter from the YSA to the YWLL convention.

It is the opinion of the NEC that the logical thrust of our discussions at the June plenum about the prospects and tasks facing the YSA, and our discussions about the character of the YSA as an independent youth organization, is toward the launching, or more accurately the reestablishment, of a totally independent, public publication of the Young Socialist Alliance. That is what we are proposing to the plenum.

Why don't we simply continue the process of expanding the public face of the YSA in The Militant? Unquestionably we could go much further in that direction, even to the point of perhaps having a whole separate section of The Militant that is completely edited by and under the control of the YSA. And it's also true that The Militant would have to continue to cover a lot of the activity of the student movement and that an independent YSA publication would have to cover and take a stand on some of the general political questions that are dealt with in The Militant, since the YSA is concerned with the entire political situation and not just with "student politics." So on the surface it seems more efficient to have a combined publication, with one staff and one business office, and with comrades only having to go out and sell one publication instead of two. That would be less work, but it would also be less independent. It would look like, and it would be, rented space in the party paper, rather than a truly independent voice of the YSA.

I think that's just a reflection of the general point I mentioned earlier--that it often seems easier to combine aspects of our functioning with the SWP. The ultimate conclusion would be to simply merge the YSA with the SWP--after all, it's more work to have a separate organization, with a whole separate apparatus; it's harder to develop and maintain two strong leaderships; it would be harder to put out two publications.

But that's only looking at the short run. We have to take a longer range view of what will best build the revolutionary movement. And just as we have decided that it's vitally important to build the YSA as a strong, independent youth organization, if we think that putting out our own publication would enable us to recruit more, to be more effective in the student movement, to build the YSA better, then we should not hesitate to go ahead even in the face of the short run difficulties.

So the question we have to look at is this: Is there a basis for the YSA to publish a paper that is different from The Militant, that is interesting, and useful in building the YSA? We think the answer is definitely "yes."

Before going on to describe concretely what we envisage as the contents and function of such a publication, I want to make a comment on the format. It clearly is beyond our resources at this time to publish a weekly YSA paper for public distribution. At this stage a weekly would simply be competing with The Militant, rather than complementing The Militant. It's not out of the question that at some time in the future, when the YSA is a much larger organization, we may need our own separate weekly paper, but that's not what we're proposing now. We propose beginning with a monthly. We also think that a newspaper, rather than magazine, format would best suit our needs, primarily because a newspaper format would enable us to run whatever combination of longer features and short news-type articles we want, while a magazine is more limited, and also because newspaper format conveys more the impression of an action publication. The utility of the monthly newspaper format will be clearer as I go into the proposed contents of the YSA publication.

The paper would first and foremost be the public voice of the YSA, telling what the YSA thinks about the issues facing young people, what course of action the YSA proposes. So it will have to carry a certain amount of general news analysis. In many cases there will be an obvious youth angle to this. For example, our coverage of the antiwar movement would primarily deal with the Student Mobilization Committee. But in no case would we view what is written in the YSA paper as simply a synopsis of the news analysis in The Militant. We assume many if not most of the people who read the YSA publication will also read The Militant, and we will always take questions up from a slightly different slant. We will have a lot to say, as the YSA, about why young people shouldn't support McGovern, about why trying to work within the Democratic Party is poison for the antiwar movement or any other movement.

Another example: If we'd had such a paper when Nixon went to Moscow, we wouldn't just have run the same type of articles as The Militant. We might have used the Moscow trip to go after the YWLL more directly. How can they support this betrayal? How can they defend it? As young people who are supposed to be antiwar fighters, can't they see how Moscow sabotaged the antiwar upsurge? We could challenge them to debate the question--even offer them space in our paper! That's how we could handle the Moscow trip. We might still do it.

And of course the YSA paper would have the most coverage and analysis of the student movement. What's the mood on campus? How can students be effective? The YSA paper could go way beyond what The Militant is able to do in this area. We could carry big feature articles on campus and high school struggles--what happened, what are the lessons, what was the role of the YSA? Such a paper could serve as an organizer of the student movement, of the vanguard of the student movement. It would expose the cutbacks, the tuition hikes, the attacks on Black and Chicano studies departments, the racist and sexist practices of the universities, the complicity with the warmakers. And more than just expose--it would point to

the way students can organize and act to fight such practices, continually educating on the need for students to link up their struggles with the working class and oppressed nationalities-- the red university strategy.

Probably many comrades are familiar with the Young Socialist, the monthly newspaper of the Canadian socialist youth. The Canadian Young Socialist is very similar to the kind of paper we're proposing for the YSA. The YS provides a good example of how such a paper can be an organizer of the student movement. This spring a special commission set up to study higher education in Ontario province came up with a report, called the Wright Report, which if implemented would have led to cutbacks in educational services and increasing the cost to students. The comrades wrote an expose of the Wright Report and printed it as a special supplement to the YS. The supplement both explained why the Wright Report was an attack on students, and how students should organize independent mass actions to fight it. Orders for the supplement began to come in from schools all over Ontario. And because of the response to this special feature on the Wright Report, the comrades were able to take the initiative in organizing a significant province-wide mass demonstration against the Wright Report proposals.

I think the situation in the high schools is even more wide open. There is no national high school radical newspaper. The YSA's paper could begin to fill that vacuum, by having the best coverage anywhere of the high school movement. Regular high school sales would be a special sales focus.

We would want to carry a lot of news of what the YSA is doing-- YSA forums and classes, YSA student government election campaigns, etc.

It's obvious that this fall a lot of the paper will be devoted to the YSA convention--what's going to happen at the convention, why people should attend, what's being done to build it, who's coming to it. We would follow closely the progress of the YSJP teams, as well as the speaking tour by YSAers. The paper will be an important piece of convention-building literature.

One thing I noticed in reading through the early issues of the YS is that they really played up the campaigns of YSA members who were running as SWP candidates. I think we should do that. To begin with, the SWP vice-presidential candidate is a national leader of the YSA, a member of the National Executive Committee. And there are many local campaigns we could feature. John Hawkins, a YSAer, is running against Shirley Chisholm. In Detroit, Barbara Fox, a 16-year-old YSA member, is running for school board, and they won't let her on the ballot because they say she's too young.

One of the most important things the paper could do this fall is help us recruit hundreds of YSJPers to the YSA. We should run

explicitly recruitment articles: articles like the interview we had with the Bloomington comrades when they joined, or an article on "Why Andrew Pulley Thinks You Should Join the YSA." Or articles that take up the typical questions people have about joining the YSA.

The paper should zero in on the major campaigns of the YSA. For example, since a witch-hunt-minded Federal judge in Florida has ruled that the state universities can refuse to recognize the YSA, because he says the YSA is violent and a "clear and present" danger to the Florida educational system, we are going to launch a big national defense effort this fall to win our right to be recognized on the campuses in Florida. The YSA paper will publicize the case, build support for it, and help organize the defense.

I think we can take the fund drive into the pages of the paper, report on it and ask readers of the paper to make contributions.

Another important side of the paper is the polemical side. The YSA paper will take on all our opponents in the youth arena and show what's wrong with their politics. We'll go after NAM, we'll go after SDS--which is experiencing a little resurgence and pretending to be a broad, anti-racist student movement; and above all we'll go after the Young Workers Liberation League, the Stalinist youth, on the trip to Moscow, on their support to McGovern, on their anti-nationalism, their anti-feminism, their phoney super-workerism. The establishment of a Stalinist youth group is one thing that's changed drastically since we dropped the old YS. At the beginning of 1970 the DuBois Clubs lay in ruins and the YWLL hadn't yet been founded. But today there's a large, growing Stalinist youth formation that's challenging the YSA for the leadership of revolutionary youth. They have a (more or less) monthly magazine in which they carry all sorts of scandalous, lying attacks on the YSA. We need our own paper to answer those attacks.

I've saved for the last what I think is one of the most exciting aspects of the new YSA publication, something that was always a hallmark of the old YS--the coverage of the international student movement. As part of an international revolutionary movement, we're in a good position to get all sorts of material American youth wouldn't be able to read anywhere else: interviews with young revolutionaries from other countries, features on the politics of the student movement around the world. Let me throw out one idea we had for an early issue of the paper: As a result of Linda Jenness's tour to Latin America, we're now in correspondence with the newly formed revolutionary socialist youth group in Argentina. Perhaps we could get them to write a story on the situation facing the student movement in Argentina.

Next I want to take up how the new YSA publication would relate to the existing publications of our movement. First, The Young Socialist Organizer.

As comrades are undoubtedly aware, we've had problems with The YS Organizer ever since it was launched, problems that basically



came down to unclarity on the nature of the publication. We think the new publication is the answer to those problems.

Even before we considered the idea of a new YSA publication, the NEC had numerous discussions about possible changes in The Organizer, trying to analyze what was wrong with it. In the course of those discussions we drew up lists of the different types of Organizer articles, the different functions they serve. And we're convinced that the bulk of what was useful and valuable in The YS Organizer could be incorporated in the new YSA paper-- although of course the material would be written quite differently.

To the extent that there is material unsuitable for the new publication--because it's too internal or for some other reason--we might have to utilize mailings, or we could experiment with putting out something like a "YSA Builder" that would not be a regular periodical but would just come out when we had material for putting one out.

So our proposal is to stop putting out The YS Orgaizer as it now exists, and to replace it with the new publication I've described.

How will the YSA paper relate to The Militant? We still see The Militant as the central publication of our movement. Comrades will still look to The Militant for week-to-week political direction, and because it is a weekly The Militant will still be our best tool for intervening in rapidly changing events. We want to see the two papers as complementary, rather than competing. To facilitate collaboration between the two in working out each week what material should go in The Militant and what in the YSA paper, we will probably have the editor of the YSA paper sit in on weekly Militant staff meetings. Even with the launching of the new YSA publication, we plan to continue working to get more coverage of the YSA into The Militant.

We expect there will be a large overlap in the readership of the two papers--we want to sell them both primarily on the campuses and in the high schools, at demonstrations and political meetings, etc.

We don't think this proposal involves any changes in the way we utilize the International Socialist Review. We will still be selling the ISR to a smaller audience, and most ISR sales will continue to be off literature tables, out of bookstores, through selective hawking at demonstrations, or as a result of discussions with people interested in our ideas, rather than from the kinds of widespread distribution we will use for the two papers.

How will we go about getting this paper out, and what will it mean for the YSA? Publishing the paper will be a big change for the functioning of the N.O.: it will become one of the central tasks of the entire National Office, and writing for it and giving political direction to the paper will be a challenge to the national leadership. We expect to strengthen the N.O. staff in

order to put out the paper. Even considering the subsidy the paper will require and the increase in staff, we think the project is financially feasible. These outlays for the paper are included in the N.O. budget figures on which the \$32,000 fund drive is based.

The NEC thinks that the launching of this new publication, if approved by this plenum, will be a major step forward for the YSA. It's a step that flows naturally from the decisions of our June plenum. The independent YSA paper is one of the best answers to the need for a greater visibility and public face for the YSA.

Moreover, as an independent publication under the control and direction of the YSA, it will be the best reflection of the public image we want the YSA to have: dynamic, action-oriented, deeply involved in the student movement in high schools and colleges all across the country, championing and leading the struggles of the oppressed for liberation, and aggressively recruiting to the revolutionary youth movement.

Our publications have gone through many transformations in the course of the YSA's development. The proposal for a new YSA paper incorporates many of the best features of the old Young Socialist at various times since it began publication 15 years ago. But in launching this publication we are really looking to the future. We're looking at the needs of the kind of organization the YSA is going to become, and at the tools we need to build that kind of organization, both in the immediate fall offensive before us and in periods of even greater expansion yet to come.