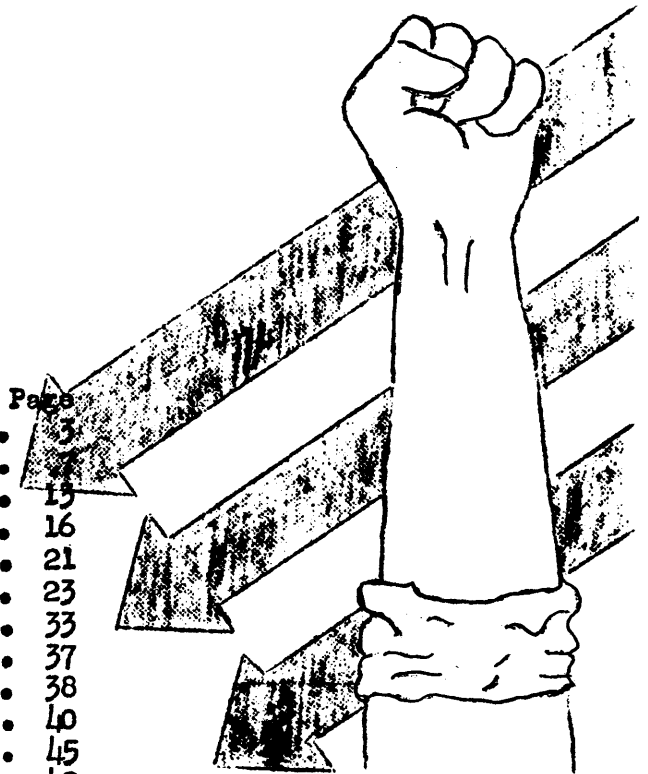


# YOUNG SOCIALIST

# REVIEW

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Information And  
Discussion Bulletin  
of  
The YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### What The YSR Is

The Young Socialist Review is the information and discussion bulletin of the Young Socialist League. The YSR is regularly prepared by the Chicago Unit of the YSL.

The aim of YSR is to constitute a forum for the expression of all points of view within the YSL and is open to all members. Contribution from non-members will be accepted if of sufficiently high interest.

Articles signed by individuals do not, of course, necessarily represent the views of the YSL; "official" material will be clearly labelled as such.

The YSR is published at least bi-monthly, or more often when there is sufficient material. So, PLEASE SEND COPY AS SOON AS SOON AS IT IS READY to 1343 E. 50th Street, Chicago 15, Illinois. Send it stencilled or typewritten.

The circulation of YSR is not restricted to YSL members although it is issued primarily for members. Members should make every effort to get copies into the hands of all other interested persons. For information write the editor of the YSL National Office at 114 E. 114th Street, New York, New York.

### This Issue

This is the 7th pre-convention issue of the YSR, and the last before the 1957 convention of the Young Socialist League. We have published seven issues, most of them bulky ones, in a period of three months. This, to our knowledge, marks a record for the pre-convention discussion of a Socialist youth organization. It presents eloquent testimony to the intensity and extensiveness of the discussion which preceded the forthcoming convention, and indicates the thoroughness of preparations for the convention. These preparations offer assurance that the decisions taken at the convention will be genuinely represent the democratically arrived at decisions of the League.

The next issue of YSR will be the first post-convention issue and will undoubtedly consist of the resolutions adopted by the convention.

For a variety of reasons, this particular issue was prepared by the YSL National Office and not by the Chicago Unit. (The NO has had the assistance of the New York Unit in this task.) This fact gives us the opportunity to praise the Chicago Unit, and YSR editor Debbie Meier, for the outstanding job they have been doing on the Review.

A note on the page numbering in this issue. Following page 32 are several concluding pages of the article beginning on page 23 which are numbered 32A, etc., and likewise with several pages following page 37. This is due to the fact that the concluding pages of the respective articles involved were stencilled after pages 33 and 38, pages which begin different articles, had been stencilled and mimeographed with those page numbers. The articles beginning on page 15, while numbered in the table of contents, do not bear numbers on the pages themselves. We trust that these defects, which result from the necessary haste with which this issue has been put out, will not create difficulties for readers.

Looking forward to a fruitful convention,

--Max Martin, Issue editor  
June 26, 1957

"page 2" of YSR VSN 3  
appears to never have been  
printed (numbering error:  
pages go 1, 3, 4, 5 etc).

This is the case in both my original  
issue and in the ISL mimeography.

-Marty

June 2013

## Some Examples of Ultra-Leftism, Sectarianism and Confusion

by Debbie Meier

The latest "theoretical" attempt by a spokesman for the LW C gives us a further understanding of the approach, methodology and attitude of another of its members and acknowledged leaders. Alas, it is no more encouraging than previous ones and represents another hide-bound, sectarian, ultra-leftist and at times plainly ignorant approach to the more serious questions which our movement faces today.

### I. On Vanguards

I can, and doubtless will have occasion to dispute with others (both members of the majority and minority) the arguments put forward by Comrades Berg and myself on the role and meaning of the vanguard party. Yet this first attempt may discourage some by its total irrelevancy and inadequacy to deal with the problems we raised. It appears to center its attack on something neither Comrade Berg nor myself said, but which we learn comrade Worth feels very strongly about—the validity of Marxism and Marxist laws. As near as I can make out what brought about this strange outburst was the following sentence in our articles: "If we will but recognize that valuable as Marxist theory is, most of it (certainly in its application) is still in the realm of theory in a field, the field of social science, that has not come anywhere near the point where it can be called a science at all, in the sense of a science with exact, verifiable laws..." (emphasis added). Perhaps this is badly worded and itself an inexact formulation—but let us at least recognize that this was not intended as a refutation of the theory of class struggle, the theory of the class nature of society, the theory regarding the need for revolutionary, conscious leadership (all of which Worth defends and all of which we clearly emphasized that we regarded as valid and important concepts) or any of the other strawmen set up by Comrade Worth and then defended by him. The position we stated was that in the sense in which the physical sciences qualified as a science—with their exact, quantitative laws, with their precise predictions verifiable by experimentation and by their consequent ability to establish a whole series of very precise laws, Marxism did not. One cannot, in other words, train, educate and school Marxists as one might train physicists and expect similar results in terms of the ability to deal with social problems. There exists a general theory of gravity, but more than that there exists a host of related laws and data which enables a scientist to predict, given a certain object under certain conditions, exactly how the law of gravity will effect the functioning and behavior of this object. Is Comrade Worth implying that the general laws of Marxism can in any way be compared to this? It is this simple truth that we were stating. The extent to which ones stresses this, the extent to which one places certain Marxist formulations in the category of scientific laws, all these are disputable, contestable and interesting. We hope that Comrade Worth will tell us sometime what aspects of Marxism he would call the basic laws of this science. It is true, comrades Berg and myself would limit them to a few important formulations of Marx and his "successors." The rest of Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism, etc. stand as important insights and theories, which like all such insights and theories of history prove more or less useful in dealing with current problems depending upon the context in which they are used, the manner in which they are interpreted and the ability of the "user" to modify, relate and place such theories into their proper relationship to his own experiences with contemporary problems. The question of to what degree "Marxism" is a science, whether it is a science or a scientific methodology, etc., these are interesting questions and worthy of attention. Unfortunately, however Comrade Worth's comments are no contribution to this and other controversies.

## II. Revisions and Capitulations of Cannonism...

In order to maintain the brevity of these remarks I shall limit myself to a few comments on Worth's attack on the Meier analysis of the SWP's relationship to the third camp view. He centers his attack on an after-thought of mine in which I compared the attitude of the SP and SWP to nationalist revolutions as they related to a third camp viewpoint toward the same. Comrade Worth, while in actual fact claiming to repudiate my comparison spends his entire energy in verifying it--albeit explaining and defending the SWP's view. Amusingly enough since writing that piece, and since reading Comrade Martin's articles, I have discovered that in many ways it was my summation of the views of the SP and of the third camp socialist which suffered from inadequacies and Comrade Martin has clarified some concepts on this question for me. Unfortunately Comrade Worth has not done the same for the views he puts forth. Because try as I will I cannot make head nor tails of his explanation.

It seems to center on some contention that it is difficult, or possibly impossible to speak of struggles for national independence at all. In fact Comrade Worth seems unsure whether or not Hungary and Poland even constitute nations! Fortunately this confusion is not shared by either the Poles or Hungarians. Instead of limiting himself to the irrelevant (in terms of this question) but true statement that national and social revolutions, at least in our epoch, are never purely one or the other, and that national revolutions are related to social struggles, he tries instead to repudiate the existence of such nationalism.

For example where, as in India, there existed a native bourgeoisie the struggle against imperialism was able to take place within the context of bourgeois society--although there were elements of social struggle amidst the nationalist camp. In Algeria where there exists virtually no native bourgeoisie the social struggle has played a very important role and the national and social revolutions are occurring simultaneously. In Hungary the two were again intertwined and inseparable. The same can be said, to one degree or another, of all such struggles against foreign oppression in the Middle East, South America, the Far East, etc. What we said in India, Algeria, Guatemala, Hungary and Egypt is that the struggle against class exploitation and the struggle for socialism and democracy is complicated by imperialist foreign oppression and that the struggle against this foreign oppression serves both to weaken the two reactionary war blocs, to strengthen the forces of social progress and in the long run to strengthen the potential forces of the third camp. Therefore we would have no equivocation about supporting a bourgeois nationalist revolution in Hungary (although history precludes such a phenomenon). Comrade Worth who, we assume, supports or supported (however critically) such struggles for national independence in other parts of the world where the working class forces did not predominate, denounces such a policy in the case of the Stalinist and Russian dominated nations of Eastern Europe. Why? Because, apparently, he considers Stalinism a more progressive regime than capitalism--whether it be capitalist dictatorships or even bourgeois democracy. Comrade Worth however, as he will readily admit, has never been much impressed with or in favor of the concept of the third camp. It is no wonder.

## III. On Democracy, Reuther and Trade Union Tactics.

The subject of Reuther seems to be a major problem for the LMC--which has inherited this bugaboo from the SWP which inherited it as a result of a particular line and policy followed by the SWP within the UAW during World War II during the leadership of R.J. Thomas and the Stalinists. The LMC has latched on to the SWP at one of its weakest links.

While it may surprise some newer members, let's get rid of certain easy misconceptions about this subject which could confuse some and which possibility the LWC and the SWP play upon. Some new members may well look horrified when they are told that the YSL and ISL majorities support the Reuther caucus despite the fact that Reuther is for the Democratic Party, opposed at present to the formation of a labor party, a supporter--critically--of American imperialism, anti-socialist, a bureaucrat with a tendency to use bureaucratic practices, and no longer the militant he once was! Let us assure these new members that in actual fact, even if the average SWPer and LWC'er may themselves not know it, this is quite beside the point and not necessarily involved in the dispute. The SWP, for example, supported the old-pre-Reuther R.J. Thomas-Stalinist leadership of the UAW despite the fact that this leadership was pro-Democratic and pro-FDR, led the most vigorous fight for the no-strike pledge, was in favor of strictly enforcing this disastrous pledge, engaged in (or attempted to) a witchhunt against anti-war radicals, and was willing to sell out every militant struggle for Negro rights, wage inequities, contract demands in the interest of the "war effort" and "national unity." While the P-ISL attacked this policy of the SWP we incidentally never claimed this proved that they had abandoned Marxism, class politics, et al.

The question posed at that time and at the present--and the question which is therefore really in dispute is--what forces in the union movement does Reuther represent today, what alternative exists given the context of today's climate through what means are we best able to pose the problems which labor faces and to maintain union democracy, what are the key issues facing labor at this time and how does the Reuther leadership stand in relationship to these issues? These are the type of questions we asked during and after World War II and which led us to support the Reuther caucus which emerged as the most militant, active and conscious trade union tendency on the American scene (see Widick and Howe's excellent "The UAW and Walter Reuther" which covers this period). In our opinion Reuther and his caucus still represent more or less the best type of leadership which is possible today, and the present abortive fight against this leadership leads into blind alleys, demagogery, and side-tracks the union militant from the important issues. That Worth doesn't agree is not surprising. His article indicates that he doesn't know anything about the development of the UAW and the Reuther caucus and understands even less about the present developments and issues facing American labor--this is more surprising. A struggle for an alternative leadership we say--and this is what Worth should discuss--will not advance the general consciousness and level of the trade union movement. Reuther maintains the support of the union militants and the UAW continues to be the most aggressive and socially conscious union despite the crisis in the auto industry (which while causing great rank-and-file dissatisfaction and frustration will not at the moment lead to a mass demand for a socialist solution to this capitalist crisis because he and his caucus react to the pressures and drives of the membership, incorporate into their own program the best demands of their opponents and because they do a relatively good job of pushing for these contract demands (albeit not the type of job which a socialist leadership would do and which would be possible in another period--when incidentally the Reuther leadership would probably be more militant also). The Reuther "machine" has maintained most of the vital democratic traditions and policies of the UAW in a period when they were entirely stifled in almost every other union (compare the proceedings of a UAW convention to U.S.A., etc., compare the rights of factions and caucuses within the UAW, etc to other unions and the use to which they are put). This is not merely a tribute to the man Reuther, nor even to the constant pressure put upon him by the left wing of his own caucus, but also to the type of union he leads.

Worth denies all of this and argues that Reuther is in fact, rather than a representative of the more progressive wing of the labor movement, the most dangerous enemy of progressive unionists—not tomorrow, but, can you believe it—today. More dangerous than Beck? Absolutely, says Worth, in so many words. Why? Because Beck, who is merely the strongest, most corrupt and more dictatorial (as Worth admits) example of a type of unions all too-rampant and too-accepted by the union movement today, is so obviously bad that he will fool no one! But Reuther is clever...he permits democracy, he does put forward militant-sounding contract demands, he does even lead a union which wins such demands, etc...and thus he fools the workers, and sections of the socialist movement! To some this may sound reminiscent of the SLP argument that trade unionism per se is the main enemy since the boss never fools the workers but the trade union movement does, or the arguments of the CP in the early 30's about social facsism, or to the old-stand by joke made against radicals that socialists should welcome reaction because "the worser the better." To the SLP and many other left sectarians then the real problem is that Reuther represents a form of social democracy—and it is far easier for some of them to support old-fashioned corrupt union bosses, strong-armed dictatorial union leaders, out-right pro-capitalists and Stalinists (all of whom the SLP has on occasion supported within the union movement\* than to support a perfidious social democrat! The more detailed aspects of this question have been excellently dealt with by Comrade Taylor in an earlier YSR. Comrade Worth would do well to read it, and deal with it....

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## DEMOCRACY AND DISCIPLINE IN THE YSL

by Debbie Meier

The question of the meaning of the YSL's democracy and discipline provisions, and the proper relationship between minority and majority rights is an important one. It becomes especially important in view of the LWC's recent attempts at interpreting these sections of the Constitution, and the majority's attempt to interpret them in terms of implementation motions aimed at the post-convention period.

### I. YSL CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY AND DISCIPLINE

Let us briefly examine the previously accepted concept of YSL discipline and democracy. The position of the organization is briefly this:

1. That no member nor any subdivision of the YSL shall have the right to act contrary to the policies of the YSL. This discipline as you can see is of a negative character. It does not state that every member is obliged to implement the policy of the organization (i.e., the majority position). Thus while the YSL has the right to prevent a member from campaigning for the Democratic Party or causing against the YSL position in an outside arena, the YSL does not have the right to prevent said individual from abstaining on any activity, from refusing to participate in the YSL's electoral activity, or refusing to enter into a suggested arena.

The precedents for this are many.

Example No. 1. The NAC some time ago adopted a position with regard to the SDA in which it expressed its opposition to the "split" tendency in the SDA and urged them not to carry their position to this end. There were individuals within the YSL and on the NAC who disagreed with this policy and advice. However, none questioned the right of the organization to prevent its members in SDA from acting contrary to such a policy, that is, pursuing a policy of urging a split in SDA. Those who disagreed might simply refrain from participating in the situation at all, a right guaranteed them and one which would be respected.

Example No. 2. To take a local situation. Some time ago a new member of the YSL told the unit that he had been approached by a "fraternal benefit" veteran's organization of his previous Army regiment and asked to join. He wondered whether or not it would be permissible to join. After inquiring about the nature of the group, the YSL unit decided that it did not fall under its jurisdiction and that the individual should decide on his own. No one in the unit would have denied the right of the unit nor discouraged this member from recognizing the right of the YSL to tell him not to join this organization if they had felt that it was a political organization which would engage in activities of a reactionary character.

In essence a general recognition of this right is elementary and fundamental for the functioning of any socialist organization. The organization may decide that in certain areas it does not choose to implement this right. At the time of our founding convention we de-



clared beforehand our intention of ignoring this provision insofar as it related to conscientious objection, giving to CO's equal rights to carry out and act upon their convictions even if the organization itself did not hold that point of view. Similarly a unit, the NAC or the convention can certainly decide that in a particular case it is not necessary for minority members to abstain from pressing their views, i.e., implementing them in outside arenas, or giving permission to members to act contrary to the policies of the organization.

All members therefore are obliged (1) to make an effort to understand the policies of the YSL and (2) insofar as they feel it important to act contrary to these views, to raise the question in their local units, with the NAC, the NEC or the convention depending on the type of issue before taking such action and getting the membership's permission for such activity.

2. No member or subdivision of the League shall have the right to express his views contrary to those of the League without differentiating himself from the organization. Thus in this category is covered those myriad of instances in which an individual disagrees with the majority's position and in which he wished to defend, argue for or explain his position both within and without the organization. Since the YSL discussion is always open there is of course no crucial difference or distinction between "within" and "without" the organization. The intention here is not to enable minority members to implement their position. It is to enable them to explain, defend and argue for their minority views. Thus, for example, to take our SDA case: if a member of the YSL disagreed with our SDA position, while he could not push for a "split" in SDA he could if asked explain that his position differed from the organization. But in any case the purpose of putting forth his minority views would not be, in this example, in order to convince other SDAers to act contrary to the manner in which the YSL suggested. Nor would it be in order to get other YSLers to act in such a contrary manner. The purpose here would be to clarify the fact that different views exist within the YSL, and to explain the basis for his or her own views in order to be honest with one conscience and in order to lay the basis for a change in the YSL's position, as well as to lay the basis for explaining and drawing the lessons afterward. It is NOT done in order to prevent, hinder, sabotage, delay, embarrass or in any way impede the YSL in trying to carry out its democratically arrived at decisions.

Now the line between action and expression of differences is not always simple to determine. If in the struggle for Negro rights, a member of the YSL argues for the position that we should not participate in any broad Negro organizations since they were petty-bourgeois, and if he were over ruled by the majority of the organization on this question, what are the rights of the member and what avenues of expression would then be open? Certainly he could continue to argue for his views in our discussion organs, certainly if interestingly written his views would not be excluded from Challenge, nor would he be excluded from publishing his own articles, documents, etc. on the question for distribution primarily to units and members. Certainly he would not be prohibited from telling others, or explaining to others - members and non-members - his views. Now let us

assume that YSLers were active in a local NAACP chapter as loyal, active participants. Would it still be within the democratic rights for such a member to hand out a leaflet attacking the NAACP as a bourgeois organization outside of NAACP meetings, although, of course, differentiating himself from the majority of the YSL and making absolutely clear that he spoke only as an individual. (In such a situation it would be far more preferable if he did not differentiate himself from the YSL and never mention the relationship between himself and the YSL at all !!) I think there is no one who would claim that the passing out of that leaflet is simply the expression

of a viewpoint legitimized by our discipline and democracy provisions. It is clearly not that, it is clearly as much of an action as a socialist could possibly engage in for implementing the position held by this particular member.

Again, as in all questions of judgements which constitutes the major capital of a healthy socialist organization and the major criteria for choosing its leaders, its spokesman, etc., there are questions which cannot be spelled out in fine print thereby satisfying everyone with a detailed formula for separating the permissible from the impermissible. Responsible members have a simple way of determining these matters - raising them with local and national committees. If such committees decide the question in a way the member of the unit considers unfair the procedure would be then either to appeal to the next convention or to ask for a special convention or in the last resort a national referendum. Otherwise, if not vital, to bow to an unwise decision.

Comrade Faith, I think partially correct, reminds us that we have leaned over backwards in this respect: that the majority is not obliged once having answered the political content of any minority members or factions views to continue to debate every nuance, twist and ramification of this view if they felt (1) that the original exchange adequately disposed of the fundamentals of the question and (2) that most members had already decided where they stood on the basic issues and no longer were interested in the details of the minority's views. Comrade Faith is perhaps correct in reminding all of us that we might otherwise tie ourselves up in knots out of a misguided sense of fairness and responsibility every time a minority springs into existence. After all if 10 members of the YSL should tomorrow decide that the U.S. is a form of feudalism, the leadership, after explaining what they considered to be the fallacy and inaccuracy of this approach, is hardly obliged to spend its major energy debating the nuances, twists and details. But the EWC members say, you are comparing our views to such a ridiculous viewpoint? To some extent, yes, and apparently Comrade Faith has found the minority's overall views transparently and obviously unreal, and foolish and adequately answered months ago. After all, she would say, we are democratically obliged to act as though all disagreements were legitimate, serious, sane or important. All we are obliged to do is to provide a completely free and democratic avenue for the expression of all views, and morally obliged to try and deal with the more important political issues raised.

Democracy and discipline provisions constitute a guide to units, members and national committees. Obviously the rigidity with which they are applied depends on the circumstances, individuals, etc. For example with a new member, one is frequently, and correctly so, more lenient; with a leader, one must have a different attitude, since a leader should know better and should set an example to younger and less experienced comrades. Second, because insofar as his activities are identified with the organization they reflect, for good or bad, on the organization in its public presentation and reputation. Similarly, one obviously decides whether or not a certain issue shall be exempted from this criteria due to its importance or unimportance, or one may decide that certain individuals have acted in the best of faith but under a misunderstanding. Similarly, one may decide not to expell or suspend a member or to censure him, all unpleasant and awkward tasks, because the particular individual can be educated, or perhaps the individual is likely to resign anyway since this act represents part of the impending break with the YSL.

## II. THE LWC'S VIEWS AND ACTIONS

Now how does all of this relate to the present discussion. It relates in two ways. First, to the type of activity certain individuals and sections of the LWC have behaved in the past period. Second, to their defense of these actions and their related assurances that the convention will not alter these actions because they plan to continue pressing their views in the same manner (if not intensity) afterwards since they consider the manner in which they have acted as entirely responsible, loyal and legitimate, and any implication to the contrary as bureaucratic, undemocratic, evasive, totalitarian, monolithic, Leninist, etc.

1. In this category I would consider the motion made in Chicago for the Chicago YSL to refuse to participate in a Joint May Day Forum with the SP unless the united committee would invite the SWP to participate. The unit voted to suggest such an invitation but voted against the provision that we otherwise decline sponsorship. While a member of the LWC is certainly within his rights to boycott, to abstain from helping or implementing such a joint May Day, or to point out the disastrous consequences of sponsoring it without an invitation to the SWP, it would be impermissible for the YSL to refuse participation because the SWP was not invited. Why? Because every member of the Chicago unit understood the meaning of the unity resolution passed by the NEC and understood that the YSL units were now under obligation to press and aid our unity proposal. Now if the only argument in defense of the LWC was that they did not consider the NEC had a right to take such a position I would be astounded, surprised and confused, but not so disturbed. It is when members of the LWC imply that even should the convention adopt the NAC Draft Unity Resolution substantially as it is, and so forth, they would still feel it permissible to present such a motion and attempt to get it carried out and thereby attempt to put the Chicago unit in a position of hindering, sabotaging and acting in general contrary to the aims, policies and goals of the organization.

2. Tim Wohlforth's recent letter to Muste and his acceptance of a position on the National Committee on the American Forum is a similar step. If Tim were a loyal member he might have written Muste a letter along the following lines: "Dear Comrade Muste; As a member of the YSL and the LWC who disagrees with the position of the YSL, and as one aware during my recent travels of the attacks and difficulties which the AFSE has run into, I wish to express to you my approval and sympathy for the task you have set for yourself and the AFSE. I hope to get the YSL to alter its position on this question. Until that time I cannot, of course, join or offer myself as a member of your national committee in order to indicate the support of myself and my co-thinkers in the YSL. But I can, of course, extend to you my best wishes for your efforts and hopes that if there is anything I can do to help the AFSE without taking such political responsibility for the Forum, that you will let me know. Fraternally, Tim Wohlforth, member of the YSL, and secretary of the LWC, YSL." But Tim Wohlforth's move, done incidentally in the name of the LWC, and understood by Muste in such terms, and Shane Mage's similar offer, constitutes a different path, and one very much in contrast to the type of precedents set at an earlier time. To join the national committee of what the YSL national action committee has called an organization is not after all merely the expression of an opinion.

3. While the YSL can have no objection to our raising our differences of opinion within the arenas, forums, discussions, etc, now going on throughout the U.S., the YSL can not function as two separate organizations. Obviously if the YSL functions in these arenas as two completely separate and hostile groups, one presenting and defending the YSL's position and the other attacking the YSL's point of view and the YSL in the most strident and vehement manner, this would be impermissible. That is, from what we understand, the type of situation that exists in Berkeley where the national minority spends a considerable portion of its time in the local Forums attacking the YSL as capitulating, witchhunters, etc. This is not merely an expression of opinion made in order to attempt to alter the organization's position and to aid in the healthy development and relationship between the national and local organizations and other organizations and arenas. Rather it can in no way aid in the internal YSL discussion and it can only result in the alienating others from the YSL either because they believe the LWC or because they don't, but do not understand why they should join or cooperate with an organization which functions in such a strange manner.

### III. HOW TO CLARIFY THIS SITUATION

What do we propose? First of all, we propose to clarify at the coming convention what we always understood, from the founding convention up until only yesterday. Following that we hope that no member or individual shall be under any misconception as to what will follow from any flagrant breach of such provisions.

This is not an attempt to hinder discussion. The majority has not only given the minority its factional rights, not only lived up to every conceivable democratic obligation - access to Challenge, numerous YSRs, time for discussion in every local unit, etc., etc., but it has taken the trouble to write at the moment somewhere near 40 articles which deal exhaustively with every single question raised by the minority on a serious political level. That our arguments have not convinced all the members of the LWC, that some still consider some of Shane's or Tim's or Scott's arguments as valid, unassailable, brilliant or the like, is not through our irresponsibility or our failure to attempt to deal with them on a political level. While one may argue that they have been presenting silly, or devious, or childish, or inconsequential ideas in some respects, we did feel under the obligation to examine all their ideas as best as we could. But we insist also upon the rights of the majority, paramount of them being that they have the advantage, denied the minority, not only of being able to call themselves the majority but of implementing positions, and this does not mean that it must fight one section of the membership in exactly the same manner as it would another completely different and alien organization in order to implement its policy. The YSL cannot become two separate organizations - as if there were a YSL-majority organization and a YSL-minority or LWC-organization, both with equal privileges, rights, obligations, areas of activity, etc. That is what we have tended to become in this pre-convention period. The question which the membership (see Faith's article) has asked is -- will this continue, and can it be prevented?

We address ourselves sincerely to those members in the LWC who, whatever our differences, really do wish to build the YSL, i.e. a Third Camp socialist tendency, and who do not wish simply to destroy it. There are some, we are frank to admit, whom we no longer believe have such good intentions toward us. But while our attitude therefore differs depending upon the sincerity we attach to such declarations of loyalty, let me state that I for one will press at the Convention for the adoption of a clarified discipline and democracy motion along with a convention endorsed mandate to local units and the NA C for the rigorous enforcement of our unity perspective, and, relating to it, of responsibility in our relations with other socialist organizations. In such enforcement, I repeat, I am not proposing that our "feelings" as to the sincerity or inner loyalty be the criteria - but that the established willingness to follow elementary democratic procedures as spelled out in our Constitution be the test. I favor holding no member or unit responsible for pre-Convention actions, but using as our criteria the actions taken after the Convention.

THE ISL IN FLIGHT: A LOOK AT THE ELECTORAL QUESTION

By Tim Wohlforth

The current issue of the YSR (Vol. 5, No. 2, June 15) includes a long article by Martin filled, among other things, with indignation at the left wing for accusing the right wing of "systematic political adaptation to the social democracy." Martin maintains that in reality the ISL has not changed its views particularly of late, and that it is the left wing that has been breaking with the traditional views of Shachtmanism. Exactly how this fits in with the fact that our view on this subject is also held by one of the founders of the WP-ISL, Hal Dreyer, Martin does not explain.

It must be stated at the outset, however, that it really makes very little difference whether the present liquidation into the social democracy is a current phenomenon or whether, as Martin maintains, it is a component part of the ISL's past traditions. What is important is the politics involved in the current move of the right wing. Still in all, there is something of political interest in what Martin maintains and it might be well to explore this question a little further in relationship to another topic — the question of socialist electoral policy.

The coming ISL convention is faced with a resolution on electoral action submitted by the PC majority which even Martin must admit is a fundamental revision of past ISL policy. However this resolution does have a certain continuity with certain aspects of past ISL policy, and in fact it is simply a logical conclusion of a particular direction of political movement. For instance the resolution mentions such groups as the "PAC, COPE, Liberal Party based upon organized workers; and the ADA among professionals and liberals" as being not "barriers to socialist ideas but vehicles for the promulgation of democratic ideals and demands." Thus the ISL sees liberal and labor front groups, whose sole real function is to rally "left" votes for the Democratic Party, not as any obstacle to socialist development and to independent class politics. Rather it urges socialists to join them "as loyal supporters". This is simply the old position of the ISL and it puts the socialist in an impossible position if he wishes — as the ISL in the past wished — to oppose bourgeois politics. Exactly how one is to remain a "loyal" supporter of an organization whose main function is to rally support for bourgeois candidates when one opposes such candidates is difficult indeed to figure out.

A few years ago Shachtman attempted to "solve" this problem by suggesting that the ISL support labor candidates running in Democratic Party primaries. The question centered around the candidacy of Willoughby Abner in the Chicago Democratic Party primary. This would make it easier to be a loyal member of a PAC or COPE. However it raised another difficult question. Suppose the candidate you backed actually won in the primary contest. Then one would either have to support a Democratic Party candidate in an election or be put in the absurd position of telling the workers that now, after being successful, they must refrain from voting for this candidate. When I first came around to the YSL this issue was being hotly debated and as I recall the youth, at least, rejected this approach. Therefore Shachtman had to wait for a more auspicious time to somehow get his new view of electoral action across to his own membership.

The ISL Lines up with the SDF

This time Shachtman does not intend to propose any halfway measure. The new resolution states clearly: "Except under unusual circumstances which cannot be foreseen at this time, it would be a mistake for socialists to enter their own candidates in the elections." Not only should socialists not run their own candidates: "Socialists must not place themselves in the position of campaigning among the workers to reject the advise of their unions in the midst of a political campaign or to call upon them not to vote for or to vote against the candidates endorsed by the unions -- even though they are bourgeois candidates whom we oppose." The position here is clear. It is a position similar to that held traditionally by the SDF and which has recently been adopted by the united SP-SDF and by the CP. It is one in reality which means support of the Democratic Party. For if you do not urge the workers to vote socialist; if you exclude a negative campaign urging them simply not to vote; and if you exclude a campaign urging them to vote Republican; then in reality you are left with only the Democrats.

The basic line of reasoning behind this new resolution is not new to the radical movement. With all the claims of the right wing to be engaged in new and creative politics (this is what they say at the moments when they are not claiming to have never changed their politics at all) this particular conception and motivation for electoral action is frankly old hat. It is the point of view of the old guard in the SP which in the middle of the Thirties split from the Socialist Party. At that time this old guard claimed that the SP's policies of running its own candidates isolated it from the labor movement which was supporting Roosevelt. Socialists pointed out then (and it still holds) that the SDF was simply abandoning socialism in its search for respectability, not with the rank and file workers, but with the union bureaucrats who were tied to FDR. This analysis remained correct, and the SDF lost all influence on the American scene except in the ranks of the bureaucrats of the ILGWU. It has since adopted the politics of the State Department on all questions and has become an old men's club of retired labor bureaucrats.

The reasoning behind the present ISL line is identical with the reasoning of the SDF. It hopes to win support for the future socialist movement by kowtowing to the bureaucrats -- by not running candidates against the Democratic Party. Thus it adopts a policy which hardly a year ago the ISL itself would have characterized as "class collaborationism." Now we begin to understand the reluctance of the ISL leadership and the YSL Right Wing to criticize the CP's line on the American Question. It couldn't simply because it happened to agree with it. Further we understand its reticence in attacking the Memorandum of Understanding along these lines. It couldn't because it sided with the SDF against the SP on this question.

It should also be clear that this is not a tactical question but rather one of the most fundamental nature. In considering this question one is not considering available resources for running a decent campaign but simply the principle itself of independent class politics in opposition to the Democratic Party. In a conversation I had with Martin, he made it clear that the ISL resolution is not simply meant to treat electoral policy for a socialist sect of the size we know. On the contrary, he envisions this policy as applicable to a large socialist movement, at least the size of the SP in the Thirties. He feels that the

greatest fault of the SP in the Thirties was simply its insistence on running candidates. According to this logic, if it had adopted the point of view of the SDF, then it wouldn't have lost Reuther. The fundamental approach here is that a socialist movement should move to the right at a fast enough pace to keep up with all those who are attempting to desert the socialist movement in order to gain power in the trade union bureaucracy. That is one way to build a socialist party and as the experience of the SDF illustrates, even from an opportunistic point of view it is a failure. For once you drop your fundamental socialist identity and politics then you have no reason whatsoever for existence and you soon die.

### What Does This All Mean?

It would be difficult, I should think, for Martin to square this new resolution with his claim that the ISL and YSL Right Wing is not systematically adopting to the social democracy, a claim which comes not from left wing sources alone, but from one of the founders of the tendency, Hal Draper. The only way he can explain away this new resolution as consistent with the development of the ISL is to slander the whole past of the ISL. It may very well be that Shachtman, even before the Abner campaign, was for this policy. However, the fact that he waited until now to break this new position is illustrative of two things. In the first place it points out that the rank and file membership of the ISL was far from ready to liquidate ideologically into the social democracy, and Shachtman had to move slowly and carefully. Secondly it points out the catalytic effect of the SP-SDF entry proposal on all those latent social democratic elements in the program of Shachtmanism. As I briefly pointed out, such an attitude as the ISL has adopted towards the Liberal Party and ADA leads logically in the direction of the current resolution, but only in an atmosphere of an organizational dissolution into the SP-SDF did Shachtman have enough nerve to put forward his whole reformist position in such a blatant way.

The importance of all this to the unity question should be pretty obvious. Before unity is actually accomplished the leadership of the tendency which states so fervently that it will never change so much as one point of its program once in the SP-SDF is already basically revising its ideological baggage before it even gets on the social democratic train. It does not offer much comfort to those who view this new move as the "Leninism of today."



WE PLEAD GUILTY

The National Action Committee of the YSL, at its meeting on Wednesday, June 19, asked Tim Wohlforth if he had attended the recent convention of the Socialist Workers Party. Tim stated that he had attended the convention, but when requested to name all other YSLers who had attended, he refused to name them, feeling that it was up to the individuals involved whether they wished their attendance to be made known.

We, the undersigned, freely admit that we, too, are "guilty" of having attended the SWP convention. We ask our accusers to consider: Why did we do it? Why do we, who only a year or six months ago oriented toward the ISL as the only viable "adult" socialist organization, and who regarded the SWP with hostility, -- why do we now feel close enough to the SWP to attend its convention as visitors? The answer lies in the political direction of the ISL, and with it the YSL Right Wing. Six months or a year ago, we were under the impression that the ISL was a revolutionary socialist organization, albeit one which did not show too much life or promise. We considered the SWP also to be a revolutionary socialist organization, but one so burdened with mistaken theories and practices that to give it serious consideration was the farthest thing from our minds.

But during the past year the ISL has retreated from revolutionary politics so far and so fast, that there can be no doubt in the mind of any thinking person that the ISL has passed far beyond the line separating revolutionary socialism from reformism. Various aspects of the ISL-YSL policies in the past -- for example, their approach toward the liberal movement-- were indications of the direction in which they might move; these, however, could still be considered permissible within the framework of a revolutionary organization. But the abrupt turn toward the social democracy, towards "unity" with the SP-SDF, and corollary position on the electoral question, made it crystal clear that the ISL and its co-thinkers in the YSL were moving in a direction diametrically opposed from revolutionary socialism.

This was a shock to us. For on a whole host of questions the ISL had suddenly shifted into reverse gear and assumed positions contradictory to what the comrades in the ISL, whom we then respected and admired, had taught us: the nature and role of the social democracy as being a tendency within the socialist movement which acts as the last prop of the capitalist class in a crisis, and therefore, a tendency which is an obstacle to socialism; the conception of the UN as being a reflection of the existing relationship of forces between the world imperialist powers, with no ability to play an independent role; the conception of "democracy" as specifically "workers democracy", in no way to be confused with slipshod formulations

which might confuse workers democracy for bourgeois or parliamentary democracy; and finally, an abhorrence of arbitrary bureaucratic methods of organization.

On these questions and more, the ISL, and with it, tacitly or openly, the YSL Right Wing, has made an about face and marched directly rightwards. On nearly every important event which has occurred during the past year -- the 1956 elections, Gaza, the labor probe, the uprisings in Eastern Europe, the crisis in the American CP, to mention a few -- Labor Action, the ISL, or the YSL, have taken the opposite of a class-struggle, revolutionary socialist position. An organization cannot be expected to be right on every question, of course; but when it is wrong on every question, then perhaps one might be expected to have some doubts about the nature and direction of that organization or tendency.

Had there been the slightest doubt in our minds, at this late date, whether the ISL was still a revolutionary socialist tendency, the recently proposed ISL resolution on electoral policy which calls for virtual support to the Democratic Party, would have struck the final blow to any such illusions.

It seemed to us that on many of the current happenings of the past months, particularly on the regroupment question, the SWP was taking a more militant, more class conscious position than the ISL. Therefore, whether or not we considered the position of the SWP on the Russian question to be mistaken, and regardless of the fantastic rumors of the "bureaucratic apparatus" which ruled the SWP that we had been nourished on, we were forced to give the SWP more serious consideration than we had previously. The SWP seemed to be, whatever its limitations, the only significant organization in the country which had retained its revolutionary integrity. It seemed obvious to us that in any regroupment of revolutionary socialists the SWP was bound to play a leading role.

Consequently, when we were invited to attend the SWP convention as visitors, we welcomed the opportunity. Here was a chance to see the SWP's highest body at work -- to see what the level of the political discussion in the party was, whether real disagreements existed, how minority tendencies were dealt with, and, of the greatest interest to us, how the delegates evaluated and reacted to the regroupment situation.

On all of these points we were favorably impressed. The very fact that people from other tendencies were present at all sessions of the convention, including the election of the National Committee, was enough to dispel many of the doubts that some of us had had about the SWP. The truly democratic nature of the proceedings, the lack of domination of the discussion by the leadership, the prominence of women among the delegates, the respectful attention paid to presentations of minority viewpoints, and -- closest to our hearts --

tations of minority viewpoints, and-- closest to our hearts-- the complete absence of ridicule, laughter, slander, and vituperation by the leadership of minority views or of inexperienced speakers-- indicated to us that the SWP is a truly democratic organization, not merely on paper, but in life as well. It had been a long, long time since any of us had attended an organizational meeting where democracy was actually put into practice, and, I repeat, it made an impression on us. It turned all the ravings of the Schachtmanites about "party democracy" in their own organization and the "monolithic, bureaucratic, leadership" of the SWP into the purest hypocrisy.

The political decisions adopted by the convention were evidence of a conscious effort to break out of the isolation and the sectarian tendencies forced upon the SWP, as well as upon all other radical tendencies, by the past period of reaction and retreat. This present period of regroupment poses important choices before a political organization. Shall it withdraw from the perspective of a genuine regroupment of revolutionary socialists, either in the ostrich-like manner of the SLP or by the equally sectarian turning to the right and ignoring the all-important Stalinist arena, as the ISL has done? Or shall it, with programmatic integrity and organizational flexibility, face this new situation with an intention to build a revolutionary party? The SWP has chosen the latter course. Tremendous adjustments must be made to adapt to this new situation, adjustments which affect every rank and file member of the party. The convention indicated its determination to meet this test.

Another example of the determination of the SWP to break out of the isolation and sectarian aspects of the last period is the adoption by the convention of a line for a strong political offensive on "democracy": emphasizing the democratic nature of the socialism the SWP advocates, of course; emphasizing the struggle for democracy in the trade unions; and emphasizing democracy in the party itself. Needless to say, the difference between this, workers democracy, and the vague, maudlin, unspecified "democracy" that so many of our friends are muttering about these days, will be stressed.

Before describing the now-famous "youth panel", we would like to make clear our indignation at the Right Wing's treatment of this whole matter of the SWP convention. Tim has nothing to fear from any governmental committees before which he might have to appear; for at the NAC meeting June 19 he faced a long inquisition from his own comrades, which reminded him of nothing so much as the famous Army-McCarthy hearings. "Did you or did you not attend the SWP convention?" he was asked. "Name those members of the YSL who attended." "Tell us what was discussed on the youth panel."

We would, of course, have no objection to discussing the SWP convention in a normal comradely atmosphere. There would be nothing lost and much to be gained from such a procedure. However,

in the poisoned atmosphere which now exists, with threats of expulsion in the air, and after having been called "disloyal" and "Cannonite agents" for so many months, we see no purpose in such an inquisition except to fortify the Right Wing's emphasis on petty organizational bickering which it considers, and rightly so, the only possible way to cover up the weakness of its politics.

The manner in which the Right Wing has treated the SWP convention is one more concrete sign that the YSL is about to become the narrow youth group of the ISL, oriented solely to its own liquidation into the SP-SDF. Any pretensions to the "broadness" of the YSL have been clearly shown to be outright misrepresentation. The Right Wing waxes indignant at the possibility of a member of any "adult" tendency other than the ISL (and now, we suppose, the SP-SDF right wing), acting in the YSL as a disciplined member of that adult tendency, doing "opponents work" in the YSL, so to speak. Yet these same Right Wingers expect each YSL member to do "opponents work" in all adult tendencies which he feels close to or is a member of -- all tendencies except the ISL, that is. For not one inkling of the serious cleavage on the ISL-PC on the "unity" question was revealed to the YSL, even though our National Secretary happens to be a member of the ISL-PC, until months after it developed, and even then most YSLers heard about it only through a report of the Left Wing Caucus. This failure to communicate to the YSL a sharp disagreement within the ISL on a question which vitally concerns the very existence of the YSL, shows without a doubt that the primary loyalty of ISL members within the YSL is to the ISL, not to the YSL.

With this double standard for dual membership in "adult" political organizations, the YSL should frankly disavow all its pretensions to being a "broad" organization. How can the YSL in good faith ask members or sympathizers of any "adult" tendency to join the YSL, if they are expected to do "opponents work" in that organization for the YSL? The Right Wing will answer this, we expect, by saying: "We do not ask members or sympathizers of tendencies other than the ISL to join us. We do not want such people in the YSL." If that is so, then the YSL should frankly and openly affiliate with the ISL and do away with the hypocrisy.

Word of our attendance at a youth panel held during the SWP convention has somehow reached the ears of the Right Wingers, ever-eager to pick up a piece of gossip which they can use for their own malicious purposes. This youth panel was not, contrary to rumor, some devious plot designed to wreck the YSL. Young SWPers from various areas met to discuss the possibilities for building a youth movement in each area. The discussion was oriented strongly in the direction of reaching former members of the LYL. The general idea of the SWP is to push for a regroupment of militant youth within the framework of the only nationwide socialist youth organization, the YSL. This is the first time that the SWP has seriously oriented toward the youth, and the young

people in the SWP greeted this orientation with great enthusiasm. It was our impression that these young people, with their militancy, their interest in ideas, their organizational experience, and their great interest in a youth perspective, regardless of our theoretical differences, would be a great source of strength to the YSL.

It might be argued that the SWP, at its convention and youth panel, was merely "putting on a show" for us; that their professed interest in helping to build a broad, militant youth movement is not "sincere." However, we doubt very much that an organization is going to spend a considerable amount of its valuable convention time, which, after all, is very limited, on a question in which it is not "sincerely" interested, merely for the benefit of a few people.

We suggest, in any event, that the YSL put the sincerity of the SWP's proposal to a test, by inviting all SWP youth to join the YSL with full democratic rights, and helping us to build a broad, militant youth movement.

Signed:

Martha Wohlforth  
Danny Freeman  
Sharon Gold

YOU PLEAD GUILTY? BUT NOT TO WHAT YOU ARE CHARGED WITH!

(The "Left-Wing" and the SWP Convention)

by Max Martin and Art Lowe

When the National Action Committee adopted its motion in regard to Comrade Wohlforth and the SWP Convention on June 19th, it had no intention of printing this motion in YSL. Nor did the two authors of this brief note. The submission for publication of the article by I. Wohlforth, D. Freeman and S. Gold to the YSL makes desirable the publication of the NAC motion as well, to clear up the distortions in that article. (How our three authors - none of whom were present at the NAC meeting in question - can allow themselves to feel that they are informed as to what took place would make an interesting enquiry.)

A comparison of the motion and the article should make clear what these distortions are. To delineate the obvious however, we raise a few questions:

1. The article tries to give the impression that the charge against Comrade Wohlforth was that he attended the SWP Convention. It is in this that our authors too "plead guilty". But a reading of the NAC motion makes clear that Wohlforth is being rebuked not for his attendance at the SWP gathering, but rather for his intention of hiding this fact from his co-NAC members and the YSL membership, his refusal when questioned on it to give the NAC information legitimate for it to request, and his continued refusal to this hour to carry out his obligation of providing the NAC with this information.

2. The article gives the impression that Wohlforth's reticence on this point results not from any greater loyalty to some other group than to the YSL - he would be delighted to tell us all about the SWP Convention - but because of his refusal to participate in McCarthy-type inquisitions by the NAC which occurred, moreover, in an atmosphere of charges against the "left-wing" of "disloyalty" and "Cannonism". Why then did Wohlforth not prevent the inquisition, and simultaneously deal a serious blow against the charges of "disloyalty", by informing the NAC of his attendance at the SWP Convention and answering its questions on it before he was questioned by NAC members? Why, also, did he at one point during the "questioning" - before he decided for reasons of diplomacy to pretend to answer our questions - say that he would refuse to answer any of our questions until he got the permission of the SWP to do so? Why, later, did he say that he would tell us anything we wish to know and then proceed to evade all of the questions we asked him?

3. Our authors convey the impression that the SWP invitation to T. Wohlforth, D. Freeman, T. Wohlforth, and S. Gold proves how forthright and sincere the SWP is. Would not an invitation to, let us say, M. Harrington have been a bit more persuasive? They point to the presence at the SWP Convention of visitors from other organizations - besides the YSL, that is - as evidence for their contention on this matter. But since Wohlforth refuses to tell us who they were, why are we to give any credence to this point? We suspect we know at least one of them and remain singularly unimpressed with any claims about his "objectivity" and powers of observation.

4. And finally, we ask all YSL members to ponder how much more they know about the "youth panel" at the SWP Convention - at which, we hear, there took place a discussion, in Wohlforth's presence, of SWP work in the YSL - than they

reading  
already known from ~~some~~ the Militant and Bert Dock's letter, now that they have read the article of our "left-wing" friends?

TEXT OF THE NAC MOTION OF JUNE 19

It has been reported to several members of the NAC that Wohlforth attended the recently held convention of the Socialist Workers Party. Further, that he attended the Youth session of that convention at which there took place in his presence a discussion of SWP-AYS work in the YSL. Wohlforth had not reported to the committee that he had intended to attend the SWP convention, nor had he subsequently reported his attendance at it. It was obvious to the NAC that he had no intention of so reporting. At today's meeting, therefore, various NAC members questioned him about the facts reported to them. He was asked if it was true that he had attended the SWP convention. Taken aback by the question which he did not expect, he replied affirmatively. He was asked if he was a member of the SWP. He said, "No." Asked in what capacity he attended the SWP convention, he replied, "As an invited visitor." He was then asked what sessions of the convention he had attended. Answer: The youth panel, the election of the national committee, and parts of other sessions. It was requested that he give a detailed report of the discussions at the Youth Panel, and replied that he declined to do so. Further, that he refused to answer any further questions on the SWP convention. Still further, that he regretted having truthfully replied to the question about his attendance at the convention in the first place. In this connection he also stated that he felt our questions were like those of the inquiries of Congressional Investigating Committees.

Subsequently, he stated that he had reconsidered and would answer all questions put to him. However he proceeded to reply to all questions about the Youth Panel of the convention in such a fashion as to provide the committee with no more information than can be learned from the Militant and from Bert Dock's letter to the YSL. He specifically during this period declined to answer two concrete questions put to him. 1. on the identity of other visitors to the convention and 2. on the identity of other YSLers who were visitors to the convention.

It is clear from this incident that Comrade Wohlforth feels that other obligations he may have supersede his obligation to supply the NAC with information essential to it for its pursuit of its proper activities. There can be no doubt that the information requested on the SWP Youth Perspectives and activities, was of legitimate and necessary concern to the NAC and that NAC members are obligated to provide such information to the committee. The NAC notes its view that Wohlforth's behavior is incompatible with membership on the YSL NAC but that in line with its general attitude, on similar indiscipline by Wohlforth it takes no action on the matter at this time.

The NAC calls the foregoing facts and views of the committee to the attention of the entire membership of the YSL.

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY - A REPLY TO SHANE MAGE

BY MAX MARTIN

III.

We have stated several times during the course of this article that the real dispute between the NAC Draft Resolution on the Crisis of World Stalinism and its "left wing" critic, Shane Mage, revolves around the question of the relationship of democracy to socialism, and the application of this relationship to a country like Hungary. It is necessary to examine this dispute with specific references to Mage's views on the concrete problems of the Hungarian and Polish revolutions, his prognosis as to their further course had Russia not intervened in Hungary, and his program for meeting the problems that would have arisen in that event.

Mage informs us that our references to the anti-Stalinist revolutions as a "democratic" one, seeking "no other change", is unreal. "A huge number of economic and social changes ... are the inseparable accompaniment to the popular revolutions against Stalinism ...", he says. Now perhaps the resolution can be charged with bad formulation on this point, for what was intended was the idea of a revolution which does not aim at restoring private property in the decisive means of production but instead seeks the democratization of a statified economy. But even if this point is unclearly expressed, it is clear that the NAC is aware of the fact that a "huge number of economic and social changes" accompany the anti-Stalinist revolution and are part and parcel of it. Not only are we ~~xx~~ aware of this; we insist on it. Otherwise, how could we declare that the democratic revolution witnessed in Hungary last year constituted a ~~x~~ social revolution, that it involved a change of the social system?

The dispute is not over whether there are such changes, but rather as to their character and as to the program one advocates for a socialist government in dealing with these changes and the problems they entail. Let us look at the problems that Mage dire-fully predicts. And then at his solutions for them.

- 1) "The establishment of formal democracy (sic - we are talking about real, not formal, democracy) means free elections to a sovereign parliament...result in fact in a government representing the petty-bourgeois majority..." In other words, free elections and the rule of the majority will result in a non-workers, petty-bourgeois government.
- 2) The Catholic Church would have organized the peasant and petty-bourgeois majority, so that free elections would have resulted in a "clerical majority" in the government.
- 3) A "petty-bourgeois government...would be able to bring about a return to capitalism, and in very short order." This capitalism, which Mage qualifies as a petty-bourgeois type state capitalism, would be "based (to start with) on small property on the land and in production and trade."
- 4) "The first step would be...restoring capitalist relationships in agriculture and small production and retail trade." This, like the NEP in Russia, would continually tend "to develop restorationist tendencies." In the hands of a "petty-bourgeois government," the Hungarian "NEP" would, like Bukharin's policies during the Rus-



sian NEP, "certainly lead straight to capitalism."

5) "Another decisive aspect of the return to capitalism...would be the ties of Poland and Hungary with the capitalist world market, primarily with the U.S.

6) The nationalized industries "would serve the interests of the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie and the needs for trade with the Western capitalists." This would mean "an orientation entirely to consumer goods production, for the benefit of the peasants" and a de-emphasis "of the growth of the state sector, i.e., of industrial production."

7) And the consequences of this? a) "Wages kept low..." b) "...workers councils...not...allowed to interfere...in the management of the economy." c) The "...work force would be sharply reduced...", i.e., there would be large-scale unemployment. d) "...the workers representatives would not be allowed to hold power in the government..."

All of this would have flowed from restricting the revolution to general democratic aims, argues Mage. And these developments would have added up to travel on the road towards capitalist restoration, or perhaps even to having already arrived there. We shall have to subject Mage's predictions to a close analysis, to see which are false, which true, and which half-true, but before doing so, it is necessary to view the problem from another angle.

Let us, for purposes of argumentation, concede for the moment that Mage's prognostications would turn out to be true, that the developments he foresees in the event of the "restriction" of the revolution to "general democratic aims" and a "parliament" - restrictions Mage alleges the NAC advocates - are correct. What then is the answer? Mage informs us that "establishment of the state power of the working class" and the "soviet system" - which, he alleges, is his program as opposed to that of the NAC - represents the solution.

By itself? Automatically? How will this prevent the peasants from decollectivizing the land? Or the peasants from being the majority of the "soviet" government? Or the petty-bourgeoisie from demanding consumer goods? How, in short, will it prevent that "huge number of economic and social changes" which trouble him so? His answer: by itself it will not prevent them. As a matter of fact, he tells us, it "does not guarantee...against capitalist restoration." Indeed, Hungary "would immediately be faced with the same sort of problems." All that it would guarantee is "the opportunity of the working class at every point to impose its own socialist direction of the nation."

And what would such socialist direction consist of? With what program would a socialist government meet the problems Mage writes of? What should its program be? This is the important question, for otherwise, how is one to know if Mage has any answers to the problems he poses. But at this point Mage breaks off his trend of thought and begins to discuss something else. This, however, not because he lacks a program. On the contrary, his articles are permeated with his program at every point, and he discusses some aspects of them concretely in various sections. It is this we must look at.

Mage's Program.

The first and most important plank in Shane's program, openly stated by him, consists of the disenfranchisement of the peasantry and petty-bourgeois majority in the country, of refusing to let it participate in the political rule of the nation. In the picture he paints, the workers as a minority are to exercise exclusive political rule in opposition to the peasant majority. In that way, and that way alone, the peasants can be prevented from doing all of the things they wish to, which will add up to capitalist restoration.

We asked above: how will a "soviet system" prevent the peasants from being the majority of the "soviet" government, that is, how will it prevent them from ruling through the "soviets"? After all, it is the possibility of peasant and petty-bourgeois government that troubles Mage so much. As we understood the "soviet system", it was a system of "soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers," of all of the oppressed, of the entire toiling population.

Won't the peasant majority in the "soviets" constitute a "soviet" government, i.e., a petty-bourgeois "soviet" government? Won't special measures be needed to prevent this from happening? And doesn't Mage advocate such measures? Of course he does. He even tells us what some of these are. Is it an accident that Mage refers almost exclusively to a system of "workers councils," instead of the more familiar term, "workers, peasants and soldiers councils" and that he only once refers to "the creation of councils of working peasants?" And that almost in passing?

Isn't it quite clear that he aims at establishing a government which will exclude the majority from rule? Item: "Free elections, in turn would mean the establishment of a government reflecting the numerically largest section of the population." Mage isn't going to let that happen, not if he can help it. Item: "A majority cannot express its rule unless it is organized." Mage doesn't intend to let that happen either. Item: "It may be that some comrades...will claim that this is 'undemocratic'..." In his reply, Mage says this and that but doesn't say it's "not undemocratic" (with or without quotation marks around undemocratic.")

We ask: does anyone recall reading, during the last dozen or more years, from the pen of one who calls himself a socialist such a derogation of "free elections," outside of the Stalinist press? Free elections are clearly a problem for Mage, whether these be elections to "soviets" or to a parliament. One way he intends solving the problem is to prevent the peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie from organizing what political parties they choose, by effectively disenfranchising them, in other words, but of this more below. But at this point we would like to inform Comrade Mage that one of his co-thinkers, another "left-wing" critic of ours, has come up with the "solution" to his problem.

This solution, with which the name of Comrade Robertson is associated, was advanced some time ago (see Forum, May 1954) as a polemic against the view "that at this time (1921, after the civil war - M.M.) the Communists should have called for new elections ~~to~~ to ~~the~~ the all-Russian Soviets and turned the state power over to whatever majority party or coalition emerged from the soviet elections." (Actually, the view being polemicized against is not

stated accurately - it did not speak of "calling new elections," but of allowing the unhampered exercise of continuous renewal of soviet deputies, the best feature of the soviet system.) The "solution" adhered to by Robertson rejected the idea of such elections - since the Bolsheviks probably would have lost!

In this view, elections are for when "our side" is sure of winning, not at other times. While we ourselves prefer the honesty of those who say: "we're against elections, that's all there is to it," we recommend this additional "solution" to Mage for dealing with the problem he sees facing him as being in line with his "Marxist," "left-wing" thinking on such matters. As for ourselves, we stand for free elections, with the full recognition that there is a "risk" that we may lose under them. If we ever decided that we were against elections when such a risk existed, a decision we know we will never make, we would simply say: "To hell with all of this talk about democracy. Period."

so

While Mage does not say/in so many words, he clearly is for prohibiting "pro-capitalist" parties from existing, presumably among them, the Polish Peasant Party and the Hungarian Smallholders Party. But that means he stands for the disenfranchisement of the peasants of those countries. We hope that we will not be told that we have no right to charge him with this because he did not say that the peasants were to be prevented from voting entirely. As all comrades who think about the question will realize, when a minority party is ruled off the ballot in the U.S. on some technicality or other, the first thing socialists say is that its supporters are thereby being deprived of their franchise. The Russian people also vote, it must be remembered, but they have been deprived of their franchise nonetheless.

In the discussion in the New York Unit, Comrade Wohlforth also argued for the proposition that the revolutionary Hungarian workers should not have permitted the organization of pro-capitalist parties, but on a different basis. He explained that this was not a question of principle, but rather one of tactics. To allow the formation of pro-bourgeois parties, he argued, would have given Russia a weapon with which to slander the revolution as a "counter-revolution." On this line of reasoning one can say that the Hungarian people should not have established any democratic procedures, since this also would have given the Kremlin such a weapon. Or that they should not have ended Russian domination of Hungary, since this allowed the Russian rulers to slander the revolution as a break with "proletarian internationalism". This way of looking at the problem can be reduced finally to the proposition that if the Hungarians had not revolted, the Russians would not have been able to slander their revolt!

It is painful to discover that in this day and age there are comrades in the YSL for whom the road to socialism proceeds not through the expansion of democracy, but its restriction. And not merely the restriction of democratic rights of a small handful of exploiters, but of the vast peasant majority. To argue against such a view in the YSL would be superfluous. All we wish to do is to state our view, the view of our movement. In our opinion, all political parties, including bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and peasant ones must have all democratic rights in a workers state, including the right to advocate

capitalist restoration, so long as they abide by legality and confine their restorationist efforts to advocacy, attempting to win elections, etc.

Mage will of course tell us that this opinion is not in accord with Lenin, but in so doing he is shandering Lenin and Bolshevism in the guise of defending them. He will tell us that our concepts are not in accordance with those expressed by Trotsky in 1938. But we long ago decided that Trotsky's formula on this question was vague and that it evaded the essential questions posed on this point. We, in other words, stand on the platform of democratic socialism. In Mage's view, the NAC's position in favor of "full rights for all pro-capitalist parties" is in "conformity with its orientation..... bourgeois democracy". He does capitalism too much honor. ~~He~~ besmirches socialism.

### Mage's Program Vs. the Democratic Socialist Program

1). But let us look at Mage's prognostications, and at his program for dealing with the difficulties he envisions, as contrasted with a democratic approach to these problems. His first point is that with free elections, under democracy, the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie who comprise the majority of the population will organize - or be organized into - an anti-socialist party or coalition which will then win any free elections that are held and organize a petty-bourgeois government. To prevent this Mage will not allow such parties to be organized - he says so - and moreover perhaps not even allow any elections to be held - on this point his not as frank as his co-thinker Robertson.

But that means that Mage is for carrying out socialist measures in Hungary - for beginning the creation of the economic foundations of a socialist society - in opposition to the vast majority of the people. For forcing socialism down people's throats in other words. For us and our movement this notion was long ago - long before the ~~xx~~ line, comrades - subjected to the condemnation it deserves. If Mage were right, if the majority of the Hungarian people opposed socialism then it would only mean that Hungary was not ready for a socialist transformation, and to attempt to effect it would be a crime. Not merely because such an effort would violate our "pure" democratic ideals, but because whatever would be created along this road would NOT BE SOCIALISM.

Did matters actually stand the way Mage sees them? Would the prospects for steps toward socialism be gloomy, had the Hungarian revolution not been massacred by Russian troops? We ourselves see no reason for pessimism and much reason for optimism on this score. The facts are that not only did the Hungarian working class possess a strong socialist consciousness, but so did other classes and so did the parties and politicians which represented them. All of the evidence available conclusively demonstrated that a majority of the Hungarian nation stood for democratic socialism. All of the political parties organized during the few days in which the Hungarian revolution was master of the nation went out of their way to explain that they did not stand for capitalist restoration. So did various prominent bourgeois politicians. Even the Church felt itself constrained to give a similar impression. Comrade Mage, we suggest that you read the abundant evidence for this assertion marshalled in the pages

of Labor Action and the New International in the weeks and months following the revolution. Even the U.N. report describes the program of the Hungarian people as that of democratic socialism.

2) Mage describes the role of the Catholic Church in Hungary as that of organizer of the anti-socialist, reactionary peasant and petty-bourgeois majority which would, under "pure" democracy, lead Hungary back to capitalism. Now, we demand, is he going to prevent this from occurring? In part via preventing the organization of pro-capitalist parties. Will that be enough for him however? Won't the Church organize the peasantry in other ways to delay or hamstringing the workers state? Won't Mage stand for suppression of the church, or at least for denial to it of some of its rights? Mage does not exactly let the membership in on his views on this question, so we cannot answer with complete certainty. But we would ask this: if Mage does not mean that the workers should suppress or restrict the Church's rights in some way, then what was the point of his predicting that under "pure" democracy the Church will behave in this way, and use this prediction as an argument against "pure" democracy. Either Mage intends to restrict the rights of the Church, or he wasted a lot of paper and ink in developing his point on the Church.

We stated that we cannot be certain as to what Mage intends on this matter. But during the New York membership discussion Wohlforth in his presentation defended a view - whether he thought it was also Mage's or not we cannot say - that called for suppression of the Church. Sharply and vigorously rebuked for this by a number of New York YSLers during the discussion, Wohlforth "retreated" in his summary to the position that so long as a majority of Hungarians were Catholics he would oppose suppressing their church, but when a majority would cease being Catholics then he would stand for suppression. Is it any wonder, then, that Wohlforth does not understand what we mean by the term "democratic socialism"? Some comrades may think that he is being hypocritical when he asks us: "What is this 'democratic socialism' groupment that you are talking about? What is 'democratic socialism'?" We, however, believe that he honestly does not know and that he simply cannot grasp what democracy is all about.

In contradistinction to the view of Wohlforth-Mage, we take a different position on the Catholic Church. We are against its suppression even if there is only one Catholic left in the country. We believe that the Catholic Church in Hungary, Poland and elsewhere should have complete freedom, as a private, voluntary, religious organization, to conduct its activities, unrestricted in any way by the state, and without state interference into the internal affairs of the Church. We believe, also, naturally, that there must be complete separation of church from state, including the completely secular character of public education.

Let us, however, admit an obligation where one is due. We owe to Mage-Wohlforth our recognition that the Draft Resolution is defective in that it does not discuss this question. Mage is right, we should have paid attention to the Catholic Church in the resolution. What we should have said in it, however, is not what Mage-Wohlforth believe, but our democratic views. The convention should remedy this defect.

What of the substance of Mage's prediction on the role of the Church in Hungary? In the final analysis it boils down to a lack of faith in the ability of the socialist working class to forge an alliance with the peasantry based on a program of building a democratic socialist society through democratic stratification of industry plus concessions to the non-working class elements in the population, all within a framework of political democracy. The question does not consist merely of what the Church will do. Like Mage, we know that the church will probably try to play a reactionary role. But cannot the workers win the political allegiance away from the Church? That is the question. If not, then one cannot build socialism and the suppression of the Church will not produce socialism. We believe that in Hungary, however, it could have been done and that is why we are indeed optimistic about the socialist future of the anti-Stalinist revolution in Eastern Europe.

3) According to Mage, the "petty-bourgeois government" that would have resulted from what he feels the line of the NAC to be would have brought about a return to capitalism in very short order. Let us see what would have constituted a return to capitalism in his opinion.

4) "The first step would be...restoring capitalist relationships in agriculture and small production and retail trade." But if that is the first step toward the restoration of capitalism, then is Mage proposing to prevent the peasants from taking back their land if that is what they should want to do? And if so, what has such a policy in common with that of Lenin and Trotsky on this question, the Lenin and Trotsky whom he quotes so often? It strikes us as being closer to Stalinist policy of forced collectivization of the land than to those of the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution.

As far as we are concerned socialist policy has no interest in maintaining the bureaucratic collectivization of land which existed in Hungary under Stalinism. At the same time, of course, socialists do not "favor" private property in agriculture. They stand for a democratic, voluntary socialization of land. Such a socialization, they believe, can only take place through long term patient education in favor of nationalization of agriculture. Therefore, they favor the full right of the peasantry to reclaim the land collectivized by the Stalinists in Hungary and would assist the peasantry in their efforts to organize return of their individual plots of land to themselves. Moreover it is absolutely necessary to recognize not merely this abstract "right" of the peasantry, but the fact that the bulk of those peasant who are in collectives - especially in the poorer ones - will wish to disband them and return to private proprietorship. Based on this probability a democratic socialist government in Hungary would have been prepared to facilitate such a de-collectivization immediately after it had won power.

Moreover, there is a very good likelihood that Stalinist collectivization of land in Eastern Europe will have so embittered the peasantry against collectivization of any kind - both those peasant who had been in collectives and those who had not - that for a very, very long time the socialist government would be faced with the reality of a long term peasant opposition to socialization

of agriculture. A democratic socialist government would, of course, attempt through education and by the example of the superiority of these voluntary collectives which would be organized from the beginning, to win the peasantry to democratic socialization of the land. It would not, however, in any shape, manner or form attempt to organize such collectivization through coercion or repression. And this means more than merely refraining from ~~herding~~ herding the peasants onto collectives with bayonets. It would also mean that the state would not adopt economic policies such as to force a grudging acceptance of collectivization by the peasantry, i.e. would not withhold economic aid from individual peasant proprietors and granted only to collectives or intermediary steps between small private peasant agriculture and collective agriculture. The state would place such agricultural machinery as the country possessed and was able to produce at the disposal of private peasant holdings as well as in the hands of collectives, either in the form of cooperative ownership of such implements or through state "tractor stations."

What applies to agriculture applies also to small scale industrial and commercial enterprises. What has to be remembered is that the Stalinists in Eastern Europe have overstated the economy way beyond what is realistically in accordance with socialist "nationalization" requirements. Thus concessions by the working class to the demands for small scale private industry and commerce would not only be in accordance with "general democratic aims" and help win support from the "petty-bourgeoisie" for the socialist government; it also would accord with a realistic economic policy for a socialist government in Hungary.

Hold on, our critics will admonish us! Where does Mage say that he intends to prevent the peasants from re-privatizing the land? Doesn't he, in fact, imply that this "would be... absolutely necessary... for any non-Stalinist government?" Yes, the sentence in Mage's article from which we have just quoted does indeed imply that Mage agrees with us on this point. But then, we ask, what is the meaning of Mage's discussions on this score? If this policy is an absolutely necessary one for any non-Stalinist government, including such a non-Stalinist government as Mage would favor, why does this policy constitute "a first step" to "capitalist restoration?" And even if one were to regard it as a step toward that, which we do not, since in the context we envision it would have a different meaning, what does this first step toward capitalism have to do with whether there is a "soviet government" in an "workers state" or whether we are dealing with a "parliamentary government" under "general democracy?" Either Mage means to prevent decollectivization of land or else he does not intend for his "soviet government" to do so. But in the latter case this first step toward "capitalist restoration" will result equally under a "soviet regime" as under "general democracy."

5) "Another decisive aspect of the return to capitalism... would be the ties of Poland and Hungary to the capitalist world market," writes Mage. To be sure, a democratic socialist government would engage in trade with capitalist countries, and allow "cheap Western commodities" to enter the country. It would also undoubtedly seek loans for ~~investment~~ industrialization purposes as did Russia after its revolution. But why would this be a decisive aspect of a return to capitalism, when the socialist state would hold a monopoly on foreign trade?

6) "Their (the nationalized industries) fate would serve the interests of the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie," says Mage. Should it not serve those interests, we ask, as well as the interests of the workers? Should it not try to meet the needs of all strata of the population and at the same time try to advance the socialist future of the Hungarian people through industrialization?

7) Mage spells out the meaning of his previous point this way: "An orientation entirely to consumer goods production, for the benefit of the peasants." The tricky word in this sentence is entirely. Not only tricky, but misleading. Nobody would stand for such an orientation "entirely." What is needed, of course, is a program which balances industrialization and the production of consumer goods so as to satisfy the legitimate and rightful demand of the peasants, petty-bourgeoisie, and workers for consumer goods. ~~Then~~ Does Mage propose that a Hungarian socialist government not try to meet such a demand for consumer goods? Does he favor a policy of super-industrialization, sweating the surplus necessary for it ~~and~~ out of the peasantry? Then indeed he will find it necessary to disenfranchise the peasants, and more than that!

8) The other disastrous consequences foreseen by Mage need not detain us for they follow only from his incorrect view of the actual consequences which would have resulted from "pure" democracy, and from the wrong meaning he assigns to those few consequences he has rightfully foreseen.

#### RUSSIA AND HUNGARY

A good portion of the trouble with Shane's thinking about Hungary resides in the fact that he accepts Trotsky's conception of what the various struggles inside Russia during the 1920's meant, a conception which subsequent developments have proven to be mistaken in some large part, and then applies it to the Hungary of 1957. Trotsky felt that the fundamental struggle in post-civil war Russia was between the forces of capitalist restoration, politically represented objectively by the policies of Bukharin, on the one hand, and the forces of the socialist working class represented by the left opposition. The Stalinist bureaucracy was viewed by Trotsky as a "centrist formation" destined only to hold the center of the stage for a short while and to capitulate to the forces of capitalist restoration. Now Trotsky continued to view the Stalinist bureaucracy in this light long after Stalin had liquidated Bukharin, Bukharin's political collaborators, all of the NEPmen, and all of the kulaks. He continued to hold to this view until his death. The SWP until this hour regards Stalinism as a force which is perpetually capitulating to capitalism, both internationally - about which they write a great deal - and internally - about which they say little these days since even they do not wish to be regarded completely as laughing stocks.

Now, Mage apparently also sees the developments in Russia in this way. He then transfers this conception to Hungary in 1956, had the Russians not massacred the revolution. We, as Mage knows, have a somewhat different analysis, not merely as to the nature of the present Russian state and system, but also on the developments which led up to it. One point in our view is this: That while there were capitalist restorationist forces, they proved too weak to restore capitalism, and that when the Russian workers



proved unable to solve the problems of Russian economy and Russian society on a socialist basis, these problems were solved not on a capitalist basis - not by capitalist restoration - but in a new way and by a new class. Do not these facts have any bearing on the prospects for capitalist restoration in Hungary? Especially when the capitalist forces in that country are weaker than they were in Russia? Especially when the socialist working class is ~~stronger~~ stronger in Hungary today than it was in Russia in 1921-22? When there exists a wider socialist consciousness among non-working class elements of the population ~~than there~~ in Hungary today than there did in Russia after the Bolshevik revolution. Mage's fears of capitalist restoration are his own private nightmare.

### THE REAL PROSPECTS IN HUNGARY

In our opinion the prospects for long strides toward socialism in Hungary, had the revolution been successful, were indeed good. As we have already indicated, Hungary in 1956 possessed far better social bases for such a development than did Russia in 1917. A socialist working class could have forged an alliance with the peasantry on the basis of the widest political democracy and on "concessions" to the peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie in the matter of de-collectivizing land and allowing capitalist small production and trade. A socialist government would have been able to win the support of such elements and keep them from the embrace of Catholic reaction precisely because it had such a program. It would be more likely to lose the support of the peasantry and to drive it into the political arms of the Church in its absence. A socialist government with such support could construct a balanced program aimed at satisfying the needs of all strata of the population for consumer goods, at the same time that it worked on the further industrialization of the country and expanded the socialist sector of the economy. Would the peasants turn on this socialist sector? What do they care about whether industry is satisfied or not? They will turn on socialized industry only if and when it takes their agricultural produce from them at low prices and gives them few or no industrial products in return, and those at extremely high prices.

Like Comrade Mage, we know ~~know~~ that all manner of problems would arise - problems to which it is impossible to pose detailed answers. These problems would pose serious headaches for a Hungarian Socialist regime. We do not think it necessary or possible to anticipate them all, in their full detail. What we have tried to do is to indicate an approach to their solution and to counterpose that approach to that of Mage-Wohlforth. Not that Hungary, left isolated for a long time from socialist developments elsewhere, would have been able by its own efforts and resources to establish "socialism in one country". Left isolated, the Hungarian socialist revolution would have, in our opinion, been able to maintain itself for a longer period of time than was the case with the Russian Revolution. Nevertheless, not aided by the socialist revolution elsewhere, it would have at some time or another degenerated and given way to some reactionary formation, whose exact outlines cannot be predicted in advance.

MAGE: "DEFENDER" OF BOLSHEVISM OR DEFENDER OF "BOLSHEVISM"

Throughout his articles Mage presents himself as a defender of Lenin and of Bolshevism. His "defense" inspires in us the following thoughts: Protect us against our friends, our enemies we will take care of ourselves. Mage takes the conceptions he holds in regard to Hungary and transfers them back to the Russian revolution. Fortunately for Lenin and Bolshevism, Mage's ideas bear not too much resemblance to those of the leaders of the Russian Revolution. Indeed, they remind us much more of the descriptions of Bolshevism to be found in the writings of anti-Bolsheviks. The major difference being this one: Mage's distorted view is prefixed by him with the statement, "Ah, good - that's the way it should be in Hungary too." Anti-Bolsheviks present the same picture, but evaluate it differently, to wit: "Monstrous".

"Lenin," writes Mage, "...was not exactly eager to grant 'full rights' to capitalist parties after the victory of the Russian revolution" And I, adds Mage, am not only "not exactly eager", but positively infuriated at the thought of "granting" such rights in Hungary. If Lenin's position were as described by Mage then it would look kind of bad for Lenin, in our opinion. But this is not the case at all.

Mage quotes from Lenin's "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky". We presume then that he has read it. Does he recall these words from it:

"As I have pointed out already, the disenfranchisement of the bourgeoisie does not constitute a necessary element of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nor did the Bolsheviks in Russia, when putting forward the demand for such a dictatorship, long before the November revolution, say anything in advance about the disenfranchisement of the exploiters. This particular element of the dictatorship was not born according to a plan conceived by some party, but grew up spontaneously in the course of the fight."

Lenin then explains why. "...the bourgeoisie of its own accord separated itself from the Soviets, boycotted them, put itself up and intrigued against them." And then he points out that this "intrigue" contained among other elements, military mutiny. Lenin defends the subsequent exclusion of the Social Revolutionary (and Menshevik) Party from the Soviets on the ground ~~of~~ ~~its~~ - not of its being a pro-capitalist peasant party - but on the basis of its participation in civil (and international imperialist) ~~war~~ against revolutionary Russia. So this disenfranchisement then had nothing to do with Lenin not being "exactly eager" to "grant 'full rights.'"

To be sure, there subsequently grew up in the party a view that this abnormal situation, which resulted from civil war, was the "normal" one, was the way things should always be, so that Tomsky could remark in 1921 or 1922 that while there was room in Soviet Russia for many parties, one of them, the Bolsheviks, would be in power and the others in jail. But this chapter is already the beginning of the degeneration of the revolution, not a glorious page in Bolshevik history. Our movement has long ago declared our opposition to such a view, and not merely in relation to other workingclass parties, or even merely on regard to peasant parties, but in regard to all who were willing to accept Soviet legality and confine their opposition to propaganda, elections, etc, as opposed to expressing their opposition with guns in hand.

Mage informs us that the Constituent Assembly was dispersed in Russia. Knowing Mage's fear of letting the "majority" rule in Hungary, one may be led to believe that this was Lenin's motive in Russia too! Has Mage read

Lenin's "Theses In Respect to the Constituent Assembly" as well as the chapter in "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" which deals with the Constituent Assembly? Does he know that Lenin assigned two reasons in these works as the justification for its dispersal, namely: the more democratic nature of soviets in general, and the fact that the Constituent Assembly did not represent the will of the Russian people, that it did not represent the democratically-expressed wishes of the majority of the people! Let us look at Thesis 4.

"The convocation of a Constituent Assembly in our revolution on the basis of lists drawn up and promulgated at the end of October, 1917, is taking place in conditions which exclude the possibility of a faithful expression of the will of the people in general, and of the laboring masses in particular, by the elections of the Constituent Assembly."

The historical evidence on this point, is too complex to be gone into here. Suffice it to say that it concerns the fact that the SR's had split after the SR voting lists were promulgated, and that the lists did not reflect the divisions in the party, nor the support enjoyed by each grouping. The party lists contained mainly Right-Wing SR's, and these composed the overwhelming majority of the SR's elected. However at the time of the meeting of the Assembly, the Left SR's, who participated with the Bolsheviks in the Soviet government, had the support of the overwhelming bulk of those (peasants mainly) who had originally supported the united party.

Anyone who wants to can believe or not believe Lenin. What has to be stressed is that Lenin's reasons for dispersing the Assembly, those that he gave, were democratic reasons, and not anti-democratic reasons.

Moreover, Lenin explained, we are in the midst of a civil war now. And all of the Czarist and capitalist forces who are trying to overturn the revolution have rallied around the Assembly, while the All-Russian Congress of Soviets "represent...the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia, all the workers and soldiers, and 70% or 80% of the peasantry..."

What does this have in common with Mage's presentation of Lenin's dispersal of the Assembly?

From reading Mage, one would get the impression that dispersing a Constituent Assembly is a task to be lightly undertaken and one that should be on the agenda of every revolutionary socialist program during every revolution. What would he then make of the fact that Lenin proposed not to disperse it on the basis of the following: a) it accept Soviet legality, b) support the fight against the military counter-revolution, c) give "the earliest possible grant to the people of an extensive right to re-elect the members of the Constituent Assembly," the latter so as to secure the election of one that did represent the people. And that the dispersal was accomplished because the Constituent Assembly, which was a tool of the counter-revolution, refused.

The opportunists, wrote Lenin, are turning Marx into a "liberal".

Mage, we must add, is turning Lenin into...a Cannonite.

## On "Soviets" and "Parliaments"

Throughout the course of our reply to Mage we have pretended that Mage's view that the distinction between the Draft Resolution and its "Left-Wing" critics centers on the difference between "general democracy" and "parliament" on the one hand, and a "workers' state" and "soviets" on the other, actually represented the real differences involved. We did this so as to be able to examine that which lay behind the dispute, as this was formulated by Mage. During the course of this discussion, we have laid bare the reality to be found in the "workers state" versus "general democracy" dichotomy. Let us now take a brief glance at the forms of workers rule, a rule in which the majority of the people would participate.

Mage asserts that the NAC stands for a parliamentary as opposed to a "council" system of state institutions. We have already pointed out that this claim about the NAC resolution is false. The Resolution does not declare for a parliament as the instrument of the democratic rule by the Hungarian people; neither did it call for "All Power to the Workers' Councils". What must be remembered is this: socialists do not insist that only via a "soviet system" can the socialist rule of the working class and people be manifested. All that they say on this score is that historical experience shows that all revolutions throw up such organs of popular rule and that these tend to become the institutions of the new state power. This has been the case with all socialist revolutions since the Paris Commune. Moreover, that in all socialist revolutions against capitalist regimes which we have witnessed in the past, there has resulted a civil war in which these councils became the organs of the revolutionary working class and people, while parliament became the rallying point of the forces of capitalist reaction. Under such conditions, the aim and slogan of "All Power to the Workers' Peasants and Soldiers Councils" was necessarily counterposed to the "parliament" or assembly around which capitalism rallied. But no one has ever claimed that a "soviet system" and it alone, could provide the indispensable element of workers rule. Trotsky, for example, during one of the early Labor governments in England specifically allowed for the utilization of parliament by the workers for a socialist development, a parliament, which would be transformed, however, in the direction of greater democracy.

If this is a possibility under capitalism, is it not even more of a possibility under the conditions which prevailed ~~xxx~~ in Hungary in 1956. What class, we ask, would make "parliament" its focal point of counter-revolutionary activity, in opposition to the workers organized in their councils. The bourgeoisie? the peasants? But that brings us back to Mage's entire distorted conception of the developments in Hungary. Having dealt with them earlier, we will not comment on them again, but refer readers back to our earlier discussion.

It might have been that the Hungarian situation would have culminated in a "soviet system", or in a "Parliament", or in a mixture of the two: a parliament in which the councils were also represented directly, a proposal which was made in Hungary by some revolutionists during the course of the revolution. Mage would regard such a situation as one of "dual power", but that only because of his generally mistaken views on the revolution. Since we see that it would have not been this, the necessity for calling for "All Power to The Workers Councils" does not exist, and its desirability is nil precisely because those in the YSL who propose this aim and slogan ~~xxx~~ propose it in counterposition to "democracy."

## On "Revolutionary Parties"

Our "Left - Wing" critics admonish us for failing to call for a "revolut-

ionary party". What, we ask, is a revolutionary party? One which stands for the revolutionary overthrow of the existing regime and oppressive system. That regime in Hungary was a Stalinist one. The system, likewise, Stalinist. Was not the Social-Democratic Party a revolutionary party then, or even the Smallholders' Party for that matter? But our critics are not satisfied.

Wohlforth, during the course of the New York membership discussion, even informed us that such a party must be organized prior to the revolution, or else no revolution can take place. Fortunately, he does not follow these ideas to their logical conclusion, or else he would be forced to believe that the Hungarian Revolution did not occur. More than that, since everyone knows that it is impossible to organize parties under Stalinist totalitarianism, he would have to conclude that the people under Stalinism cannot overthrow their masters. Oddly enough, it is this last conclusion which has led some many socialists and ex-socialists to rely on American military might in the struggle against Stalinism.

Not being anarchists or believers in "spontaneity", we too believe in the necessity for a party, and believe that a democratic-socialist party of the Hungarian working class, with a Marxist orientation, would have been required to safeguard the gains of the revolution and lead the nation on to the path towards socialism. We do not presume however, to decide in advance whether the Social-Democratic Party could have been organized for such a rôle, or whether another political party would be required. We see no reason to exclude the development of the Social-Democratic Party into the party required by the workers for this task, although we do not definitely predict its occurrence. Mage, who wants us to be modest in calling for opposition to Gamulka, will undoubtedly regard this as "capitulation". But we are used to that.

To our views, Mage-Wohlforth counterpose the "need for a revolutionary party." What do they mean? We suspect that at best they mean a party that resembled in all respects the Russian Bolshevik Party of 1917, or perhaps the Hungarian Communist Party of that period. Such a view is both foolish and icon-worshipping. But we do not assail it too much because it occurs to us that they may mean even something else, something not even as reasonable as that foolish view.

The horrible thought occurs to us that they may mean a party resembling the Socialist Workers Party of the United States.

All we can say, is "no, thanks". We'll stick to our formulations and views, with whatever imperfections they may have.

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We have presented our arguments against the conceptions of Mage-Wohlforth and for the defeat of the Wohlforth amendments which embody those conceptions. But we have also had another aim in this article. During the course of the discussion, we have been asked a number of times by the "Left-Wing", "What do you mean by a 'democratic-socialist' regroupement? What is this 'democratic-socialism'? Do you mean Mollet's policy in Algeria?"

No, comrades, by democratic socialism we do not mean Mollet's policy in Algeria. That was not democratic-socialism. On the contrary, it was anti-democratic, pro-capitalist and imperialist. We mean by "democratic-socialist" all of the conceptions we have discussed here, as counterposed to ~~Stalinist ideas~~ Stalinist ideas mainly, but also as counterposed to your views. Do you know, understand, Comrades Mage and Wohlforth? You may not, but we believe that the overwhelming majority of the membership of the YSL will.

ON A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR "UNITY"

by S. T.

The three comrades who have entered their pleas of being "guilty" of having attended the SWP convention protest their "guilt" to an action no one accuses them of having committed. No one charges the commission of any heinous act merely by attending the meeting or convention of any other organization. All should know, once and for all, that all members of the YSL can attend any meeting they wish.

The YSL, and this applies to any other socialist organization, thinks that it has the right, however, to inquire as to what meetings its members have attended. It also believes it has the right, strange as it may seem to some of our newly blossomed ultra-democrats, to inquire as to what transpired at such meetings. This does not make the YSL a "Leninist" organization, as Tim Wohlforth has charged, to exercise these elementary organizational rights. Nor does it make Tim Wohlforth a democrat when he shouts back, "It's none of your damn business."

However, what we do object to is when a faction in the YSL sets itself up as a separate organization and proceeds to exercise discipline inside the faction, while, in practice, denying that same prerogative to the YSL as a whole. That the so-called "left wing" caucus operates as a separate and distinct organization should now be apparent to all. They are now engaged in recruiting to their faction individuals who are not members of the YSL. What abused section of our Constitution will be dragged out to justify recruiting members to a faction of an organization before they are even members of the organization!

It is also intolerable to the functioning of a single organization to have a faction of its members who feel that they do not have to be responsible to the organization for their political actions. Or who feel that it is an abrogation of democratic procedure for the organization to inquire into their political activities. It is disloyal on the part of those members who reply to these perfectly legitimate inquiries that they are part of an "inquisition" and Eastland-FBI tactics.

Any socialist organization should maintain a healthy interest in the areas where its members function. If a member is in a trade union or the NAACP, it would be normal to expect that they would report on the political developments in these areas. Any organization ought to take a dim view of members who attend meetings of other organizations, or who take speaking assignments before other organizations, and do not inform their own organization, and who even maintain that the organization to which they belong has no right to inquire into these activities. This has nothing to do with so-called "opponents work". Socialists function in other organization, and very often, if not the overwhelming majority of the time, are not engaged in so-called "opponents work". We do not participate in the trade unions, in the NAACP, in local community organizations, in the Liberal Party to name only a few as "opponents". We function or should function as loyal member. We have a different point of view on many occasions on policy, but we do not wish to destroy or wreck these organizations. Our purpose is to try to aid in the development

and attempt to influence<sup>it</sup> in a more militant and left-ward direction. The reason for this attitude is that we do not view most of the organizations in which we may function as rivals to the socialist movement, especially to the small socialist movement of today.

The YSL, we must admit, has an inordinate amount of interest in respect to the developments of other tendencies of the socialist movement. We feel a special interest in such meetings of other tendencies which discuss matters closely affecting the YSL, or where the YSL will be discussed. And quite naturally, if the NAC discovers that one of its members has attended such a meeting, our interest is only sharpened. Therefore since Tim Wohlforth did not think it was his responsibility to report the fact that he attended the SWP convention, the NAC believed it had the obligation to inquire as to whether the reports we heard were true, and whether Tim Wohlforth would give the NAC a summary of the sessions he attended. It was at this point that we were rudely informed that "It's none of your damn business." However, fortunately for Wohlforth, he had a change of mind and then decided to give a "report".

The NAC members were forced to ask Wohlforth a series of questions only because Tim Wohlforth gave a "report" which contained about as much information as a blank piece of paper. We were informed that the SWP youth were militant, enthusiastic, concerned with the problems of being a youth organization, interested in former LYLers, they were for "unity" with the YSL, that the average age of some Toronto members was 22 years, that everyone was of good spirit, that it was a democratic meeting and finally that all points of view were freely expressed. We had about as much information after the "report" as we did before the "report". The only detailed information was the average age of the Toronto members. When we inquired as to the different points of view which were so freely expressed, the perspective of the AYS and view on the perspective, what were the points of view about the YSL (information which will be freely discussed at the open YSL convention), Wohlforth replied either that he doesn't know, he doesn't recall, or it wasn't discussed. There is little doubt on the part of the rest of the NAC that Wohlforth thought he was extremely clever when he replaced his originally untenable position of refusing to say anything until he got permission from the SWP with a "report" on meaningless generalities. And after reading the confession of "guilt" by the three other comrades from N.Y. who assure us of the "truly democratic" nature of the SWP, we have about the same amount of information.

### The YSL's Special Interest in the SWP Youth

Our interest in this convention is only to be expected. After all the SWP has made a proposal for "unity" with the YSL. Do those comrades who are shouting "inquisition" think it is illegitimate for the YSL to want an honest report about the proceedings of an organization which has made a "unity" proposal? We know that the SWP convention was not open and the radical public has no official information about the various points of view in that organization, even less information than is available about the Communist Party. Therefore if a YSLer was invited to attend we wonder whether it was for the purpose of informing the YSL of the SWP's point of view or because Tim Wohlforth and his friends are regarded as near members of the SWP and functioning as a SWP-oriented tendency inside the YSL?

Tim Wohlforth's "report" to the NAC and the statement of the three other comrades is interesting. It is more than an assertion of the right to attend certain meetings, since no one disputes that. It is a political declaration that the YSL (and the ISL) have been "wrong on every question" in the past year; and by inference, although they do not say it yet, the SWP has been right on every question. This blanket assertion we do not wish to challenge at this late date for the entire discussion in the YSL has been between the independent socialist tendency and a Cannonite-orientated tendency. This is quite evident since Mage and Wohlforth who have been the main spokesmen for the "left wing" have raised the factional dispute on almost every single question with the exception of the nature of the Russian state. And when seen from the totality of everything they have written, it is obvious that it adds up to the SWP's point of view. They have now reached the stage where they are openly willing to admit this fact. The only mystery at this late date is why they protest when we characterize the "left wing" caucus, as almost exclusively represented by Mage and Wohlforth, as Cannonite. They have the right to hold this point of view, but we do object to their attempt to masquerade under the guise that it is the YSL which has changed its politics, while the "leftwing" represents what the YSL always stood for.

#### The SWP's "Unity" Proposal

The action of the N.Y. "left wing" and their understandable reluctance to honestly discuss their attendance at the SWP convention, and the fact that they tried to keep that fact hidden from the YSL, sheds additional light on the SWP's proposal for "unity" between the YSL and the AYS. Despite this "unity" proposal made at a time when there is general discussion of regroupment in the radical movement, the YSL has certain reasons to suspect the bona fide nature of the proposal. We know of the SWP's justification of the tactic of entering other socialist organizations, especially social-democratic ones, in order to attempt to take it over, or else to build a caucus in the party and then split the party. We know that the SWP considers the YSL as well as the independent socialist tendency as "social-democratic", in character independent of anything which has happened in the past year. We know that certain leaders of the SWP since the formation of the YSL have made statements to the effect that they would have to deal with the YSL before the SWP could build its own youth organization. The implication being that the YSL has to be captured or destroyed, or the field cleared, before SWP can have a serious youth perspective. We also know that several years ago the SWP sent a number of youth into the Chicago YSL, and attempted, without much success, to set up a faction in the YSL. And since these actions and statements were made not twenty years ago but only yesterday, so to speak, it is not unexpected if the YSL were to entertain a few reservations about the motives of the SWP.

We regret to state that little has happened which would enable the YSL to resolve its doubts in the SWP's favor. Their latest maneuver, the invitation to the "left wingers" to attend their convention, gives us very little indication for believing anything else but the SWP is attempting to recruit a number of YSLers under the color of a "unity" proposal. If the SWP were serious about unity with the YSL, it is inconceivable that they would proceed in this manner. In order to make a good start they would not only invite members of the



minority who are already 300,000% for joining forces with the SWP, but the majority who are skeptical of the SWP's intentions. If the SWP is a "democratic" organization where democracy exists in practice and not on paper (as it presumably does in the YSL), then the thing to do is to invite skeptics down. Better still, invite in the radical public, or at least a representative of each tendency to see this "democracy in practice". Let them invite not only Shachtman, but Bert Cochran and some Johnsonites. They would be able to testify based upon intimate previous contact with the "democracy in practice" as it is practiced in the SWP. That would be verification that is of value.

But instead of inviting those whose impression would be worth something, the SWP invited down a group whose testimony, while interesting, is next to worthless because of their political commitment to the SWP. But the problem is not the extent or lack of democracy in the SWP. It is the motivation of the SWP in making this "unity" proposal. The proposal that we test their sincerity by consummating unity is disingenuous, if nothing else. The motivation of the proposal is not to be tested by consummating the act for which sincerity of the proposal is the precondition. And in the absence of verifiable evidence, the assertion of the minority is just not enough.

However the issue is more than sincerity. We have to consider agreement on purpose as well as a conception of how to build a socialist youth organization. This can not be resolved by repeating as our ultra-left friends do (for this question alone), "let's build a broad, militant youth movement." On every other aspect of the regroupment discussion, especially toward the SP, they demand the maximum amount of clarification; toward the SWP, they demand the maximum speed. We know that the SWP is now talking as if if were in favor of something called a "broad" youth organization. But what this means is anybody's guess. The YSL certainly wants to know, for we have deep-seated suspicions, whether or not they view this as a means whereby the SWP hopes to build for themselves a youth organization through entering the YSL, building a faction, taking over the YSL or else splitting the YSL and leaving with a larger group than with they entered. Now of course this perspective may turn out to be a disaster, in that they may lose more members than they gain. Or it may merely be abortive in the sense that they gain nothing for all the effort expended. But then again, it may be considered worth while even considering only a possibility of success because from the SWP's point of view the YSL is an impediment in the way of building a viable SWP youth organization.

In the meantime what happens to the YSL? The YSL, involved in this faction fight with the Cannonites, will not be able to remain an organization capable of attracting new members who are capable of building a healthy socialist organization. Instead the YSL will become the battlefield between two or more hostile tendencies; one which will be "wrong on every question" and one which will be right on every question. Their only point of agreement will be that the YSL is a prize worth capturing. It will become the not-so-happy hunting ground for adult tendencies, or rather the battleground for youth representatives of adult tendencies. Such an organization will have no future, only a past. It will tend to repel radical and socialist youth who will be horrified at the constant factional atmos-

phere. And in turn it will tend to attract those who can best thrive on this type of factionalism, and do not turn out to be the best or most enduring kind of socialists. The SWP may feel that it can recruit out of the debris, but the YSL is under no obligation to help create this situation.

Different tendencies can exist in the same organization only when there is a broad area of agreement on what you want to build and how you wish to do it. But such agreement, even if of a general type, can only be arrived at before hand, and unity then is the test of whether the agreement is viable. A visible foundation has to be present before it is even possible to get to the first stages of the discussion. We will never get to that point as long as we have a minority which is in close collaboration with another youth organization, and this minority is engaged in an attempt to recruit into the YSL individuals who are hostile to the YSL, assuming that they even understand our politics. It will also be extremely difficult if that minority is attempting to recruit into the YSL individuals who are sympathizers, if not members of the SWP, under the banner of "join the fight against the right wing".

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### "Our Only Interest is How to Smash Them"

(The following is excerpted from sections of an SWP Bulletin of June, 1955, published in Labor Action, September 12, 1955. To our knowledge, the SWP has never repudiated this position.)

From Murray Weiss to J.P.Cannon:

"In this respect I think we should combat all inclinations to regard our struggles with the revisionists of all forms as a finished chapter belonging to the dead past. We will be badly mistaken if we think we can 'by-pass' even the Shachtmanites, as well as the Cochranites, in ideological battles. The awakening youth will examine all programs and tendencies. They will not take our word for anything. We will have to review and bring up to date all the great faction fights. These fights, after all, were not factional brawls. Nor were they concerned over obscure doctrinal points of fine interest only to a sect. They were of the great programmatic issues of our epoch and they have burning meaning in the world today.

"Take our work on the college campus. In my opinion both the Shachtmanites and the Cochranites are important opponents to our movement in this arena. Any attitude that we can turn our backs on them and work in unploughed territory is a dangerous half truth.

"This does not mean that we are interested in any fusion or entry with these people. Our only interest is how to smash them. But this must be done at every stage anew. And it must be done with ideological weapons. (emphasis added)

"I am worried that our student work will not get to first base until we've taken off our coats and done a job on the Shachtmanites. The brutal fact is that they have more on the campus than we do. And much more important, they stand in a position to disorient and demoralize awakening elements that are looking for a radical solution."

Only one thing has changed: the tactic of smashing is now entry.

In view of the recent reports of the "democratic" nature of the SWP and the interest that a number of comrades have in the SWP we reprint excerpts from a letter Bert Cochran wrote to Labor Action (November 23, 1953). S.T.

"Permit me to correct several errors in your November 16 article on the split in the Socialist Workers Party.

"Your account conveys the impression that a special plenum was called on November 7 to take up the Minority's non-attendance at the 25th Anniversary public meeting of the SWP. Actually, the November 7 plenum was officially set on September 30, a month before the public meeting, or our non-attendance at it. While we had a pretty shrewd suspicion from the first that the plenum was being called to expel us and to launch a war on the World Trotskyist movement, officially we knew nothing, as the Cannon caucus leaders steadfastly refused us all information as to the purpose of the plenum.

"This high-handed usurpation was followed in the next weeks by completely cutting out our representatives from all party decisions and plans, and subjecting us to a campaign of unexampled rowdiness and vituperation. When we saw the 25th Anniversary meeting being organized by the Cannonites as a demonstration against us (as can be seen from Cannon's printed speech) we decided it was high time to make an organized protest against the two-bit-dictatorial methods.

"Your article further states: "The Cannon majority presented a resolution calling on all who failed to attend the anniversary meetings to give their explanation and excuse...but the minority NC representatives refused to participate and did not answer." ~~What~~ what actually happened was that as soon as the plenum opened, Cannon presented a special motion "suspending" five Minority leaders and excluding from membership all our supporters unless they signed a 'loyalty oath' and disavowed and condemned us. I thereupon presented a substitute motion of our resolution which called for the continuation of the political discussion, for the SWP to remain part of the world Trotskyist current, and condemned Cannon's attempt to dynamite the world movement. My substitute motion was ruled out of order, the expulsion resolution was adopted, and we were out of the plenum--in less than half an hour! One has to go to the Stalinist movement for any comparison with this bureaucratic outrage!

"Then, immediately after the plenum, hoodlum tactics were employed against us. One of the SWP national leaders broke into our Youngstown headquarters when no one was present and stole chairs and other property belonging to the Youngstown organization, which had voted 8 to 3 to side with our group. The SWP leaders seem determined to befoul the socialist movement with a public scandal!

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"Their approach to the American scene, which is probably the most decisive gauge of the nature of the present Cannon faction, is one of thorough-going sectarianism. According to their new revelation, the tiny, unknown SWP has the "ordained leadership", the essential cadres of the revolution, and if it only remains "true to itself" and keeps blowing its own horn, its revolutionary triumph is guaranteed. Its political position is a compound of ultimatism

and smug braggadoccio. The SWP is due to emerge as the new DeLeonism of the radical movement. This sectarian ossification reflects no special trends of circles in the American labor movement, or even of American radicalism, but arises out of the petrification of the "old Trotskyists" who have succumbed to a quarter century of isolation."

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For those readers of YSR who are unfamiliar with the expulsion of the Cochranites from the SWP, we also reprint below excerpts from the article in LABOR ACTION which dealt with that expulsion. Quoted in these excerpts are quotations from the SWP Majority Resolution which expelled the Cochranites. Comrades are urged to remember that the pretext for this expulsion did not consist of charges that the Cochranite minority had been traveling up and down the country attacking the SWP nor that they had printed a public organ attempting to discredit it. And above all, it must be remembered that nobody was charged with refusing to accept the discipline of the SWP or violating it. The charge was simply this, that the Cochranites had boycotted the 25th Anniversary meeting of the SWP. Following are the excerpts from the LA article which tell what the SWP did about this "boycott" action:

This majority resolution, first of all, characterizes the boycott action in typical Cannon style, beginning with "treacherous, strikebreaking" and including: "an act of objective aid to the Stalinists who expelled the initiating nucleus of American Trotskyism in October 1928"... "an organized demonstration against the 25-year struggle of American Trotskyism," etc.

Declaring that "all who participated" in this boycott "have obviously consummated the split which they have been long preparing," the resolution proceeded to read them out of the party. Five of the leaders are thereupon named as those "who organized the boycott" and these are declared to be "hereby suspended from the party." No trial, no formalities of an inquiry as to who "organized the boycott," not even for the record; the charge and verdict are in the resolution slapped down before the committee (the NC - ST).

Furthermore, the split is to be mechanically spread down into the ranks by what the Cochranites more or less aptly termed a "McCarthyite loyalty oath." All supporters of the minority are called on to "individually disavow and condemn" the boycott or else be expelled.

This is standard operating procedure with Cannon. It preserves in fossil form the methods used to Stalinize and monolithize the CP's of over a couple of decades ago, when oppositionists were expelled and then all those who voted against the expulsions were in turn expelled.

Cannon (the minority charges) has been trying for almost two years to line up his faction for driving through a hard split....

(According to the Cochranite document, "The Split in the SWP"), "The majority leaders made their decisions in their private caucus meetings... and then read off their decisions to us... The Cannonites arrogated to themselves the right to proclaim by fiat the 'party line' on any and all questions without submitting their caucus decisions ~~to~~ ~~any~~ for adoption by any legal party body." On September 30 they decided to call a special NC plenum but refused to inform the minority NC members on its agenda, purpose, documents, reports or any other arrangements for it. (This was the plenum whose first order of business was the minority's expulsion).

By Frank McGowen

Shortly after I first left the "left" Wing Caucus I wrote a brief statement of resignation in which I said: "the political basis of the LWC is not merely a regroupment perspective, but a disagreement with the independent socialist tendency on a whole series of important political questions." More explicitly this meant that the LWC is based on Cannonite politics, that these Cannonite politics form the theoretical basis of the regroupment perspective of the LWC, and that in the YSL the LWC was moving in the direction of a split to the Cannonites. Since I never shared the Cannonite politics of the LWC these considerations would seem to be sufficient political reasons for leaving. However, since comrade Tim has written a letter asking me to explain my differences with the LWC more fully, I am happy to oblige him.

The position of the LWC on regroupment is based on a sectarian view of the perspectives for the socialist movement in American society, and a Cannonite conception of the nature of Stalinism. To the LWC, the current period in America is a reactionary one in which the possibilities of reaching significant sections of the American people, are not sufficient to justify the formation of a broad socialist party whose program departs significantly from the full program of their favorite sect. When pressed they do not deny that the Negro struggle, the relaxation of the cold war tensions, the letup of the pressures of the witchhunt, etc., slightly differentiate the present from the past few years. But a mass socialist party is still impossible in this period; propaganda groups are still necessary. This is true enough - as far as it goes. The broad Debsian party we advocate will still be primarily a propaganda group, but it will not be the same kind of a propaganda group as the existing sects. Mass parties and small, isolated propaganda groups concerned with fully elaborated programs do not exhaust the range of possibilities. What is needed is a large propaganda group which can spread certain very general ideas (socialism, labor party, defense of democracy everywhere) to a large number of people, and to begin the long and difficult task of rebuilding socialist influence inside the labor movement.

The sectarian perspective of the LWC is reenforced by their analysis of the labor bureaucracy and the relationship of the American social democratic groups to it. Since the rank and file movements against the bureaucracy must ~~not~~ precede the development of a labor party and since social democracy is tied to the bureaucracy, a broad socialist party including social democrats could not effectively push for a labor party. But the American social democratic groups are not tied to the labor bureaucracy materially and ideologically as the social democracy of Europe is. Whatever ties exist in America are almost completely ~~on~~ on the level of ideology.

Moreover in the past, fear of the Stalinist movement has been an important force pushing social democrats toward the labor bureaucracy. Given the continuance of the liberal capitalist politics of the labor bureaucracy and absence of a significant stalinist movement, American social democrats would tend toward independence from the labor bureaucracy. On the other hand, the labor bureaucracy is not a homogenous social stratum; some sections of it are far more progressive than others. The advent of mass pressure for a labor party may induce sections of the bureaucracy to support this demand. The fight for a labor party need not, throughout its entire course, be a head-on fight with the labor bureaucracy.

This sectarian American perspective leads the LWC to discount the possibility or the desirability of reaching out to the right. To them, the crisis in Stalinism is the only change in objective conditions relevant to regroupment.

But they view the Stalinist crisis merely as an opportunity of recruiting to their brand of revolutionary socialism. It can be pointed out that ex-Stalinists are not likely to join a sect in significant numbers - that if a Stalinoid regroupment is excluded, a broad party capable of recruiting from the right is necessary to recruit large numbers of ex-Stalinists. But this is not the most important part of the argument.

For decades the Stalinist movement has been the largest, most powerful, movement that was generally considered to be socialist. As such, this anti-workingclass movement played the role of the leading party of the "left." This role can now be taken from the Stalinists by a genuine socialist movement. The accomplishment of this task would eliminate one of the major causes of the backwardness of the American socialist movement. Such a development would be progressive no matter how right wing the new socialist movement would be.

The LWC, in line with the Cannonite theory of Stalinism, is opposed to the building of a movement which could replace the Stalinists as the leading party of the left if that movement is social democratic. Thus the Cannonite theory of Stalinism combines with a sectarian view of the perspectives of American socialism to produce the regroupment line of the LWC - Join the SWP.

## THE POLITICAL CHARACTER OF THE AMERICAN FORUM

by Sam Taylor

The first meeting of the American Forum on June 12 in New York City gave the radical public a better picture of what the Forum is and the different tendencies operating in it. Although most of the speakers utilized every opportunity to emphasize the "discussional" character of the Forum, everyone at the same time recognized that most everyone believes it to be something additional. At one time or another it is denied that it is an organization, but merely the formalization of the regroupment discussion which had been going on for several months. But if it is merely a "discussion" group to formalize discussion among radical groups, then why is it necessary to set up an organization which sets as its perspective to carry out its discussion among wider circles which have little or no contact with existing radical organizations or tendencies. Obviously it is some type of an organization. This is even belatedly admitted in the May 31 statement of the Steering Committee of the "Left Wing" Caucus which calls the Forum a "broad and non-programatic socialist organization."

Since it is some kind of a socialist organization, then what is its political character. To say that it is only an organization to formalize discussion is evasive and ignores the development of the Forum. A.J. Muste took the lead in initiating the Forum after a ~~px~~ period of several months of discussion on regroupment. After a round of such meeting, everyone, more or less knew where everyone else stood on regroupment as well as their positions on a whole series of questions. The real question in most people's mind was: what to do next? The idea that what they wanted to do was to merely continue more "discussions" or to in general clarify socialist ideas in general is nonsense. Everyone was interested in the next organization step. The real question was not whether anyone wanted to discontinue discussions in general for no one was for ending them. Rather the issue revolved around different conceptions of the political character of the next step. Specifically, if there was going to be a formal organization, then what would be its political character? And this can be determined as much by what an organization does not say as by what it does say.

There were different opinions as to what its political character should be. The YSL and the ISL were of the opinion that the minimum needed in order to justify out taking political responsibility for the Forum, that is, to send a representative to sit on its National Committee, was a clear-cut statement on the defense of democracy everywhere and against any form of totalitarianism where the people are denied their democratic rights. We did not demand that it adopt our ideas about democratic socialism, nor the nature of the Russian state. We wanted a minimal political statement. And unless the Forum could take this minimal position for the defense of democracy everywhere since it has already made clear its defense of democratic rights in the U.S., we felt that it would give the Forum a certain political coloration. We did not and do not say that the Forum is any kind of a Stalinist-front organization, since it is obvious to all that the CP or Stalinists do not control the organization. Rather we felt that the Forum adopted a Stalinoid pol-

itical coloration. This does not mean that we regard many of the participants on the Forum as Stalinoids; a number of them are clearly anti-Stalinist in the sense of not being in any way defenders of the Russian social system.

What we mean is that the Forum itself, as an organization established for whatever purpose anyone may wish to assign to it, has issued statements which clearly express concern about the stability of the American economy, "the increasing concentration of economic power in private hands; by the reactionary attacks upon the labor unions; by the heavy trend to conformity and persistent violations of civil liberties; by the prevalence of racism; by the threat of American militarism and the nuclear arms race" (from the printed brochure of introduction to the American Forum). But it does not have a word to say the areas of concern inside of the Russian and Stalinist orbit. This is the usual Stalinoid formulation of a political statement, and consequently our estimation of the political character of the Forum.

The American Forum can be considered as a step forward toward regroupment, - but a regroupment of a certain type. We believe that two types of regroupment possibilities are open: a democratic socialist and a Stalinoid. This is a type of regroupment step that permits the continuation of the confusion or identification of socialism and Stalinism. It is not the kind of regroupment which leaves no doubt in any one's mind of the complete identification of socialism and democracy.

Given this development we felt that the Forum would not be a viable means whereby to carry on regroupment activity, if those who in deference to the position of the Communist Party and Stalinist opinion (which seems to be their main concern) do not feel that they can go along at the present time with a minimal statement in defense of democracy everywhere, then the regroupment discussion would isolate itself, no matter what its immediate gains may be. While socialists and democrats are obliged to defend the political liberties of the Forum's participants against Congressional and police intimidation, no one is obliged to defend the political character of the Forum and help to perpetuate the illusion that it is merely a discussion group which takes no position on any question.

At the first public meeting of the Forum, A.J. Muste outlined and argued against the criticism raised by radicals and socialists who have refused to participate in the Forum's National Committee. He gave four objections or criticisms:

1. Those who say that you can not engage in discussion with Communists. But, Muste replied, no one should be excluded from the discussions now going on.

2. Those who say that Communists are incapable of participating in a free discussion and dissent. Muste answered while this may have been true under Stalin's regime, it is no longer true as seen by the events in Poland and China.

3. Those who say that it is alright to discuss with Communists, but not to put them on the National Committee; or that it is permis-



ible to arrange only single meetings with Communists. But, Muste answered, there is no reason why it is the abrogation of political righteousness to place Communists on a committee set up for "continuous discussion."

4. Those who say that it is alright for the American Forum to set up a National Committee with members of the Communist Party, provided that the committee also contain those who are severely critical of Communism and the CP. In reply Muste stated the such people are already on the NC and who will not engage in united action with Communists.

But at no time did Muste indicate the major reason why many, if not most socialists who refused to participate, gave: the refusal of the Forum to come out with a clear-cut statement on democracy everywhere, not only in the U.S. That is, a statement which would have made the Forum politically defensible inside of the labor movement which it hopes to reach. The reason for the strange commission is clear; it would bring out into the open the political character of the Forum. All the other objections Muste outlined are in a sense organizational straw-men. Muste's complete attachment to an objective statement of the most important criticism is brought further into question since he read to the meeting a letter from Norman Thomas which while stating his opposition to the Eastland committee's witchhunt tactics also stated his objection to the Forum. Norman Thomas stated: "We may well discuss social theories with Mr. Gates but not unite with him or his followers in a socialist organization unless and until their conversion to democracy has been far better proved than it is today."

The objection to the Forum is usually met with the reply that the Forum (1) does not take positions on any question since it is only a discussion group, or (2) the question of democracy everywhere is precisely one of the things which has to be discussed since that is where there is disagreement. The inference being that the Forum will take a position once the differences have been resolved. These two positions are sometimes discussed or raised in one and the same breath, as Milton Zaslow did at the Forum meeting.

But the situation is quite simple: Either the Forum takes no position on anything, anywhere and issues no statement referring to any real problem and is neutral on everything; or else it stands to be judged by what it does or does not say in its statements. Clearly the latter applies.

The question as to whether the Forum is an united front or a discussion group can often degenerate into a play on words or nuances. What the Forum is does not depend on the various definitions served up. The pressures inside the Forum will bring that out as soon enough. This the reason why Muste at the meeting raised the warning against "manipulation or slap-dash action" by the participants. If everyone understands the discussional nature of the Forum, then why the warning.

The Forum may state in its printed brochure that the "American Forum rigorously limits itself to the specific purpose of discussion /but/ in no sense prohibits or prevents any individuals or groups from organizing united activities, discussing merger or try-

ing to form new organizations. American Forum neither promotes nor seeks to inhibit such developments." But the reality is that the members of the Forum have begun or did participate in an united action - the May Day Rally. The way it works is that most or all of the participants and their organizations get together for a joint action which is formally carried out under the name of another committee. The fact that they take off the hat reading "American Forum" and replace it with one reading "Committee for this or that specific action" will mislead only the innocent. Everyone else will know that this is the American Forum. This tendency was seen at the June 12 meeting where Albert Blumberg of the CP clearly stated that the CP does not regard the Forum as an arena for "endless discussion" and a place to "canvas differences of all groups." "The purpose, he stated, "is to move outward not inward." And he concluded by pointing out that we "look forward to breaking out into the broad area of socialist thinking and action."

It is only natural to expect that after a brief period of "discussion", the pressures to "do something" will become readily visible. The "discussion" will be the prelude to united front activities.. Who can be serious in believing that anyone is really concerned with raising that topic "what will socialism be like in the U.S." It can either be meaningless or a cover for differences. It can be guaranteed in advance that everyone will come out four-square on paper for a democratic type of socialism. What is really of interest is the fact that many of the participants consider Russia to be some form of socialism or a "worker's state." To what extent will this be discussed, or pushed aside in order to emphasize what all can agree upon as a preface to "doing something".

The spirit of free inquiry with which the important questions will be discussed is to be seen by the answer given by Milton Zaslow of the Socialist Unity Forum to the position of the Forum on civil liberties in the Russian orbit. The questionnaire was attacked as presenting an "indictment" to the Forum and as an attempt to cast aspersions on the Forum as a defender of totalitarianism. While the meeting announced that all points of view will be considered, this was one question that certainly was not welcomed.

#### CIVIL LIBERTIES AND THE AMERICAN FORUM

While the YSL has stated its criticisms of the Forum, needless to say it has nothing in common with the reactionary attacks of the Congressional committees and the bourgeois press. We oppose and denounce the attempted intervention of the Congressional reactionaries and the police in order to silence the Forum. We unequivocally support the civil liberties of any group to advocate any point of view free from Congressional or police intimidation.

The true test of the defense of civil liberties is the defense of the rights of not only those with whom you may be in agreement, but precisely those with whom there is disagreement. The record is well documented with the position of those who are only willing to defend the rights of their friends and not of their opponents. In order to defend one's civil liberties, there is no necessity to express political agreement. The test is the defense of the point of view you reject.

Therefore we must reject the concept of the defense of civil liberties put forward by some of the supporters of the Forum, and notably Tim Wohlforth in the YSL, which states that the only real defenders of the civil liberties of the Forum's participants are those who support the Forum, agree with its positions, participate on its National Committee and do not utter any criticism of the Forum.

However the point of view as presented by Tim Wohlforth in the July issue of the "Left Wing" Bulletin goes even further, and links up any criticism of the Forum with the Congressional and police witchhunters. All critics are in some way bowing to or capitulating to the witchhunt, or else they are not consistent civil libertarians. We have heard this type of argument before, and Tim Wohlforth's repetition of it does not make it any more valid. Up until now it used to come almost exclusively from the Stalinists and the "anti-anti-Communists", but now even the CP has to a great extent abandoned it. The Stalinists would argue that any criticism of Russia or the Communist Party was aiding the witchhunt, if it was not actually part of the witchhunt. And conversely, the only way to defend the civil liberties of Communists was to avoid all such criticism, to say nothing hostile about Russia or the CP, and better still to participate in one of its front organizations. All criticism was linked to the criticism of the reactionaries - the Daily News, the Hearst press, McCarthy, etc.

Socialists rightly reject such arguments as representing a capitulation to Stalinism. They defended the civil liberties of Stalinists and continued to state their criticism of the CP and Stalinism. They did not believe that just because reactionaries attacked the CP, it followed that socialists had to remain silent on the question or become tacit supporters of Stalinism. This incidentally was also the type of reasoning of the reactionaries who tried to link up all defended of the civil liberties of CPers and Stalinists with sympathy and support to Stalinism. Therefore we reject this type of thinking as applied to the American Forum. We make clear our reasons why we do not feel that we can take political responsibility for the Forum given its present political character, all from a socialist point of view, while at the same time making clear our opposition to the Congressional and bourgeois witchhunters.

One further remark on the relations of the YSL to the Forum. Although the YSL does not wish to have a representative on the Forum, it in no way follows that we do not wish to continue to participate in the discussions going on among various tendencies and groups. That is unless supporters of the Forum intend to exclude all those who do not wish to take political responsibility for it. Our position does not mean that YSLers should not attend meetings of the Forum, nor speak at the meetings nor conduct ourselves in a hostile and disruptive manner. We will continue to participate in ad hoc committees or local discussion groups which do not set themselves up as a "socialist organization" with or without a program.

This article will be a) factional b) personal as all hell and c) represents no one's views but my own. It is true that I am rumored to be connected with M.M. (one hardly dares to spell out the name of such an enemy of the working class). It is also true that after a few summery months of a boring and idiotic factional struggle against an equally boring minority I greet with joy the apparent determination of Tim and some other minority spokesmen to get themselves thrown out. However these notes are for the Convention in general and not addressed to the minority in particular.

What is the YSL:

Much of the current furore, and some of the ugliest aspects of the factional struggle, in the YSL has been caused by the ambiguity of the YSL on just how broad and how disciplined an organization we are. A great deal of nonsense has been written on the YSL "breadth" - some of it by supporters of the majority. The Convention has to clarify this question. Above all it must make clear that the fact that we are for a broad all inclusive Party and youth organization, including a number of tendencies, this does not mean that until a regroupment takes place which will make such a broad Party and youth group possible we intend to ape it. The YSL is nothing more and nothing less than the current organizational form through which the revolutionary socialist Third Camp tendency expresses itself politically, in this period, in the youth field.

The breadth to which we have referred meant that while the YSL was a third camp organization which sought to train a third camp cadre it has always been willing to take into its ranks individual members who had not as yet developed our views. It also referred to the fact that the YSL is the product of a unification which united the YPSL and SYL, choosing to use as a criterion of unity our common politics irrespective of our conflicting traditions i.e. the fact that many of us disagreed sharply on questions of "trotskyism", "bolshevism" and that some of us were pacifists.

In other words we decided to build an organization based on political agreement rather than a common tradition. Thus all the nonsense about whether this proposed step or that is consistent with trotskyism is irrelevant. Equally irrelevant are parallels the Cannonites cite about our current faction fight and the fight the Schachtman tendency led in the SWP in 1940. The Schachtman tendency historically we take no responsibility for. In short most of the stuff the minority writes about leninism and trotskyism ("we trotskyist youth") is sent to the wrong address. To things more crudely: a comrade who is a God believer, has a menshevik position on the Russian revolution and is a pacifist but shares the YSL's politics as they apply today is eligible for membership and leadership in the YSL; a comrade who is a trotskyist and a sterling Leninist but disagrees with our current politics is not. In short the YSL is neither a trotskyist nor a Leninist organization but one whose ties are based on a general analysis of the current reality and with a line on current questions. (I might add that the last vestiges of our "leninism" and "trotskyism" are, to me at least, sectarian and wrong hold overs from a past which I do not share. If the faction fight at least destroys some of the old "bolshevist romanticism" in our ranks it will have served a progressive purpose.)

One last point. It is true that we have in the past tried to recruit Cannonite youth, as well as youth which disagreed with us. But we were always trying to win them to our third camp line. We never accepted the idea of a Cannonite tendency as a valid part of our movement. Thus while it makes sense to recruit this young Cannonite or that - even while he maintains his erroneous views - it should only be done on the basis of his being willing to work within the YSL framework as a loyal member, not subject to external discipline in his YSL work.

(more)

Thus the proposals of the AYS to unite with us are unacceptable unless we can have clear assurances that their entry would not mean the entry of a Cannonite tendency disciplined from outside. Incidentally the YSL is an independent youth organization but one which at Convention after Convention has stated that it constitutes with the ISL a single political tendency and that it has the warmest fraternal relationships with the ISL. Thus when the minority talks of preserving the YSL as an independent youth organization what they mean is that they desire to alter our relations to the ISL.

I might add that when we talk about the "independent socialist tendency", I at least mean more than just the ISL and YSL, for example the comrades around Dissent and some of the socialist pacifists around Liberation are closer to us than any other political current in the United States. I favor the YSL pressing the ISL to attempt to establish close fraternal working ties with the people around Dissent, and our participation - our loyal participation - in the Dissent Forums which exist in many parts of the country. The ISL has, I believe, been inexcusably sectarian in regards to Dissent.

#### On the Minority:

The YSL - as well as all other propaganda sects - exists primarily for the purpose of educating youth to a specific socialist viewpoint. It is not an all inclusive organization. It cannot afford to have the bulk of its time spent on debating questions settled in the minds of the majority of the membership years ago. We are obliged to give every minority in our ranks a hearing - this we have done. But comrade Faith's excellent article makes a valid point - it is irresponsible to keep the discussion going beyond a certain point. Her meaning is, I think, that we have heard the basic views of the minority some months ago. The bulk of our membership has rejected those views - further attempts to press the discussion only involve a repetition of the old arguments. This does not mean that the minority has given its line on every question to the membership, it does mean that we have rejected the fundamental line of the minority. Its line on most questions is rejected by the simple fact that the members of the YSL are in the YSL and not in the SWP.

I am for the Convention spelling out our discipline provisions in such a way that no future violations will be tolerated, than no further misinformation about our organizational form can be spread. Thus it is clearly impermissible for the minority to engage in anti-YSL activities in our arenas of work. It should be made clear that they cannot cooperate with the SWP, or any other organization, since all political relations of YSL members with other organizations are channeled ~~thru~~ through the proper committees. It should above all be clear that they cannot sabotage our line on unity, and still remain members of our organization.

I have observed the fact that this faction fight is damaging our organization. Wolforth's reading of a private political letter by an SPer is an act that damages us by reviving all the old wives tales about trotskyite agents in the SP. The minority in its public work in Berkeley spends much of its time attacking the ISL and YSL. Wolforth in New York acts as if he is under no restraint at all, speaks at the AYS Camp, at the American Forum meeting etc. without the slightest responsibility to the YSL Committees. The faction "recruits" outsiders as if it were a separate organization. If their differences with us are such that they cannot submit to any discipline then they should leave. The fact is that no other organization would have tolerated the kind of behaviour I am talking about - above all their ally the SWP would not have tolerated such behaviour. To all of this they reply: but we can do anything we want because the YSL is not a Leninist organization. As if only "leninist" organizations had a right to expect some loyalty from their members, as if only "leninist" organizations had a right to take measures against a minority whose major activity is publicly attacking the organization.

(more)

It so happens that the minority does us a favor. One of the problems of a revolutionary tendency in this period is that it is almost guaranteed to suffer from an unholy degree of ~~sectarianism~~ sectarianism that develops as a result of our long isolation. If the minority serves no other function but to, by example, educate our membership about the effects of sterile sectarianism and to force our majority to implement its politics and express them in a non-sectarian (non-bolshevik) manner it does us a real service. The fever of the factional struggle has burned out some of the old bad habits that some of the members of the old SYL suffered from, we have the advantage of seeing in the minority a distorted caricature of how we sometime must have sounded to our own periphery and friends. However now that we have learned the lesson we need a free hand to implement it.

It is interesting that the minority's line is weakest precisely among those to whom their line is directed, the stalinists and stalinoids. The "accusation" that the YSL majority seeks to build a movement which can address itself to those now to the right of the socialist movement i.e. the lib-labs and secondary trade union leaders rather than the "revolutionary" regroupment of the SWP is guaranteed to receive applause from ex-LYers who know that no movement which cannot create an opening to right can or will survive.

#### Some problems for the majority:

1- The National center has functioned poorly. Delegates are responsible to see to it that they receive reasonable guarantees that the center will function. "Function" means that it will be able to aid the units in the growth which we now face. There is a unspoken assumption among some people that the YSL cannot grow in the coming period, that all our problems will be solved by unity. This is not so, to begin with it is not all clear that in the youth field it will be that much easier to build a YPSL than it is now to build the YSL. The virtues of the YPSLs broadness are to some extent counterbalanced by the freedom the YSL has from the sometimes embarrassing role of the SP. Thus we have to build the framework of the future youth movement of the ~~youth~~ united movement today, we have to train its future leaders. Many comrades have the almost mystical (and ~~defeating~~ defeatist) notion that while the YSL can grow by recruiting one member here and one there the YPSL will be able to grow by hundreds. Neither proposition is true. The YSL has a real perspective of growth if we only begin to apply some of our abstract notions of how to build the new movement to building the YSL today, and the YPSL will face a similar, if somewhat easier, situation to the one we face now. Therefore we must assure an aggressive functioning center that can use the opportunities which exist and which desires to use those openings.

2- Some problems exist about the Unity line. The way I understand our proposals they hinge on two ifs. We are for unity if the SP-SDF decides that it is willing to have a third camp tendency as a valid part of the Party with all rights other members enjoy. The second if hinges around our all-inclusive party conception, that is we are for unity if the SP-SDF is willing to live with a tendency that gives notice that on that question it intends to try and change the Party's views. In other words we postulate at least two major changes in the SP-SDF a) its willingness to have us in and b) its willingness to allow us to press the question of an all-inclusive SP-SDF as a condition of unity.

Secondly I believe we should frankly, and in a comradely manner criticize the things the SP does with which we disagree. We are politically responsible for the SP in the eyes of much of the radical public because we advocate unity. We also have a responsibility to be honest. This will not create any barriers to unity since the SP leadership would tend to be more suspicious if we suddenly ceased to criticize them. I am not for a unity with illusions because such a unity cannot last. As an example I believe the SP acted stupidly and wrongly on the Forum.

I believe we should also make it clear that while we favor a broad unified SP-SDF over all other organizations this does not apply to the present SP-SDF. Or to put it in another way: if the SP-SDF decided to reject any regroupment perspective it will be a tragedy for American socialism and it will doom the SP-SDF to compete with the other sects as one of them i.e. on basis of program. In that case of course I favor the growth of our sects the ISL and YSL whose politics are superior of all others in the United States today. In short unless there is unity we favor the growth of our tendency over all others. After there is unity we favor a party in which a number of tendencies can exist - but even there we favor the growth of our tendency as a loyal part of the party. I think this has to be made clear because some ambiguity exists in the minds of some of our friends about this matter. Our desire to build a broad movement does not mean that we have given up our politics. Those aspects of our "politics" which we may have to give up - a devotion to a "trotskyist" tradition and certain sectarianism in language - are things we should give up in any case. But this has nothing to do with stating that we consider the politics and organizations of the ISL and YSL as superior to those of the SP-SDF, unless it is an SP-SDF which seeks to turn itself into the party of all democratic socialists.

STATEMENT OF THE LEFT WING CAUCUS

CONCERNING POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION BY COMRADE WOHLFORTH IN THE MUSTE FORUM

1. The Left-Wing Caucus reaffirms its endorsement of the American Forum for Socialist Education. We consider the attacks upon the AFSE by all sectors of the capitalist class — by the responsible liberals (N.Y. Times) as well as by the outright witchhunters — to be a confirmation of the value of the Forum as a step toward the revitalization of the socialist movement in the U.S. We condemn the participation of Hernan Singer in the capitalist class-attack upon the AFSE. This action by the National Secretary of the SP-SDF as an authorized spokesman for his organization typifies the anti-socialist political nature of social democracy and its American representatives, the leaders of the SP-SDF.
2. We condemn the action of the YSL NAC in opposing the Muste forum. The stand taken by the YSL right wing is a further indication of this tendency's systematic political adaptation to social democracy as well as of a long-standing stalinophobic sectarianism, which tends to cut the YSL off from the real possibilities for socialist regroupment.
3. We reaffirm the right of every member and tendency in the YSL to participate in broad and non-programmatic socialist organizations, as well as in specific "adult" socialist political organizations. This right is a necessary concomitant of the YSL's very nature as a broad youth organization, uniting socialist youth of differing tendencies. We therefore approve the action of Comrade Wohlforth, and of any other member of the YSL who wishes to participate in the AFSE as an individual. We reject the contention that this matter is a subject for any disciplinary action whatsoever in an organization like the YSL.
4. The NAC majority has charged that Comrade Wohlforth "violated the discipline demanded of leading members of the organization." We emphatically reject the notion that there are two standards of discipline, one for "leading members", another for the rank and file. All members of the YSL have equal rights and responsibilities.
5. The NAC majority claims that it has the right to take disciplinary action against Comrade Wohlforth, but that it refuses to do so in order not to respond to a "deliberate provocation" by the YSL Left Wing.
6. The charge of "provocation" is a complete slander. Comrade Wohlforth was merely using his democratic right as a member of the YSL to participate in an outside organization. We have absolutely no desire for any "scandal" stemming from disciplinary action by the NAC majority against any member of the LWC. On the contrary, we retain our oft-repeated intention to remain as members of the YSL.
7. If the NAC majority believes that Comrade Wohlforth has violated discipline it is its responsibility to prefer charges against him. It is to the credit of the NAC majority that it realizes that disciplinary action against Comrade Wohlforth would be a "scandal." However, if it is not prepared to act in this scandalous fashion, it has no right to claim that Comrade Wohlforth has violated discipline and is therefore subject to charges. It is the obligation of the NAC majority either to bring charges against Comrade Wohlforth for "violation of discipline" and "provocation", or else to admit that, although it disapproves of Comrade Wohlforth's action, it concedes that he has not acted in an impermissible or disloyal fashion. The NAC majority must either back up its charges or drop them.

— May 31, 1957

1202



LETTER FROM JAMES ROBERTSON TO A.J. MUSTE

Berkeley, Calif.  
June 5, 1957

The Rev. A. J. Muste  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Reverend Muste,

I would like to offer full and public support to the American Forum for Socialist Education on behalf of myself and of all the other comrades of the left wing of the Young Socialist League who are active in the regroupment forums in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The hostile reaction from many quarters to the public announcement of the formation of the American Forum has induced me to write you taking a clear position of solidarity with the AFSE as against those tendencies within the radical movement who have withheld their support either through sectarian considerations or in response to the witch-hunting press and Congressional attacks on the Forum.

I have never had occasion to write you before although our paths have crossed several times -- not only when you have been through the Bay Area speaking, but in particular I recall how impressed by you I was when you addressed the 1954 Young Socialist League founding convention at which I was a delegate. In recent months I have followed your outstanding contribution to facilitating the regroupment discussions in this country. This has been particularly a source of satisfaction to me because of my own involvement in helping inaugurate forum type groupings in the Bay Area, in particular the Independent Socialist Forum of San Francisco and the Berkeley Socialist Forum.

For several months we in this area had been hearing that a national forum formation largely initiated by you was impending and now that it is formally launched we are looking forward to collaborating in this venture in the hope of systematizing and extending across the country as inclusive a discussion as possible. In this connection I was glad to find that two of our local forum members, Fritjof Thygeson and Paul Baran, have accepted positions on your national committee.

I must make it clear that I am writing to you entirely in an unofficial capacity rather than as Bay Area chairman of the Young Socialist League since the national YSL has unfortunately seen fit to disassociate itself from the American Forum.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

cc. National Action Committee, YSL;  
Tin Wohlforth, national committee member of  
AFSE and secretary of YSL Left Wing Caucus;  
LWC Steering Committee.

1203

RESOLUTION OF THE DAYTON AREA UNIT, YSL,

ON THE AMERICAN FORUM FOR SOCIALIST EDUCATION

Submitted by Herschel Kaminsky

The Dayton Area Unit of the Young Socialist League welcomes the formation of the American Forum -- for Socialist Education as an important means of promoting the discussion on the American Left.

We hold no hard-bound formal theories regarding the pace, direction, or form of the regroupment process. Free and serious discussion of all political questions among all tendencies is on the order of the day. On certain issues we also consider united front action possible and desirable. No matter what path any future regroupment follows, we believe that, at the present time, the AFSE is a valuable means of channelizing discussion. While it is true that local discussions will take place without such a forum, it is obvious that discussion will be more adequately organized and extended throughout the country by the AFSE. The AFSE can also be expected to play a very useful role in focusing discussion on the central political questions of our time.

Immediately following the public announcement of its formation, the AFSE came under fire from the witch-hunting Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and from the entire capitalist press. We believe that the AFSE is honored by these attacks from enemies of socialism and civil liberties as well. Attacks on the forum have also come from so-called socialists. We denounce the statement of Herman Singer, speaking officially for the SP-SDF in the pages of the New York Times, as an act of active political collaboration with the witch-hunters. We further condemn the action of the SP-SDF NEC in threatening several members of the SP-SDF with expulsion if they do not withdraw from the AFSE. We consider this action to be a "subversive-list" technique which has no place in a supposedly socialist organization.

We affirm the right of any individual member of the YSL to participate in the AFSE, while making clear that his action does not, unfortunately, represent official YSL policy.

Passed unanimously, June 9, 1957

## A NEW YOUTH ORGANIZATION IS BORN!

by H.M.

The latest issue of the jocularly entitled left-wing bulletin (July, 1957) triumphantly announces on its cover that "NEW FORCES RALLY TO LEFT-WING, 11 join caucus in one month." An examination of the list of caucus members reveals the following: 2 new members of the caucus in N.Y., neither of whom are members of the YSL but of whose applications for YSL membership Wohlforth informed the N.Y. Exec at its last meeting; 1 new member of the caucus in Philadelphia, whose application for YSL membership the NAC learned of at its 1st meeting, and which it tabled until it could consult with the Philadelphia comrades; 4 new members of the caucus in Chicago, 2 of whom are long-standing members of the YSL, 1 who is an SWP member whose application for membership was rejected by the Chicago Unit, and 1 who is unknown to us but may be a member of the YSL; 2 members of the caucus in Denver, the application of 1 of whom the NAC rejected and the other of which it tabled; and 2 new members of the caucus in the San Francisco bay area who are unknown to this writer but may be members of the YSL.

The score: eleven new members of the caucus, 2 definite members of the YSL, 3 people not known to this writer who are possibly or probably members of the YSL, 6 non-members of the YSL. And a break-down of the last category reveals 2 persons whose membership applications were rejected by the YSL and 4 whose applications have not yet been acted on.

For some time now the "Left-Wing" Caucus has been claiming that it can build the YSL, if only the "right-wing" would allow it to do so. An examination of the list of non-YSL members who are members of the "Left-Wing" Caucus will therefore be instructive inasmuch as the "left-wing" will undoubtedly claim these friends as some of the prime exhibits in its gallery of potential recruits. Before contemplating these "builders of the YSL" we should pause to examine one who is not in the category of non-members but who is in the category of probable members. We urge all comrades to read the statement, "On The Matter of a Statement To the Left-Wing Bulletin" by Richard Kenny which appears on pages 25-28 of the latest issue of the LWB. We ourselves feel that it presents a powerful lesson as to who the "left-wing" is attractive to.

Of the 6 non-members of the YSL only 2 are known to us through information other than the various statements that appear in the LWB: George Larrabee and Norman H. The former is represented in this issue of the LWB by one cartoon and one article. These, his most sensible productions in the recent period, should be enough to provide an estimate of the man. If they are not, we urge comrades to apply to us for specimens from our folder of hilarious correspondence which he has addressed to the YSL, the ISL, and Labor Action.

Norman H., whose application for membership was forwarded to us by Comrade Wohlforth, was rejected by the NAC on the basis of advice given to the NAC by Comrade Denitch, by the YSL members in the area, and by 2 ISL sympathizers who have knowledge of him.

Their view as distinct from Comrade Wohlforth's, was that the applicant was that type of unserious, unpolitical person to which the harsh epithet, "screwball" is frequently applied, and that his membership in the YSL would only hurt and discredit our organization.

But our real interest in the new members of the "Left-Wing" Caucus lies elsewhere. We do not claim to have an exhaustive knowledge of the history of the American radical movement, but do insist that we have a modest one. Never, to our knowledge, has, until now, a caucus, faction or tendency in a socialist organization contained members who are not members of the organization that this caucus, faction or tendency is a part of. To be sure, in previous faction fights in the various socialist groups there have been occasions when minority groupings began to collaborate with the organization they intended to join after leaving the one they were then in, or have collaborated with individuals whom they intended to recruit to themselves after splitting. But this has always been done on the very eve of such a split when they already openly proclaimed their intention of leaving the group they had theretofore been part of. Never before, however, has there, to our knowledge, been a case of a minority tendency in an organization containing members who were not members of that organization.

And there has certainly never been such an instance when that tendency proclaimed its undying desire to build the organization that it was part of and fulminated against the majority as being "splitters" and "wreckers" of their common organization.

This latest development of the "left-wing" merely does the following: It openly and blatantly reveals what has been true of the "left-wing" for some months now, namely that they regard themselves as a separate and distinct organization. It has been evident to us for a while now that the "left-wing" regards itself as a part of the YSL only in the following sense: that it wishes to attempt to win the YSL to its view, or rather, since this is impossible, to snatch another member or two. In all of its public propaganda and activity it has acted as a separate organization.

It ~~now~~ publishes and circulates a public bulletin which in its vicious attempt to discredit the views of the YSL and the YSL as an organization is unprecedented in the history of the American socialist movement. It clearly attempts to bring discredit on the organization of which it is a part, and feels absolutely no responsibility of any kind to that organization. One of its leading spokesman, Wohlforth, recently went on a national tour. It is, of course, customary, normal and legitimate for leaders of minority tendencies to tour the country in order to meet their followers and to participate in discussions of the organizations as a whole. On his recent tour, however, Wohlforth did a bit more; he engaged in a campaign of public attack against the policies of the organization, in the course of which he served to convince non-members of the organization to take actions different from those the YSL wishes them to take and moreover, engaged in a campaign of public attack on the organization itself. This, too, is unprecedented in the history of the American socialist movement, to our knowledge.

And now to capitalize everything, they announce that one need not belong to the YSL to be members of their tendency.

We ask: What more would they be doing, if they were a separate, distinct, independent organization? It is really hard to think of anything else. There can be no more doubt: they regard themselves as a separate organization!

And all this, while they go around declaring their undying loyalty to the YSL their desire to "build it", and engage in a campaign of protesting the expulsion from the YSL which they insist the right-wing is planning.

For a while their line was that the "right-wing" was threatening to split from the YSL and join the SP-SDF, leaving them in sole possession of a reduced (in size) organization. When these declarations received the horse-laugh they deserved, they shifted gears and announced their imminent expulsion from the organization by the "bureaucratic" "right-wing." What does all this mean?

To us the answer seems clear. They have reached a political dead-end in the YSL and desire to separate themselves from it. While we have some predictions as to what their course would be after such a separation, and these may be of interest, they do not concern us here. They point to be made is that they desire a separation but are too cowardly to separate themselves. Out of cowardice and because they hope to provoke a scandal to attempt to discredit the YSL, they go around saying that they are about to be expelled and commit the most outrageous and unprecedented acts of indiscipline hoping to provoke their expulsion. Their theory is that their public, hostile campaigns against the YSL, coupled with their no longer pretending to act as a part of the YSL - witness the incident of their new members - will sooner or later infuriate the YSL into expelling them.

Speaking for myself, I can only say that they are doomed to disappointment. The YSL should not, and I predict will not, expel the "Left-Wing" Caucus. To be sure, the convention may decide to demand of all of its members a certain minimum of responsibility (we cannot conceivably expect more than a minimum from the leaders of our "left-wing" friends - it isn't in them).

But the YSL will not, we predict, be a party to their petty manoeuvres and scandalous provocations: we will not expel the "Left-Wing" Caucus.

If the leaders of the "LW" C wish to consummate the separation they hope for, they will have to overcome their cowardice and their desires to create a little stink and besmirch the name of socialism through their provocations.

We ourselves do not desire to see anyone leave the YSL. On the contrary. On the other hand, we will not impede such a separation by those who are hell-bent for it. All we ask is that they be men about it and not petty, cheap and ~~vigilant~~ cynical manoeuvrers. After all, this is the socialist movement, not Tammany Hall.