

# OUR TWELVE WEEK COURSE OF STUDY

**F**OLLOWING the last National Convention of our League, we began to wrestle seriously with the problem of working out new forms and methods of education. As always happens when introducing needed changes, some comrades became so concerned with the method of education that they began to neglect content. In some places, the theory actually developed that the YCL as a non-Party organization, should not teach Marxism-Leninism. Some classes were organized in the YCL which did not even mention Marxism, Socialism, or the Soviet Union. A theory also appeared among some comrades that the YCL could not sell the Daily Worker!

The last meeting of the National Board sharply criticized these tendencies, and called for renewed concern with improving the quality of the content of our education. The teaching of Marxism-Leninism is the main function of the Young Communist League as an educational organization. The problem is not whether we shall teach Marxism, but how we shall teach it. All our experimentation with methods of education must continue on an intensified scale. But we must never lose sight of the fact that new methods of education are to be adopted for the purpose of teaching Marxian content, that this content itself demands the abandonment of all stereotyped methods of teaching.

The basic task that confronts us today is the education of the youth in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism during the birth and growth of the democratic front as the transitional stage to the People's Front. Education in basic Marxist theory was never more needed than today. Our enemies say that in adopting the policy of the People's Front we have deserted the position of Marxism.

Many of our own League members give evidence of not being entirely clear concerning the falsehood of these charges. Our main educational task at the moment, therefore, is to enable the members of the League to understand thoroughly that the policy of the People's Front is Marxism-Leninism applied to the present period of the menace of Fascism.

For this reason, the last meeting of the National Board decided to launch a twelve weeks course of study on the subject of Youth and the People's Front. This course, prepared by the National Office, is now being conducted in every leading district of the League. All mem-



bers of state, city, and branch executive committees are supposed to be involved. Also all leading and advanced members of every branch are expected to take it. Classes are being made available for all the members of every branch who are eligible or who desire it. It is the most ambitious educational project to be undertaken on a national scale in the history of the YCL. The most capable comrades in the various districts are being secured as in-

structors, and weekly meetings of the instructors are being held each week preceding the regular classes.

In the bulletin issued to the instructors, the general aim of this course, which can be described briefly as an **orientation course**, is set forth as follows:

"Since theory is the 'accumulation of human experience' we must study history in order to master it. Therefore, we are studying the tasks of the movement toward a Popular Front in the light of the past struggles of the American people for security, peace and democracy. One can really know an individual only if he knows the past life of that individual. In the same way, we can understand the problems of today only if we know the history which produced them. We study history, however, not in order to cram our minds with facts, but in order to learn how to make history in the future.

"In teaching the historical sections of this course, therefore, our aim is not at the moment to learn a mass of new information. Most of those taking this course have some **acquaintance** at least with the main periods in American history—the Colonial Period, the Revolution, the struggle between the slave-system and growing capitalism, westward expansion, the Civil War and Reconstruction, the growth of capitalism and imperialism, the World War, the great crisis and the intensification of the class-struggle which followed. Our aim is to help our comrades to begin to understand the **class forces** which were involved in these major periods of American history. Through interpreting those major events in the light of the Marxist-Leninist method of historical materialism, we hope to help them to learn to use the living method of Marxism. While teaching them to interpret these events, with whose general outlines they are already familiar, in the light of the **class forces** involved, we propose to begin to teach them Marxist political economy. We should strive to teach



how capitalism works by showing how it came into existence, developed, and passed into general crisis in America. We should strive to teach the Marxist theory of the state in the light of the major political upheavals in America.

"In this way, we will teach Marxism not as a body of abstract theory. But we will show how Marxist science developed as generalizations drawn from the history of capitalism—of American capitalism the same as of any other capitalism.

"In teaching the principles of socialism, our aim again is to do so on the basis of showing how socialism actually came into being in the Soviet Union. In the same way, in studying the road to socialism in our own country, we will see on the basis of experience that here, as in other capitalist democracies, the road to socialism lies through the growth and development of the People's Front. We will see that the **general course** of the movement to socialism is the same in every capitalist country, but that the **particular** differences are determined by the histories of the various countries.

"Our study of the relationships of class forces in the major periods of American history should, therefore, help us to see the forerunners of the present movement toward an American People's Front and toward socialism in America. We will see how socialism will grow up, through the strenuous efforts of ourselves and the American people, out of the whole past history of America.

"The major purpose of our course, therefore, is to study the relation between our struggle for socialism and our immediate task of **helping** to build the People's Front. This means that we are undertaking to learn clearly how we, as members of the Young Communist League, are to work within the broad, progressive movement now developing in America.

"Our aim must be to begin to train those who take this course **how to think as Marxists** and **how to study as Marxists**. We must



familiarize them with such basic literature that they will know how to continue their self-study and reading. We must also impress them with the importance of studying not only Marxist literature, but the genuine contributions of bourgeois thinkers, in accordance with Lenin's advice that our aim is to master in so far as possible the 'sum-total of human knowledge.' Our study of history, of Roosevelt's program, etc., should help produce the realization of the need for this.

"At the moment, our country is filled with rabid attacks upon everything that is live and progressive—upon the CIO, Roosevelt, the People's Front, the peace program of collective security, the Soviet Union, the Communist movement, etc., etc. A primary aim of this course is to make it possible for our comrades to meet this flood of arguments, which emanate from the open reactionaries; from the concealed allies of fascism, the Trotskyites; and from honest confusion. We must so equip our comrades with the method of Marxism that they will not memorize answers like parrots, but will be able to reason them out and to answer new and unforeseen arguments as they arise. Ability to do

'he latter will test their mastery of Marxism' "

Many confused people are now asking the question 'whether or not we are in danger of becoming lost in the broad mass movement which is developing.' It is an order to prevent individuals who want Socialism from becoming lost in the broad and often complex mass movement that we have our own independent organization. It is only the thorough mastery of the science of Marxism-Leninism that can enable us to find our bearings in the broad movement and help us to guide it on the road toward socialism, just as it is only knowledge of the stars which can enable one lost in a woods at night to find his way. This is our answer to those who are afraid that we will become lost in the movement or socialists and non-socialists. It is the primary task of everyone who wants Socialism to learn how to move among broad masses and at the same time see ahead and to guide those with whom he is moving. That is why it is so important today to study the science of human society—the science of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Dmitroff.

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