

# young socialist the organizer

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## PLENUM REPORTS

### Political Report

*Editor's Note: In this issue we are reprinting the Political Report and the Women's Liberation Report, which were unanimously approved by the recent National Committee plenum of the YSA, held in New York City, June 15-18.*

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This plenum comes at a very important time for the YSA. We have just gone through a period of activity over the past few weeks that has proved to be a dramatic confirmation of our political line, particularly in the antiwar movement and the student movement. Equally as important, we are now in a period of unprecedented opportunities for the YSA. At this plenum we need to arrive at a political assessment of the developments that have taken place and the opportunities open to us and to prepare the YSA for the months ahead.

Specifically in this report, I think there are a number of things we must do. One is to come

to a general assessment of where the radicalization stands, especially the student movement. As part of that, of course, we need to look at the general political situation flowing from the war in Indochina and the events related to it such as the Moscow trip.

We need to evaluate the progress (or lack of progress) of our opponents, and particularly our major opponent—the YWLL.

Finally, we need to project and discuss our immediate tasks from the time of the plenum to the YSA convention this fall.

This last task is perhaps the most important of the entire report. It involves taking a hard look at the way we're building the YSA and laying out the kind of approach that will allow us to take the greatest possible advantage of the opportunities facing the YSA.

That means there are some things we're going to want to start doing differently. We want the YSA to have a more open, public face. We want to project the YSA more as the YSA through the election campaign. We want the name of the YSA to be better known throughout the student movement and particularly among those young

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people who are interested in socialist politics.

What we're talking about is a new approach toward building the YSA, not one that in any way changes the basic character of the YSA, but an approach that recognizes more clearly what the YSA *is* and *should be* as a revolutionary socialist youth organization. An approach that projects the YSA more consciously as a dynamic organization that is open to anyone who supports revolutionary socialist politics and wants to be active politically.

Specifically and immediately it means a mobilization of the YSA this fall to build the SWP election campaign and recruit to the YSA. A mobilization that will focus on getting the campaign as widely known as possible and on making the next YSA convention the most successful we've ever held.

These are some of the things that we want to go into in detail later in the report.

## The War

We've been saying for quite a while now, in the face of the disagreement of all of our opponents at one time or another, that the war in Southeast Asia is at the center of world politics. That war has been, and continues to be, the central focus of the battle between the revolutionary forces and the forces of imperialism on a world scale.

That's why we have seen the defense of the Vietnamese revolution as the central task of revolutionaries all over the world and particularly here in the United States. We've understood what a victory for the revolutionary forces in Vietnam would mean. It would be a tremendous spur to every other struggle against the forces of capitalism and imperialism throughout the world, a spur to the entire world revolution.

Similarly, a defeat for the Vietnamese revolution would be a setback that would be felt beyond Southeast Asia itself.

We also have to remember that it's quite possible that the war could be ended without either a complete victory or a total defeat for the Vietnamese. But, whatever the outcome of the war, it will have an important effect on world politics.

When the ruling class shifted its tactics on the battlefield in Vietnam toward "Vietnamization" we recognized it as just that, a tactical shift. Vietnamization was simply an attempt to substitute ARVN troops for American troops and coupled with that an intensification of the American air war over both North and South Vietnam. It was an attempt to give the impression that the Thieu regime was gaining strength and that the U. S. was phasing out of the war.

It was just a tactical shift, not a change in strategy on the part of the ruling class toward crushing the Vietnamese revolution. That didn't change. It was an attempt to buy time and to stave off the antiwar sentiment in this country.

Well, when the revolutionary forces began their offensive in Vietnam the failure of this policy became evident. The entire world witnessed the collapse of the Saigon army. Periodically, stories appeared in the newspapers about a South Vietnamese relief column headed toward An Loc or Quang Tri or some other scene of defeat for the ARVN. Generally the stories explained that the relief column was totally stalled, or in danger of being cut in two, or surrounded. The results tended to be that these relief columns, rather than relieving anybody, wound up fighting for their own survival.

What was clear was the inability of the ARVN forces to stop the offensive, the total failure of Vietnamization.

In response to this Nixon ordered the mining of the harbors in North Vietnam and interdiction of rail supplies by bombing. This was not a small step. It was clearly a direct challenge to both the Soviet Union and China. It was one of the most serious military moves he could have taken short of sending large numbers of American ground troops back into Vietnam. In some ways it was a more serious move because of the direct challenge to China and the Soviet Union.

It's important to understand why Nixon felt

that it was necessary to take these steps. The stakes for imperialism in this war are very high. This is not only for all of the initial reasons that caused the U. S. to go into Vietnam—the need to crush the colonial revolution there—but also because of the tremendous resources and prestige that the United States has committed to this effort over more than ten years.

Nixon recognizes the impact that a defeat for the United States in Vietnam would have on the development of the world revolution and on politics in general. However, it's also important to recognize that there is not a total agreement in the ruling class on this evaluation. This is best reflected in editorials that appeared in some of the bourgeois press at the time, which said quite simply, "It's not worth it. It's not worth the price to continue the war."

Partially because of this pressure and the pressure created by the obvious failure of Vietnamization and the domestic implications involved in committing U. S. ground troops, Nixon has turned to the bureaucrats in the Soviet Union and China for help.

We said prior to the Peking trip that Nixon was trying to engineer some kind of deal that would result in a sellout of the Vietnamese by either the Chinese bureaucracy, the Soviet bureaucracy, or both. That's even clearer now.

We don't know all the details of what was worked out in Moscow, but there are some things about the trip that are already clear. These trips, these dealings, represent a major danger to the Vietnamese revolution. Furthermore, just the fact that the Moscow trip took place at all was a stab in the back of the Vietnamese. The fact that the Soviet bureaucrats welcomed Nixon did more to help him stabilize the situation in the United States and curtail the upsurge than any other single thing.

Gus Hall, the Communist Party presidential candidate, said in his speech at the May 21 demonstration in Washington, "Having just returned from Moscow . . . I can tell you on the highest of authority—that the continued all out support of the Soviet Union . . . to the just struggle of the people of Indochina—will not be up for discussion or negotiations . . ."

Well, while that is clearly an out and out lie, even if that were true, the simple fact that those discussions and negotiations took place when they did and in the way they did was a tremendous aid to Nixon and the ruling class.

That trip, coupled with the total lack of response by the Soviet Union to the mining of the harbors made one thing very clear. The United States can do virtually anything it wants in Indochina, from trying to bomb the Vietnamese back into the stone age to mining the North Vietnamese ports, and there will be no significant response from the Soviet Union.

And for that matter the same can be said of the bureaucrats in Peking. Their response was no sterling example of proletarian internationalism either. They could increase their aid to North Vietnam. They could blast the Soviet Union for their actions, which would make pulling off a deal more difficult for Moscow. They have chosen to do neither. They put more importance on maintaining their new relationship with Nixon than on aiding the Vietnamese.

As I said before, we don't know yet all the details of what was worked out in Moscow or what the Vietnamese will accept and can be forced to accept. We have to keep in mind the Stalinist training of the North Vietnamese leadership. We can say that the Vietnamese revolution is in serious danger as a result of these maneuvers.

All of this makes the activity of the antiwar movement, both internationally and in the United States, as important as it has ever been before. Only the international antiwar movement stands clearly for the unconditional defense of the Vietnamese revolution. Our work in the antiwar movement here remains a central political task. Just as we said before, despite the difficulties and the pressures of the elections, which will intensify this fall, we must continue to help maintain and build an independent antiwar movement.

At no other time has this strategy and our entire analysis been more dramatically confirmed than this spring.

In the antiwar report to the last YSA convention we explained that the ruling class had a big problem in regard to the war. On the one hand their strategy is to defeat the Vietnamese revolution and on the other hand they needed to maintain a relative sense of stability in the United States, especially in an election year.

That's exactly the problem they were confronted with in a very dramatic way when the Vietnamese began their offensive this spring. It was because we understood the centrality of the war and the need to continue to build the antiwar movement that we were able to give leadership to the upsurge that developed as a result of Nixon's escalation of the war.

We saw our position that the antiwar movement could be a force in world politics confirmed as well. Nixon obviously had to take into account the response of the antiwar movement at every step along the way in planning out his strategy for dealing with the Vietnamese. Specifically, we can say that the antiwar movement was a force in preventing Nixon from sending U. S. ground troops into Vietnam this time around.

That's not to say that Nixon could never send troops. However, if he did, there would be a high price to pay in social stability in the United States. This latest upsurge confirms our contention that sending large numbers of American troops back into Vietnam would produce a tremendous social crisis that would probably go far beyond what we saw this spring.

## THE STUDENT MOVEMENT SINCE MAY 1970

The events of this spring confirmed our analysis of the vanguard role of the student movement in the antiwar movement and particularly the decisive importance of building the left wing of the antiwar movement, the Student Mobilization Committee.

However, before we discuss what happened in the student movement as a result of the upsurge, I think it's necessary to step back a couple of years and look at what has happened in the student movement since the May events in 1970.

The YSA understood that the May events showed both the power of the student movement and also its limitations. We recognized that students acting alone could not end the war and could not change society. However, we also recognized that by utilizing the red university strategy students could play an important role in drawing other social forces into struggle and in that way could make important changes.

However, the vast majority of the student movement did not understand this and many were misled into thinking that they were ineffective. One reason for this was that the YSA just wasn't large enough to explain these lessons to the masses of students. We were not large enough to combat the effect of the administration, which kept telling students that their actions would not influence administration policy; of the reformists, who told students that the only way to be effective was in the two party system; and of the ultraleftists, who also kept insisting that students couldn't accomplish anything.

Partly as a result of this confusion, we saw a marked decrease in activity in the student movement following the May events.

One of the healthy results of the May events was a general turn away from ultraleftism. This was based on the experiences most students had with ultraleft actions, which led them to the correct conclusion that such actions were ineffective. However, many students took this to mean that street activities of any kind were ineffective.

Through the course of the May events and the two years leading up to them, the student movement did win many concessions. Furthermore, university administrations have been more anxious to avoid confrontations with the student movement. As a result, some demands that would have provoked a major confrontation only a few years ago were more easily granted.

The lull in the Black student movement and the Black struggle as a whole during that time also had an effect. We have pointed out before the effect of one social struggle on another and

continued on the following page

the interrelationship of these movements in the radicalization. In the past, the activity and victories of the Black struggle have spurred on the student movement. After May we saw that the general lull in activity in the Black struggle, including a lull in activity among Black students, had an adverse effect on the entire student movement.

Furthermore, as we've discussed before, the pressures of the elections in the immediate past period had an effect in channelling students away from mass action and into supporting the Democratic party, both in the fall of 1970 and now.

There are also a number of other factors that have existed since the development of the student movement and have had an adverse effect on it. One is that the present student movement has never experienced a mass radicalization of the working class. The majority of students have difficulty seeing the involvement of the working class in action against the government in anything other than a very abstract way.

Another related factor is the absence of a mass working class party that students could orient toward in attempting to ally with the working class.

A third factor is the small size of the revolutionary vanguard, making it more difficult to provide a leadership to the student movement that could answer the fundamental questions the student movement was faced with.

The temporary lull in activity in the student movement should be seen in that context.

All the basic contradictions of capitalist society that sparked the student movement continue to exist and in fact are sharpening. The radicalization itself continued to deepen and spread during this time.

During the period following the May events Black nationalist consciousness continued to spread. The feminist movement continued to grow and feminist sentiment spread among many more women. The Chicano movement experienced its most important growth. It was after May that the Chicano Moratorium took place and that La Raza Unida Party became a more significant force. High school struggles continued to take place both on a citywide scale in some places, such as in Boston in the spring of 1971, and also in many individual schools. As we saw again this spring, antiwar sentiment continued to deepen after May. This was indicated not only by this latest antiwar upsurge, but also by the massive April 24 actions that took place last spring.

Another important indication of the continued deepening of the radicalization has been the greater interest in socialist ideas. The success of the SWP election campaign confirms that. Also, it was during this temporary lull in activity that we obtained over 30,000 subscriptions to *The Militant*.

Finally, student struggles did take place on the campuses during that period of time. Much of this activity took the form of struggles to defend the gains the student movement had already won, such as struggles against restoring ROTC or allowing military recruiters back on campus. These are important struggles that can, if they are waged successfully under the right kind of leadership, spur on the student movement.

All of this is to say that the period of time between the May events and the latest antiwar upsurge was not one long drought of inactivity. It was a contradictory period in which we saw a temporary lull in activity in the student movement but in which we also saw a deepening of the radicalization and the development of new independent movements.

This period was marked by a confusion on the part of most students over how to be effective. However, we also saw that this was not a paralyzing confusion. The escalation of the war this spring brought about a quick response and a major mobilization of the student movement.

I want to make one last point here. This lull in activity was a relative one. Prior to the May events there was a period of close to two years of campus mobilizations that included the student strike led by the SMC in the spring of 1968 as well as other campus actions that took place at that time. The continued campus actions in the spring of 1969 followed by the October 15 Moratorium and the November March on Washington, were in turn followed by continued campus actions in the spring of 1970. All of this culminated in the May 1970 events themselves.

The student movement cannot be maintained at an upsurge level forever. The lull in activity that took place after the May events was a relative one, relative to that general level of mobilization prior to May.

This chronology of the development of the student movement also has to take up the latest upsurge to a degree. While we will cover it in more detail under the antiwar report, I want to make a few comments about it now.

This was the most significant activity in the student movement since the May events and, while it was not as widespread geographically as the events in May, it did involve large sections of the student movement in most areas of the country.

While in the past it has been the use of ground troops that has sparked a major response, the upsurge came in response to the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong and later the mining of the North Vietnamese harbors. This is worth noting because it reflects the depth of antiwar sentiment, particularly in the student movement.

We said prior to the upsurge that the elections were going to have a major effect on the antiwar movement this spring. On the one hand, the fact that the upsurge went as far as it did in mobilizing people in action against the war—especially in the face of the elections—was a testimony to its depth.

On the other hand the upsurge was also limited by the elections. This was seen most clearly in the marked abstention by the organized forces on the campuses that are supporting the Democratic Party. In many areas they stayed out of the mass meetings and out of most of the steering committee formations that were set up. This didn't keep all of the students that have reformist illusions out of the struggle, but it was a factor in preventing the upsurge from involving the entire mass of students on the campuses, in keeping the upsurge from becoming a general student strike as it did in May 1970. The absence of these forces from the political debates that took place in the mass meetings also tended to unbalance them to a degree and to give the ultra-leftists more weight.

Something else we noticed, particularly in the second wave of the upsurge, was the general mood of frustration that existed among a fairly large number of students. This was caused more than anything else by the inability of those students that were in motion to involve either other social forces or for that matter the entire student population on most campuses. This is one of the major differences between the May events and this upsurge. Students in this upsurge did not really feel the power of the entire student movement or of significant sections of the rest of the population in motion. This led to a greater susceptibility to ultra-left tactics.

This shouldn't surprise us. It is quite likely to happen again. The important thing we should learn from this experience is that we have to continually fight for our political strategy and explain what that strategy is. We can't assume that everyone knows what we are talking about. That is one of the things we learned this time around. All of the things we explained during the May events and that we talk about the time—the antiwar university, mass action, non-exclusion—have to be explained over again to the masses of students that come into motion.

That is an important lesson of this upsurge and of the student movement. The student movement has a very short memory, partially because of the rapid change in the composition of the student population from one year to another. The YSA embodies the living memory of the student movement. The larger the YSA is, the more effective we can be in communicating that memory—the lessons of the student movement—to the student movement as a whole.

Our success in providing leadership in these kinds of situations and in the student movement in general is based in large part on our success in building the YSA.

The success we have in building the YSA will have an effect on the student movement and the way it develops. The student movement will continue to go through the kind of ups and downs that we outlined earlier in the report. However, as the YSA grows and as we are recognized more as the real leadership of the student movement, those lulls in activity can become shorter. The YSA's understanding of the experiences of the student movement will become more generalized in the movement as a whole and there will be a greater understanding of the political tasks of the movement.

This is not an automatic process. It requires the patient, consistent work of building the YSA that we have been involved in. None of it will come naturally or easily. We have just gone through a very important experience through which we learned many things about building the YSA and about fighting for our political

strategy and winning people to it. Now we need to apply some of those lessons in building the YSA on a day-to-day basis.

I'll come back to the topic of building the YSA later in the report but I want to make a few comments about some other political developments that have taken place in the last few months.

#### THE BLACK STRUGGLE

The recent developments in the Black struggle are quite important. The Gary conference reflected both the deepening of nationalist consciousness that has been taking place and some of the thinking that has been going on for some time in the Black struggle. Even though the discussion at the conference was choked by the opportunist forces, primarily grouped around the Congressional Black Caucus, some very important precedents were set. The first, of course, is simply that the conference took place. It creates a precedent for a gathering like that taking place again, a national gathering of Black people to plan political action. Another important part of this development is that while the discussion of a Black political party was pretty much squelched on the floor, the concept was raised and discussed by a wide layer of people. That is very important in that it establishes an independent Black party as a legitimate idea that needs to be considered by activists in the Black movement.

Another important development has been the African Liberation Day demonstrations, which were the most powerful mass actions by Blacks that we have seen in some time. Not only were these demonstrations large, but they clearly had an anti-imperialist dynamic. Furthermore it appears that there are some openings for us to participate in some of these developments and some indications that they many continue to develop in a positive way.

#### WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The abortion repeal campaign has been very important, even though the demonstrations themselves have been fairly modest in size. The pressure of the elections is clearly having an impact on the women's movement. We should remember that the two largest women's liberation organizations, NOW and the National Women's Political Caucus, are committing virtually all of their resources to supporting the left wing of the Democratic Party. In general, even where WONAAC has managed to obtain endorsements from these groups for demonstrations such as May 6, they have done very little, certainly far less than they could do, to build it. So the almost total concentration on the elections by these two important organizations has restricted the size of the abortion demonstrations at this time, although the issue still has the potential of involving large numbers of women.

The fact that many of the women in NOW and the Women's Political Caucus are looking to the elections does not mean that we should write these people off as hopelessly hardened supporters of capitalist politics. Many of these women are activists in the women's liberation movement and are involved in these organizations and trying to influence the elections through them because they are feminists. We want to reach these women with the abortion campaign, with the YSA's general program for women's liberation, and with our entire socialist program. Of course, our best vehicle for doing that is the election campaign.

We have to be very careful that we do not forget about that. While the abortion campaign is the central focus of our women's liberation work at this time, we have a position on all the issues affecting the oppression of women. Where there are possibilities for us to be involved in activity around these other issues, we want to utilize them.

#### THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

There is no report on the Chicano movement on the plenum agenda. You will see that the reports on the other movements we participate in—the antiwar movement, the women's liberation movement, and the Black struggle—focus around very specific, recent national developments. We did not see the need for such a report on the Chicano movement at this time, although we do want to take some time to go over some of the general developments in the Chicano movement in the political report.

One of these developments that is particularly important is the growth of the antideportation movement, the movement to defend the rights of Chicano and Mexican workers without citizenship papers. This is a complex issue that we should be paying close attention to. It involves



defending the rights of a superexploited layer of the working class and already some very impressive demonstrations have been organized by Chicano organizations on the west coast.

Over the past few months, La Raza Unida Party has continued to grow. However, it still remains only the nucleus of a real mass party. It's an important example of a break from the two party system, but it is not yet a mass party. In addition, we have to remember that RUP is under a lot of pressure, because of the elections, from forces both inside the RUP and outside, not the least of which are the Stalinists, to move away from independent political action. This is particularly true on a national level, and that debate will continue throughout the election period. It's a debate that we've been participating in and that we should continue to participate in, through *The Militant* and SWP election campaigns, through out participation in RUP in some areas, and through our participation in gatherings of RUP on a statewide level such as the statewide conventions that will be taking place in Texas and California. Furthermore, it now looks like a national convention of RUP will take place and we will want to participate in that as well.

## Opponents

Now, I want to spend some time discussing our opponents. We've had a good deal of contact with most of them lately as a result of the upsurge. We've even seen the YWLL coming out more publicly and it's important that we take some time at the plenum to evaluate what our opponents are doing.

### ULTRALEFTISTS

For the past few plenums and conventions, we've said that the general ultraleft milieu was on the decline and that they have less and less influence. Then all of a sudden in the course of the antiwar upsurge, they seemed to be playing a much bigger role than they had before. Both of these assessments are accurate. It is still true that since the May events they have been on the decline. However, as we saw during the upsurge, they can not be written off as a totally ineffective force that we don't really have to pay attention to. They can cause a good deal of trouble and their adventurist schemes can quickly derail important struggles.

The seeming success they had during the upsurge was a temporary phenomenon that was a result of the specific situation that I explained before. They were able to feed off the general mood of frustration that existed among a relatively large layer of students. This doesn't mean that thousands of students have now become hardened ultraleftists or that we should expect to see some large new ultraleft organizations develop this fall. The same students that took part in blocking some highway or taking over some building can be, and in many cases probably were, won over to our political strategy.

This temporary, relative success of the ultraleftists should point out to us the necessity of taking them seriously, although they are not our major opponent.

### NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

One of the organizations that a number of these people from the ultraleft milieu have been involved in is the New American Movement. This organization, however, is completely reformist in its program and in most of its activities. From what we can tell in the few places they are active, they are working around reformist, community organizing type schemes.

What NAM is trying to create is an organization of the old SDS type. Not the SDS of the Weatherpeople days, but an SDS of the days of the Port Huron statement when SDS was involved primarily in community organizing activities of one kind or another.

The biggest problem they are having is the same problem SDS was confronted with; that is, how do you put together an organization of people who don't really agree on important political questions.

While we don't exclude the possibility of an organization of this kind—a new SDS—coming into existence, it doesn't look now as though NAM is it. However, we will want to keep our eye on them.

### PL-SDS

Another opponent tendency that has gone through somewhat of a resurgence lately is Pro-

gressive Labor-SDS, as seen by their convention in Boston earlier this spring. Over the past couple of years, they went through a period of terrific isolation because of their sectarian attitude toward the student movement and the antiwar movement. Evidently, PL and SDS went through some criticism and self-criticism and decided that they had to orient more toward the student movement. Although this has not brought about a drastic change in their political line, it has changed the way in which they intervene in these movements. The turn was brought about because they recognized that they weren't recruiting and that they were becoming more and more isolated.

Part of this new approach is their continuing attempts to project SDS as the organization on the campuses that fights racism. That's one of the reasons their convention was so large; they told people that anyone that wanted to fight racism should come to this convention.

We should be careful not to let them get away with too much here. The best way to combat this is to project the YSA as the organization that has a program to fight racism. We can also point out, particularly to politically healthy people that may be around SDS, that there's a real contradiction involved in saying that SDS fights racism, while on the other hand, it opposes the nationalism of the oppressed.

The new approach by SDS has probably attracted some politically healthy people and we should make a point of talking to these people, especially when SDS is involved in the various movements that we're involved in.

### SECTARIANS

There are two things we should recognize about the sectarian groups like the Labor Committee and the Workers League. They have recruited some people; that shouldn't surprise us. The radicalization is deepening and virtually every tendency that claims to be socialist is going to recruit some people.

The important thing for us is that we not allow them to get people they don't deserve, people who can develop into serious revolutionaries. What we've found, particularly with the Workers League in New York, is that they tend to grow in places where the YSA doesn't exist and where they can get away with passing themselves off as the socialists. The best solution to that problem is quite simply to build the YSA. The larger we are, the more campuses and high schools we're on and the more influence we have, the more difficult it becomes for them to pass themselves off as the socialists and to recruit people they shouldn't.

### YOUNG WORKERS LIBERATION LEAGUE

The last opponent I want to take up is the Young Workers Liberation League, our most important opponent. We should step back for a minute and consider why they are such an important opponent and why we consider them our major opponent. Just as the YSA is part of an international movement, the YWLL is also. They are part of a world movement that has tremendous resources and a powerful influence: the resources and influence that come from holding state power in a number of countries. That movement, the international Stalinist movement, has to be defeated politically if the socialist revolution is to be successful.

The formation of the YWLL and its continued existence and growth are important steps forward for the Stalinists. With the formation of the YWLL they've managed to put together an organization that seems to agree on their political line, that is carrying out some serious activity, and that is growing. This is confirmed both by reports that have been sent in from the field and also by what we were able to tell from their recent national convention.

One of the most important things we've noticed about the YWLL recently is that they are making a conscious turn toward more open, public activity. One way they're doing it is through the CP election campaign. They're consciously trying to build the YWLL through the Hall-Tyner campaign. Also, in a number of areas YSAers have reported that they are now holding open, public forums in the name of the YWLL.

Another side of this is that at their convention they laid out a more conscious approach to the student movement, one that implies more open work by the YWLL on the campuses and in the high schools. It looks like one aspect of this is the specific projection of building Student Unions for Peace and Justice. Unlike some of their projections

(like a national college student union, a national high school student union, and a national union of Black students), which are not likely to develop in the real world over the next few months, these groups are already beginning to develop in some areas. While they aren't particularly viable yet, they are something we want to pay attention to and particularly to try to involve them in united front activities if they actually come into existence.

Of course we welcome this more open activity by the YWLL because it gives us more of an opportunity to confront them politically. On the other hand we should not fall into the trap of underestimating them.

It's true that they have some serious weaknesses, not the least of which is their political line. Besides that, they have not been particularly successful in developing a new youth leadership. The central leadership of the YWLL now is composed for the most part of the same people that were the central leadership of the DuBois Clubs, as well as some of the other less successful Stalinist youth enterprises. It is also true that much of their membership is not at the political level of most YSAers, if for no other reason than that they have not gone through the experiences of real political activity that most YSAers go through. These are serious weaknesses and disadvantages for the YWLL.

But the YWLL is growing, and they have recruited a large number of Black youth. Their convention confirmed that while some of their recruitment is still on a strictly social basis, a good deal of their new membership, particularly their Black members, has come out of the Angela Davis Defense Committees, and many of these people are serious about political activity.

We have to consider them our most serious and most dangerous opponent and we have to effectively counter them politically. Along these lines, we have some specific projections, kind of our own "three-pronged approach" to the YWLL.

The first prong is the general education of our membership about Stalinism and particularly on the current positions of the YWLL. Part of this will be done through the summer schools, but we have to keep doing it continually, so that YSAers are fully prepared to confront them politically.

The second prong is continuing to try to involve them in united front activities. We've been doing this, especially on the war, and we have to step it up, not just around the antiwar movement, but on other issues as well. For instance, they said they supported African Liberation Day. We should try to involve them in joint activities on this question. It is especially important because they are so vulnerable on this because of their hostility toward Black nationalism and Pan Africanism.

So we need to step up this work, approaching them wherever we think there's any opening for united action, even when we don't think they'll agree. Every time they refuse to engage in common activities on an important political question it discredits them in the eyes of serious political people and sometimes in the eyes of their own membership.

The third prong is stepping up our polemics against them on all questions. One part of that is making sure we go after them at times when they are especially vulnerable like now, over the Moscow trip. They are wide open on this and they are under a lot of pressure. The Soviet Union is in the process of trying to sell out the Vietnamese! That is a very difficult thing for the YWLL and the Communist Party here to defend, although they're trying.

The other side of stepping up our polemics with them is some of the things that we will be doing from the National Office. YSAers have probably noticed that there has been more on the YWLL in *The Militant* recently and we intend to continue that.

What's involved in all this is taking a more conscious approach to the YWLL. This is something we want to do especially with them, but also with all of our opponents, particularly those that draw some serious people around them. The fight for political hegemony in the student movement is far from over and the work we do directly with those who are fighting us for it is very important.

## The YSA

We said at the beginning of the report that we are in a period of unprecedented opportunities for building the YSA. I think what we've just gone over, our assessment of the radicalization, confirms that. The radicalization has continued to deepen even though there has been a temporary lull in activity in the student movement.

The development that most clearly illustrates the opportunities open to us is the success of the Jenness-Pulley election campaign. There are now over 11,000 endorsers of the SWP campaign. This fact in and of itself is unprecedented. It means that we now have, on paper, the names of over 11,000 young people who are interested in socialist ideas and who are potential recruits to the YSA.

One of the main features that characterizes the mood of students today is an uncertainty about how to be effective in bringing about the changes they want. The overwhelming majority still look to capitalist politics and to little local or individual projects—although they are by no means hardened reformists—and a significant and growing minority believes that very radical methods are required. This points to a very favorable situation for recruitment to the YSA, which is the only organization that understands how students can be effective. Our main job is to go out and convince these students—many of them are quite skeptical—that our strategy, our program, has the correct answers . . . that the way to be effective is to join the YSA.

It is clear that in a situation like this, our election campaign—which is always one of our best propaganda tools—takes on special importance. The election campaign has enabled us to get our strategy to thousands of students, and to draw thousands of students around us.

Of course, *explaining* our ideas is only part of what enables us to recruit. The other part is the experiences that people go through that convince them we are correct and we know what to do. You can sit down with some people and convince them, just by force of argument, that it's wrong to support McGovern and right to support Jenness. But many more students will be convinced because they listen to us—and they're not sure—and then they participate in a struggle in which the YSA provides leadership, and then they join the YSA. That's why we can always recruit more in an upsurge situation; that's why we recruit more where we can prove ourselves in struggle.

It is on the basis of these considerations that the central projections of this plenum were formulated. In our discussions in the NEC we took a close look at the question: What can we do this fall to maximize the gains we can make from these new opportunities for building the YSA?

### THE ELECTIONS

We know that the political life of the student movement this fall will be dominated by the elections. Regardless of how the Democratic Party convention is resolved, everyone's attentions will be focused on the elections. The elections will be at the center of political life throughout the country, including the campuses and high schools.

Because we recognize that, we know that the best way, the most effective way right now to intervene in the political life of the student movement, is through the SWP election campaign. That doesn't make our work in the various other movements we intervene in any less important. We have to integrate this work with our campaign work. It means that it is through the election campaign that we can get our ideas out to the largest number of people and recruit the largest number of people to the YSA.

We have already done a great deal of work and put a great deal of effort into the election campaign and it has paid off. But, in a certain sense, everything we've done so far, as important as it has been, has been just the preparation for the tremendous mobilization we're going to undertake this fall.

What we want to do starting now, but intensifying at the beginning of the fall when school opens and lasting through the elections and the YSA convention at Thanksgiving, is put the YSA on a mobilization footing to get the campaign onto as many campuses and into as many high schools as we can and recruit to the YSA.

A very important part of this mobilization is making sure that we build the YSA out of it;

that is, that we specifically project the YSA. That is one of the things we need to do more of and it's part of the new approach I mentioned before. As a result of all the activity we carry out this fall the name of the YSA should become much better known on the campuses and while we're carrying out this mobilization we should be recruiting to the YSA.

While thousands upon thousands of people know about the election campaign, unfortunately most of them don't know that there is an ongoing youth organization associated with the campaign that they can join. That's what we want to correct. We want people that think about the campaign to think about joining the YSA. Through the campaign blitz this fall we want to raise the idea of joining the YSA in the mind of every campaign supporter.

This involves a certain change in approach—sort of shifting gears in the campaign effort—so as to project the YSA more and more. For example, we should stress the fact that Andrew Pulley is a national leader of the YSA, a member of its National Executive Committee. We intend to get out much more YSA literature. An important part of this is thinking out possible changes in our movement's publications.

Our most important opening for linking the YSA with the election campaign is the YSA convention. The convention will be the single most important campaign event of the fall, and building the convention will be a central part of the national campaign tours, the fall YSJP teams, and all the campaign meetings we organize. We'll want to try to take advantage of the press we've been able to get through the campaign to build the convention.

Most importantly, the convention will be a focus for involving YSJPers and bringing them into the YSA. Every campaign supporter will be invited to the convention and encouraged to attend. For many YSJPers it will be the convention that will recruit them to the YSA, although many others will join earlier.

Everything we do this fall with the election campaign and all our other work has to be organized with the thought in mind of how we are going to bring these campaign supporters closer to the YSA and recruit them to the YSA. One of the ways we can do this is to think out questions like, "How many campaign activities can the YSA organize on the campus itself, where most of our endorsers are, and in such a way that it will help to draw these people in?"

Another aspect of this approach is a big increase in the amount of YSA regional work we do—that is, following up on all the contacts made by the campaign out in the regions, recruiting them to the YSA, and organizing them into new YSA locals.

### THE YSA AND THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

Another important part of building the YSA is that we've learned again the importance of the YSA basing itself in the student movement. The upsurge confirmed that for us again. We know that as effective as we were in the upsurge, we could have been more effective and we could have had a greater impact if we were larger and had more YSAers on the campuses. There's no question about that.

What's involved here is the critical necessity of the YSA fighting to become the leadership of the student movement. That is the central political task for the YSA.

Why do we say that? Why is it so important? With the increased social weight of students and the tremendous growth in size of the student population, the student movement itself has become more important. Because the student movement is more important, it is more important to the success of the American socialist revolution that conscious revolutionary socialists lead that movement.

That is the most important contribution that the YSA can make toward helping to lead the socialist revolution in this country: winning the leadership of the student movement.

To accomplish this task the political life of the YSA must be based more and more on the political life of the campuses and high schools. Just to say that though is somewhat abstract. What does it mean to say that we have to know the politics of a campus inside out?

It means that we have to be familiar with local issues on the campuses. For instance, cutbacks in funds for student organizations, or Black studies departments, or for educational needs in general is becoming a more important issue on many campuses. We should be familiar with these kinds of questions and we should be ready to provide leadership for struggles of these kinds

when they develop.

This doesn't mean that we want to demote the work we do on national campaigns that we build on the campuses like the antiwar movement. It does mean that we want to be more conscious of these local issues and link them to the other work we're carrying out.

Another part of knowing the politics of a campus inside out is something that we recognized in a number of areas during the upsurge. We need to become more familiar with the people and groups on the campuses; find out who the political professors are, for instance, and work with them. We need to be familiar with *all* the various student organizations and know their politics.

All of this is part of focusing our work more and more on the student movement, recruiting off the campuses, and placing ourselves in the center of the political life of the campus.

Many of these same general concepts apply to the high school movement as well, although we recognize some of the differences involved in the work we carry out in the high schools.

The high school movement has increased in importance also, for a number of reasons. One is simply that the high school movement has grown over the past couple of years. More high school students than ever before are involved in political activity. In addition, junior high school students have also become more politically active. The high school movement has become a more important part of the student movement as a whole. Winning the leadership of the high school movement will be a very important, if not decisive, part of winning the leadership of the entire student movement.

This means that the high school movement and the work we carry out in it is very important. As I said before, many of the same concepts of putting ourselves at the center of the student movement on the campuses apply to the high schools as well. This is particularly true in paying close attention to local issues and being familiar with them. High school struggles very often originate around repressive restrictions or rules of one kind or another inside particular schools. Another issue that arises fairly often and with which we should be familiar is the nature of education in the high schools. Both of these questions, among others, are at the root of the rebellion in the high schools and we should be conscious of them and prepared to lead struggles around them.

As part of this more aggressive approach we want to take in building the YSA, it's important that we look again at all our organizational norms with an eye toward eliminating any unnecessary barriers that might be keeping people from joining the YSA. Such a reevaluation is always a good idea when we are faced with a new objective situation. We went through a similar process in 1968.

I want to read a short section from a very important document, "The Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International" (which has been recently reissued by Pathfinder under the title "A Strategy for Revolutionary Youth")—adopted by the YSA at our 1969 convention.

"The independent youth organization can attract radicalizing young people who have not yet made up their minds about joining any political party of the left and who are not yet committed to the Bolshevik perspective of becoming life-time revolutionists, but who are willing and ready to participate in a broad range of political actions together with the revolutionary party and its members. It can lead actions and take initiatives in the student movement in its own name. It can serve as a valuable training and testing ground for candidates for party cadre status, and make it easier for them to acquire the political and organizational experience and education required for serious revolutionary activity. Membership in the revolutionary-socialist youth organization enables young radicals to decide their own policies, organize their own actions, make their own mistakes and learn their own lessons."

I think that quote tells us a good deal about the kind of organization we're trying to build. We want the YSA to be an open organization that is made up not only, or even primarily, of people that have decided to commit their entire lives to making a socialist revolution. The YSA should be made up of young people that agree with our general socialist program and want to work to implement that program.



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We should recognize that we have an opportunity now to recruit on a broader level than we ever have before. What do we mean by that? It means that we have the opportunity to recruit young people at *many* different levels. From people who have been in the radical movement for some time and are extremely familiar with our politics to other people who may come around us for the first time and decide they agree with the basic parts of our program.

This doesn't mean we're diluting our program or recruiting people at a low level on the basis of no political agreement. That's what recruiting at a low level means. It means recruiting people on something *other* than a political program.

When we say that we can now recruit on a broader level what we mean is that there are now more people who are interested in socialist politics and want to do something about them. We've said this before. We said it in 1968 at the time of the Halstead-Boutelle election campaign. It was true then and it is *more* true now. The results of the '72 election campaign confirm that. The '72 campaign has been more successful than the '68 campaign and it has opened up greater opportunities for us.

Most of these young people that support the campaign and are potential recruits to the YSA do not have a thorough understanding of Marxist theory, of the permanent revolution, or dialectical materialism, and they won't have that understanding before they join the YSA. That's all right, we don't expect them to understand these things before they join. Not that these things are unimportant, but most young radicals are *never* going to understand these concepts unless they join the YSA and learn them *in* the YSA. Again, the fact that most of these people don't understand these questions before they join doesn't mean that when we recruit them it will be at a low level. Not if they agree with us on the antiwar movement and defending the Vietnamese revolution. Not if they support the Black struggle. Not if they support the women's liberation movement. Not if they support the Chicano struggle. Not if they support the struggles of the working class and making a revolution in the United States. If they support those things, and most of these people that support the campaign support it on that basis, then they support our basic socialist program and we can educate them further on our theoretical concepts and in a fuller understanding of our program after they are in the YSA.

The other side of being able to recruit on a broader level is that the people we recruit will want to engage in varying levels of activity, particularly when they first join. That is to be expected. It's only through the process of being in a revolutionary organization and going through certain experiences in it that someone makes the choice to devote more and more of their time to political activity and ultimately to devote their life to making a revolution. We should not expect that process to take place in someone before they join and we should not be surprised if there are people that will be willing to devote only part of their time to political activity and that may, in fact, have other interests.

The basis of membership in the YSA is agreement on our program and a willingness to carry it out. We want to be certain that the YSA doesn't give people who may be thinking of joining the impression that they have to decide to commit their lives to the YSA, before they make the decision to join. We don't want people to get the impression that there is some predetermined norm, some terrifically high level of activity that must be maintained for someone to remain in the YSA. It's true that once people join the YSA they do tend to devote more and more of their time to political activity. That, of course, is something we encourage, but it is a choice we want people to make *once they're in the YSA*. The essence of the whole thing is that we will lose people to the revolutionary movement if we project the YSA as something that it really isn't. The YSA is not an organization of people who are already committed to spending their entire lives making the socialist revolution.

These are not projections for changing the basic character of the YSA. Rather, they are projections for maximizing our growth by maximizing the YSA's openness to recruiting from a broad layer of rebel youth. We are able to make such projections for opening up the YSA because of our confidence in the correctness of our political program, and our confidence in the leadership of the YSA, nationally and locally.

It is also important to understand that these are not projections to be seen as gimmicks we've dreamed up to turn the YSA into a mass organization overnight, or as moves to correct certain bad mistakes we've been making. Certainly, we want to learn from our past, learn from any mistakes we've made. But our fall projections aren't based on any fantastic new gimmicks that fell out of the sky and we just discovered—they're based on the sober assessment that there is a

greater receptivity to socialist politics than ever before, and that through the campaign we can reach more of these students than ever before. That assessment is not simply a theoretical one—it's based on our experience with the response to the campaign, and the noticeable upturn in recruitment at the end of this spring.

The final point I want to make is on the role of our fall projections and our fall recruitment in building the YSA into a mass organization. We know that the YSA is still a tiny propaganda group. But we also know that just to say that does not tell the whole story. Even though we are only a tiny propaganda group there are openings in the objective situation through which we can affect developments involving masses of people. The antiwar upsurge confirms this. We were able to affect what went on in that upsurge in some very important ways, even though we recognize that our influence could have been much greater if we were larger.

Becoming a mass organization is our long-range perspective. It's not going to happen this fall. We don't know how many people we will recruit this fall. But we also recognize that each person we recruit is not just one more member on a big tally sheet where eventually we'll get enough and be a mass organization. Each new member strengthens us and gives us greater leverage to be more successful and recruit even more in the future. The student movement is going to continue to go through ups and downs. There will be times when it's easier to recruit and times when it's harder. But constantly, through upsurges and lulls and whatever else, we're going to steadily keep plugging at building the YSA and gain more than the last one—provide more leadership, carry the upsurge further, and win more new members. It's precisely because we understand this long-term process that we can see the importance of the projections made for the next five months, the importance of each new member we recruit in building a mass YSA.

GEOFF MIRELOWITZ  
YSA National Office

## Women's Liberation Report

There is an important political debate taking place in WONAAC. At the last meeting of the WONAAC National Coordinating Committee in New York on June 4 a national conference was called for July 15 and 16, just one year after WONAAC's founding conference. Some sharp political differences came out at the meeting. Among the viewpoints raised were the following:

1. WONAAC has placed too much emphasis on developing a national campaign, organizing national conferences and national demonstrations, and not enough emphasis on local grass roots organizing.

2. The nationally organized demonstrations WONAAC has held have been small and therefore can hurt the struggle for abortion law repeal.

3. WONAAC didn't organize an effective lobbying campaign when the New York Legislature began debate over the liberalized abortion law—thereby contributing to the setback the women's movement took when the legislators voted to repeal the liberalized abortion law.

4. WONAAC has stirred up a "hornet's nest" of anti-abortion organizing on the part of the Catholic hierarchy and answered it ineffectually.

5. WONAAC is "run" and "controlled" by the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party. It is their perspective—and only their perspective—that has been carried out, therefore, they bear the major responsibility for the problems that WONAAC has faced.

6. Because of the "identification" of WONAAC with the YSA and the SWP, it has not been able to play an effective role in uniting the women's liberation movement.

7. WONAAC has been completely ineffectual in its entire history; it has had its head in the sand and doesn't recognize reality. It is super-

fluous to the abortion struggle, has no influence, and is totally isolated from the "real" women's liberation movement.

All the questions that are being raised challenge the basic foundations upon which WONAAC was organized at its founding conference. Among those basic ideas and concepts were: 1. it is essential to develop a nationally coordinated struggle, as opposed to only local, state-by-state organizing, in order to develop an effective campaign on the abortion issue; 2. the independent mass struggle of women must be a central aspect of the abortion campaign; 3. red-baiting and exclusion was totally rejected by the overwhelming majority of women who formed WONAAC in the face of a large-scale debate over this question where over 100 women walked out of the founding conference.

The questions being raised not only challenge the perspective around which WONAAC was formed—but essentially they challenge the development of an independent, united, mass-struggle-oriented women's liberation movement. At this time, WONAAC is the only national organization fighting for this perspective.

As the debate unfolds, we can expect that other questions concerning WONAAC's perspective will also be raised once again: the value of organizing around a specific question in a coalition, and whether the demand of WONAAC should be focused on free abortion on demand as opposed to total repeal of all abortion laws.

In dealing with this debate, it is important to step back and take a look at the development of the women's liberation movement over the past year or so, especially since the formation of WONAAC.

Many of the questions raised by some of the

members of the WONAAC national staff come from frustration with the fact that WONAAC is not yet bigger, broader, and more influential in American politics. They are frustrated because the actions that WONAAC has held have not been larger and that there was not a mass united response to the crisis that developed in New York when the legislature repealed the liberalized abortion law and Nixon intervened on behalf of the Catholic Church. These are questions that are being raised in the women's movement as a whole.

There is no question that the interest and impact of the women's liberation movement has continued to deepen among the American people. Far greater numbers of women identify with the goals of the women's liberation movement than did at the time of the first big demonstrations in August 1970.

Following the August 1970 demonstrations, political differentiations within the movement began to increase. The question was posed, "Where do we go from here?" The National Organization for Women (NOW), the organization that made large organizational gains following the demonstration, had gone along only reluctantly with the mass action perspective and rapidly moved away from this perspective following the action. The phenomenon of livingroom feminism and counterinstitutionalism increased after August 26th.

It was clear that a national action perspective was needed. The experience of the women's liberation movement showed that the greatest possibilities for organizing such a united national campaign within the women's movement was over the issue of abortion.

The political differentiations within the women's liberation movement have continued to increase

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since the formation of WONAAC, particularly under the impact of the 1972 election period. One large section of the women's movement has turned away from the perspective of organizing mass struggle campaigns around specific demands. NOW, which played a leading role in the August 26, 1970, demonstrations, was more and more turning away from any perspective of mass independent struggle and looking to capitalist party politics, particularly through the Democratic Party, as the next stage in the struggle for women's liberation. Their central role in organizing the National Women's Political Caucus was the primary manifestation of this move.

Let's look at the development of NOW's approach as illustrated in their attitude to the August 26 demonstrations over the past three years. It was only through the pressure of the radical section of the women's movement, including the YSA and the SWP, that August 26, 1970 had the character of mass action around specific demands. But NOW played a leading role in that demonstration and without them it would not have been so massive.

August 26, 1971—one year later—was a launching pad for their activities in the 1972 elections. NOW's conception of that action can best be summed up by Betty Friedan's statement that was picked up by the bourgeois press as the characterization of the demonstration: "Women are now moving from women's liberation to women's participation in equal political power."

Although this year's August 26 has not yet been fully defined, Jaqui Ceballos, the Eastern Regional Director of NOW, probably reflected the sentiment of the majority of the leadership of NOW when she wrote in *Majority Report*, a feminist newspaper in New York, "We in NOW are going to focus on the political scene. If we raise enough consciousness we can swing the elections . . . hopefully we'll have someone to swing it to." She goes on to say "I wonder about the march . . . many women were turned off by last year's rally." The type of activities she raises as an alternative includes art shows, street fairs, and ringing bells around the nation, at the same time rejoicing that the ERA passed the Senate and urging its ratification by the states.

The elections are also drawing in a section of the livingroom feminists and counterinstitutionalists. The most recent issue of *Majority Report* has a major focus on the Shirley Chisholm campaign and delegate selection for the Democratic Party convention.

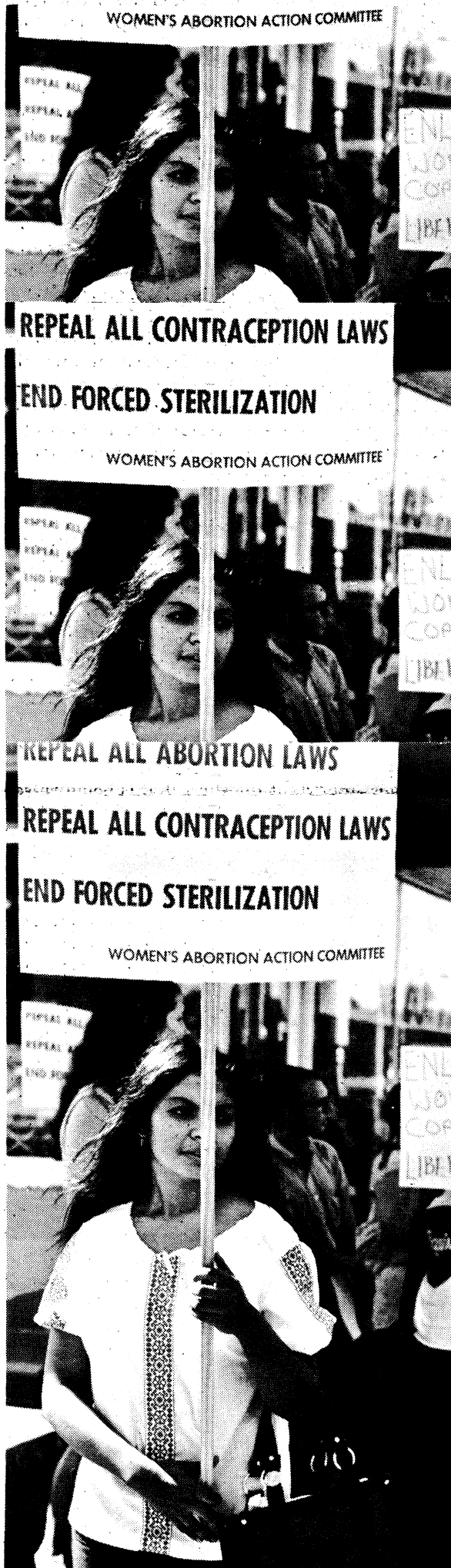
McGovern is viewed by many in the women's movement, and particularly in NOW, as a favorable candidate for women. What is happening to McGovern as the prize of the Democratic Party nomination is moving closer and closer? Recently changing his position on abortion from favoring repeal of all abortion laws, he now states that it is up to individual states to decide this question and if he were president he would take no position. Our election campaign should be aggressive in exposing such political opportunism. Some women's liberation activists will begin to break from McGovern as this process continues. This may bring some new opportunities for WONAAC, because a layer of women will see the need to support organizations that consistently struggle for women's rights, although they may continue their support for McGovern.

If McGovern wins the nomination, he will continue the process of watering down his more "radical" side. There will be disillusionment with McGovern from a small but very important layer of people, but his nomination will be viewed as a big victory by most, including women's liberation activists. There will be great pressure to excuse his drift to the right by rationalizing the importance of a victory for the liberals.

How does all of this fit into the specific stage of the abortion struggle? There is no question that if NOW had played a vanguard role in responding to the mass mobilization on the part of the anti-abortion forces in New York that the demonstrations on or around May 6 would have been qualitatively larger.

The women's movement suffered a setback in New York. There was a massive mobilization of the anti-abortion forces, and the legislature voted to repeal the liberalized abortion law in New York, reinstating the 1865 criminal abortion statute. Even though Rockefeller eventually vetoed the anti-abortion bill, the abortion movement suffered a setback because there was no real massive response on the part of the women's liberation movement in New York.

How did the leadership of NOW approach this problem? Betty Friedan was quoted in the *New York Times* recently stating that "Women have quietly begun to raise money, and we have raised now, not the million dollars that the Catholic hierarchy has at its disposal, but shall we say in substantial five figures, and we are spending that and we are deploying our forces to support the brave men and women who voted to retain our right to medical help and abortion and to defeat a picked few of our enemies. I can't give you too many details about that because of the nature of the inflammatory situation, this will have to be a somewhat quiet effort." The key word to remember here is "quiet." This is one



of the clearest expressions of NOW's retreat from any struggle perspective. The immersion of NOW and its periphery in capitalist party politics and the elections, and the intimidation by the right wing prevented them from playing any vanguard role whatsoever in the New York abortion fight. What Friedan is saying is "Don't rock the boat, for we might be able to defeat some of those reactionaries in a behind the scenes election fight." Because of this situation, the actions called by WONAAC were smaller and will probably continue to be modest in the months preceding the elections. But the importance of such actions is not lessened. WONAAC embodies the mass struggle approach. This is the key to its importance.

WONAAC will become especially important as the elections come to a close. Thousands of

women across the country have been drawn into activity around the elections through the Women's Political Caucus and view it as their form of women's liberation activity. After the elections they will want to continue their women's liberation activity and will ask the question: what will the women's liberation movement be doing next? WONAAC will be there with a record of consistent struggle. Another aspect, although it may be limited, is that WONAAC will be able to involve some of these women in struggle even now.

Besides the elections there are other factors that play a role in regard to the size and impact of WONAAC's activities. The women's liberation movement is still a new movement. The first big upsurge in the feminist movement took place in the context of the biggest upsurge in the student and antiwar movements that this country has seen. Since then, there has been a lull in the activities of the antiwar and student movements and this has affected the women's movement as well.

There is another section of the women's movement that has also abstained from mobilizing women to fight for the right to abortion and other demands. This grouping has oriented toward creating new life styles and new institutions to serve the needs of women. They counterpose this perspective to making demands on the government. The activities of these women—such as abortion referral or setting up small day care centers—have helped small numbers of women but do not change the position of the masses of women. And although this counterinstitution, livingroom feminist grouping within the movement is not as large or as powerful as NOW, they are a factor. Women from both this grouping and from NOW have carried out a vicious and sustained red-baiting campaign against WONAAC, which has had an effect on WONAAC's authority.

Before going into aspects of the debate within WONAAC, it is important to look at where the abortion struggle stands right now and what WONAAC has accomplished over the past year.

The attempt to roll back the gains women made in New York was not an isolated event. The Catholic Church is carrying out a well-financed and well-organized campaign against a woman's right to abortion in almost every state across the country. They are organizing right to life groups, holding demonstrations, lobbying, introducing bills, and filing suits.

Nixon himself has made it clear what the women's movement is up against. Since he has been in office he has made three statements on the abortion issue. First was the statement on the "sanctity of human life" that was picked up by the press around the country. Second was his public rejection of his own Population Council's pro-abortion recommendations, recommendations that were based on a woman's right to choose and not on population control. Third, and probably most serious, was his direct intervention into the New York crisis by siding with the Catholic Church hierarchy through his letter to Cardinal Cooke of the New York archdiocese. This made front page news across the nation.

Women vs. Connecticut won a major victory when the Connecticut courts ruled favorably on their suit, saying that the Connecticut abortion law was unconstitutional and violated a woman's right to privacy. Then through the intervention of the state apparatus and activities on the part of the Catholic Church hierarchy, a special session of the legislature passed a new law even further restricting a woman's right to abortion by making abortion a criminal offense punishable by up to 10 years in prison, except to save the life of the pregnant woman.

A similar development has taken place in New Jersey, where the law has been declared unconstitutional by the courts but the state is appealing the decision and a right-to-life-type bill is now before the legislature. While this is pending no abortions can be performed in New Jersey.

In Massachusetts the legislature just passed an amendment to the state constitution under a welfare subsection that would prohibit abortions by guaranteeing every fetus from the moment of conception the rights of all citizens. To be made into law, this has to pass the legislature again, and then be approved by the voters of the state through a referendum. And recently seven women in Chicago were arrested for running a self-help abortion clinic.

But there are also victories on the other side. We have just learned that Shirley Wheeler's case in Florida has been dropped. Certain court victories have been won. And more and more or-

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organizations, churches, medical societies, and state commissions have taken positions for abortion law repeal.

There is absolutely no question that the abortion issue is now a much sharper issue in American politics than it was when WONAAC was formed. When WONAAC was formed one year ago, some women in the women's liberation movement argued that it was not necessary to organize since New York and a few other states had liberalized abortion laws. They thought the states were moving in the direction of repealing or reforming the abortion laws and that women would win the right to abortion without a fight.

The women's movement cannot underestimate the resistance that the government, the states, and those forces that hold reactionary views on such questions will have to the fight for abortion law repeal. It is going to be a long and hard struggle. More myths surround this question than any other issue of women's oppression, and it is going to be a very difficult but important fight.

So what has WONAAC accomplished? First, over this past year WONAAC's perspective has been confirmed. It is the only organization that is organized nationally to unite women in action on the question of abortion or for that matter on any other aspect of women's oppression. It has built teach-ins and debates with anti-abortion people. It has initiated and coordinated numerous class action suits against reactionary abortion laws across the country. It has demonstrated against state legislatures and mobilized women for legislative hearings on abortion laws. WONAAC worked with Abzug in preparing the National Abortion Rights Act of 1972, which is presently in Congress.

This bill can be an important focus for the entire women's movement to demand that the federal government take action on this question. It is also something the SWP election campaigns should support and can be used to put the Democratic and Republican Party candidates on the spot. WONAAC coalitions have been set up all across the country. WONAAC was the only organization that carried out a public campaign on behalf of Shirley Wheeler.

Through its activities over the past year WONAAC has come to appreciate the importance of raising abortion as an international issue. By calling international abortion actions on November 20 and on May 6, WONAAC has helped inspire the abortion fight and the women's liberation movement in other countries, just as actions of women in France, Germany, Canada, and other countries have inspired women here.

When the anti-abortion forces were mobilizing in New York, it was WONAAC that provided women with the opportunity to answer the right wing with the May 6 march. The WONAAC demonstrations across the country received considerable coverage on TV and on the radio. Thousands of people learned that there were women who were prepared to fight for this right in New York and around the world.

WONAAC has provided a vehicle for women who want to struggle on this question, including those who are also involved in the elections and counterinstitution type activities but feel that is not enough. Essentially, WONAAC has become the abortion coalition and although its activities have been modest, in the broad context of the women's movement as a whole it has played a very important role.

Now, I'd like to go into the specific political debate that is taking place in WONAAC and how we view the upcoming conference. I have already indicated many of the questions that are being raised both formally and informally. As I have said, we expect that many other questions will arise during this debate. Many of the criticisms, including the red-baiting, stem from frustration with the lack of a unified mass response by the women's movement to the anti-abortion mobilizations and, in a more general sense, frustration with the fact that WONAAC isn't yet what they would like it to be—big, broad, and all-encompassing.

These criticisms also reflect a capitulation to the consistent political and red-baiting attacks on WONAAC, the YSA, and the SWP that have been pushed by anti-mass action tendencies in the women's press and by some members of NOW since WONAAC was founded. However, this is the first time since the founding conference that those attacks are reflected in any significant way within WONAAC itself. I already indicated that the elections have played a significant role in this. The questions raised in the dispute within WONAAC are important ones—questions the en-

tire women's liberation movement will be interested in. Having a clear political debate and a sober and realistic evaluation of the role that WONAAC has played in the past year will be a valuable contribution to the entire development of the women's liberation movement.

We can expect that women from virtually every political tendency and every perspective within the feminist movement will be attending the WONAAC conference.

The WONAAC Newsletter will be carrying a discussion of the political questions involved before the conference and will be very valuable in helping to clarify the issues in dispute.

One of the political questions raised was that WONAAC's national focus detracts from local grass roots organizing. For example, the "June 24-New York" proposal to the June 4 National Coordinating Committee (NCC) meeting of WONAAC stated: "Any demonstrations on a national scale such as November 20 or any nationally coordinated program of demonstrations would only hinder efforts to effect this absolutely necessary decentralization" of WONAAC's work.

Does WONAAC's national focus detract from local organizing? It has been precisely the nationally coordinated campaigns that WONAAC has organized that have helped local organizing. What is being questioned is the need for WONAAC itself. A national campaign helps local organizing because it raises demands directed against the national government. Our enemy is national—the church, the government, the courts—and any local action is more powerful if it is part of a national campaign because it links women across the country in a united manner.

One of the other charges is that WONAAC has not paid serious attention to legislative and legal activities. This is simply untrue. WONAAC has either played a role in or has helped initiate many of the class action suits that exist right now, and we think that such suits are effective tactics. WONAAC has organized and participated in hearings on legislative bills and has attempted to get repeal legislation introduced into the local legislatures. WONAAC has also played a key role in collaborating with Abzug's office in the drafting of the Abortion Rights Act of 1972, as was mentioned earlier in the report.

Another important question that is being raised is the red-baiting. Most of the women in the national office of WONAAC that are retreating from a mass action perspective have been involved in WONAAC for quite awhile. They have been involved in both of WONAAC's national conferences and have previously publicly rejected the red-baiting of WONAAC. They are now raising the spectre of "YSA/SWP control" because they have moved away from the political perspective around which WONAAC was formed and of which they see the YSA and the SWP being the best organized defenders. It is unfortunately true that right now the YSA and the SWP are the strongest political organizations participating in WONAAC. The reason this is true is not because we choose it to be that way, but because of the default of other sections of the women's movement. We must answer these red-baiting attacks head-on because red-baiting can only help destroy the abortion struggle and the entire women's liberation movement. We must explain that beneath the red-baiting lie political differences. And although it would be best that the discussion be kept on the political differences, those who are questioning this perspective will attempt to cloud the discussion by keeping it on the role of the YSA and the SWP. For example, at the WONAAC NCC meeting, after they presented their political projections, they withdrew their resolution and said that the main issue in dispute was the YSA and the SWP. As well as drawing out the political differences and presenting positive projections, it will be necessary to deal aggressively with the red-baiting and to explain what is behind it.

At the NCC meeting a proposal was passed that included a number of projections for WONAAC. In the process of helping to build this conference and participating in the political debate, it is important to begin helping to carry out some of these specific campaigns now. One of the projections that was agreed upon was holding a national tribunal in the fall, the character of which will be decided upon by the conference. We think that this could be an important political event, which can be of an international character.

Also projected was that WONAAC begin a national petition campaign for the Abortion Rights Act of 1972, introduced in Congress by Bella Abzug. Although the size and scope of the cam-

paign will be decided upon by the conference, WONAAC will begin circulating petitions now and hopefully will be able to have a large number of signatures by the time of the conference. This project also gives people some material to have on literature tables while building the conference, and that can involve interested women in the abortion law repeal campaign.

WONAAC also projected sending trailblazing teams to those states where there are major crises developing on the abortion issue and where WONAAC groups are not yet organized or are very new.

The meeting also called on WONAAC to work locally with NOW and other groups in planning activities for August 26. Discussions are beginning in some cities already, particularly in New York and Philadelphia. It is our opinion that WONAAC affiliates should investigate the possibilities there are for united activities for the women's liberation movement for either demonstrations, public meetings or other activities. The actions on or around August 26 will likely include many of the demands and issues raised by the women's liberation movement, but no matter what issues are raised, abortion will be an important question, particularly in those states where major crises are developing.

One of the things that pro-abortion forces can be doing more of is serious educational work around the question of abortion. We can't assume that everyone understands this question, particularly because of the escalated educational and action campaign on the part of the Catholic Church.

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In line with the whole discussion at the plenum about campus activity, many of the activities that are being projected by WONAAC will be effective ways to bring campus women into struggle. One of the campus projects that may be raised for consideration at the conference will be carrying out referenda campaigns for abortion law repeal this fall. The Choice '72 polls carried out on many campuses this spring showed the very broad sentiment that exists for abortion law repeal. The Canadian abortion campaign has found that this is a very useful project for building the abortion campaign on the campuses.

One of the other questions that we have continually discussed while building the abortion campaign is what is the best form through which the abortion struggle can be carried out in the context of the general women's liberation struggle on the campuses.

Women on the campuses are interested in many aspects of women's oppression. In many cities the campuses have provided the backbone for the citywide abortion coalitions. But the question is posed about the role of the general women's liberation groups or abortion action groups on the campuses. As well as health struggles, gynecological and abortion fights that take place on the campuses—which an abortion group can quite clearly organize—there are also many other issues that come up on the campuses, which are important.

On some campuses HEW struggles have been initiated demanding more female students in graduate programs, hiring more female professors, equal admissions—that is, equal opportunities in education and jobs for women on the campuses. Also there have been continuous discussions and campaigns on the campuses for women's studies. General women's liberation educational conferences have been carried out and have been successful. These are all activities that we want to participate in where possible and help to organize where our forces permit.

Serious radicalizing women don't just think about the abortion issue, especially if there is no sharp crisis around the issue at a given time. The problems of livingroom feminism, demoralization, and counterinstitutionism have not been as significant within campus women's liberation

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groups as they have been in most general city-wide women's liberation groups. The ability of large numbers of women activists on the campuses to participate in the women's liberation movement, and to maximize the number of women that can be involved in struggling around the abortion question, where our forces permit and where there is a basis for it, we should be participating in or helping to build general campus women's liberation organizations.

At the University of Minnesota, the Female Liberation group on campus has been the backbone of the citywide abortion coalition and is carrying out important health struggles on the campus. It has also carried out other activities such as a rape conference that we participated in and helped to build, and a speakers bureau that has been able to reach out to the other campuses and high schools in the region. Similar developments have taken place at Brown University with Women of Brown United, which we participate in.

Also, in our general support to women's liberation in the Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley student government election campaigns and other educational activities such as forums or classes on campus that the YSJP or the YSA carries out, we should be raising all aspects of women's oppression, not only the issue of abortion but particularly issues in relation to the campus situation.

## young socialist the organizer

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Because of the need to focus this report on the upcoming conference and the importance of the political debate within WONAAC, I was unable to go into other aspects of our women's liberation activity. I would just like to point out here the continuing growth of Chicana feminism that we have seen since the first Chicana conference of 600 in Houston. A midwest Chicana conference is taking place this weekend organized by women connected with the Midwest Council of La Raza. We were able to send YSAers to participate and to introduce these women to the election campaign. Representatives of WONAAC were also there with material to encourage Chicanas to come to the WONAAC conference.

Lastly, our primary work in the next month will be helping to organize and prepare for the WONAAC conference. This means paying especially close attention to this work.

*The Militant* will be carrying a series of articles dealing with the political questions that have been raised. We should make a special point of selling *The Militant* and discussing our ideas with the women that are interested in WONAAC.

We should help WONAAC coalitions to go on a vigorous campaign to let women know that this conference is taking place. Tables can be set up on the campuses and around the city. Volunteers can leaflet meetings of the candidates. Representatives from the coalitions could go to NOW and Women's Political Caucus meetings to let women know about the conference.

In addition, a thorough political discussion before and during the WONAAC conference will go a long way to solidify the campaign for abortion law repeal in this country and will be a valuable experience for the entire women's liberation movement.

**DELPFINE WELCH**  
YSA Women's Liberation Director