

A Must Article for Youth of America--In Sept. 'Communist'

By Claudia Jones

The harsh fact of war has affected in a new, unprecedented way, the lives and habits of millions of American youth. In a comprehensive article, appearing in the September *Communist* and in pamphlet reprint form, an outstanding leader of American youth has underscored the fact that:

"The present generation of American youth is a war generation. The youth who puts on the uniform of our country, as well as his sweet-heart who bids him farewell, has known no other world since he or she was 14 years of age than a world at war. From the very first moment in the life of young American manhood and womanhood, when it begins to develop consciousness and understanding beyond the adolescent stage, it knows only a country and a world at war. The war with all its issues, problems and future perspectives, dominates their lives, and their thinking with a completeness that is all pervading."

It is all the more significant that the author of the article and pamphlet is the national president of the Young Communist League, Mac Weiss. This significance is further emphasized when it is considered that the article "Toward a New Anti-Fascist Youth Organization" is in fact the basis upon which the Young Communist League discusses an outstanding proposal:

"... to change the program and name of the YCL and to broaden its leadership in order to help create a new united anti-fascist youth organization," at its coming National Convention, October 15, 16, 17 in New York City.

Why has the proposal been advanced? Because American youth finds itself in a "historically new situation, a situation that is without precedent or parallel in the life of any previous generation of American youth."

Indicative of this "new situation" is that millions of youth, including tens of thousands of girls, have entered the armed forces. As a result, deep going repercussions have resulted and created "a whole new complex of adjustments in their lives, their thinking, their relationship to the rest of the population, in the role which they play in all considerations of public policy."

The author points up these facts further by stressing that almost two great columns characterize the youth of America today: fighters in uniform and fighters in overalls. He further observes that even the schools are readjusting their curricula to become "feed lines" for the entry of students into the armed forces or into war production.

Wherein lies the importance of such a broad outline of youth problems today? Its importance forecasts the problems which confront our nation today in fully mobilizing the youth for victory, and in the future when the youth who return from the trenches will be demobilized, rehabilitated, and reabsorbed into schools, factory, and farm.

POSES PROBLEM

A fact of tremendous interest is the author's reference to the mass employment of youth of working age, including girls and teen-age youth—a generation that has never known unemployment and that is entering industry and the organized labor movement from the first moment of their mature lives. Truly, as he states "the possibility exists to make this first generation of

employed youth also the first generation of organized trade union youth in the history of our country." On the background of this development, he highlights a whole series of new social problems such as the wholesale uprooting of youth from communities, families, friends organizations and churches, and the disturbing growth of juvenile delinquency.

Not the least important of the changes among the youth is their political maturity. This new political role is no better shown than in the widespread and rapidly growing movement to lower the voting age to 18. All this, says Mac Weiss, "underscores as never before, the new political role of youth, the political maturity of youth, the desire to assume every responsibility of citizenship." Further evidence of this new meaning which love of country and patriotism has assumed in the minds and hearts of youth is their deepened understanding of the evil against which we fight to destroy—fascism. Millions of youth further have recognized in the great magnificent deeds of our heroic Soviet ally, something to learn from and emulate. They have begun to understand as never before the need for the closest understanding and friendship between our nation and the USSR, as the key to victory and a just and durable peace. So, too, have millions begun to learn and recognize labor as the most progressive social force in modern society, the most consistent democratic force in our country's life, the backbone of our nation's war effort. Added to this is the important recognition speeded by the very wartime requirements of our country of the need to fight for the full integration of the Negro people into the life of the nation, for full social, political and economic equality for the Negro people.

POST-WAR WORLD

The author sums up his contention with the observation that the post-war world will bring youth face-to-face with the task of building a new future through fighting for the defense of democracy at home and all attempts of reactionary forces to curtail or destroy it. He commends the progressive direction of the National Resources Planning Board program and the speech of President Roosevelt to servicemen providing the demobilized men with a "stake," or guarantees for economic and social security.

The national president of the YCL asserts that these changes among the youth is in no small measure due to the pioneering work of the Young Communist League. He traces the history of the League in pioneering and organizing the youth for correct policies more than 21 years ago, which are today accepted policies.

Yet he states "with full appreciation of the great contributions which the Young Communist League made toward helping solve these new problems, it is at the same time true that a new type of organization, much broader than the Young Communist League and capable of uniting within its ranks hundreds of thousands of advanced anti-fascist youth is required by the times. Only such an organization can cope with the new situation in which youth finds itself today and help solve the new problems which already confront the youth as well as those which will confront it after victory is won."

Discussed in the article is the fact that "the changes that are proposed for the convention will help remove certain obstacles which have hitherto impeded the building of a broad anti-fascist youth organization. There can be no question but that the name and program of the YCL were such as to imply that membership in the organization automatically committed one to acceptance of the immediate and ultimate program of the Communist Party and that they therefore operated to prevent from joining it thousands of youth who supported its immediate program and activity. It is equally true that the changes will help blunt certain weapons used by defeatists and reactionaries who pointed to the name of the organization 'evidence that the YCL was the 'youth section' of the Communist Party and not an independent organization."

A program guide is advanced by the national president of the YCL for the new organization. Among the important points included, is that the organization should be one which will place in the center of all of its work the mobilization of the masses of youth to win the war for national liberation, to smash fascism, through helping to speed in every way the opening of the second front in Western Europe now, in order to make 1943 the year of victory over Hitler. It emphasizes that the organization should take its stand by the side of the labor movement, supporting its building, defend it from attack as the most progressive, social force in modern society, the most consistently democratic force in our country's life, the backbone of our war effort. The program urges strengthening the United Nations coalition particularly to promote friendship and collaboration between the United States and the Soviet Union, the two most powerful democracies in the world, having different social systems but a common national interest in cementing their friendship and collaboration, unity of the young generation, of labor and the people, which alone can achieve these aims.

The program advanced urges full equality for Negro youth, Negro white unity, mobilization of youth for war services, education in the spirit of our democratic ideals, drawing strength and inspiration from the labor movement and the great democratic traditions of our country, the role of its patriots.

The program points to a future in order to help realize in all its fullness a land of full opportunity for youth; an America in which insecurity, poverty and want have been abolished, an America that is peaceful, free, prosperous and happy.

It is obvious that deep going changes will indeed take place as outlined by Mac Weiss in his article. Communists and non-Communists can belong to such an organization on the only consideration that they support this program.

Such a provoking and thought-stimulating article is of concern to every trade unionist, to every Negro people's leader, to every leader of youth-serving agencies, to every one, who in common with us recognize that the war generation of American youth in its fight on the battlefields of our country against fascism is making a new and unprecedented contribution to our nation's life, interests and to its future.