

P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10003

March 12, 1975

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND RECRUITMENT DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a report with ideas for improving YSA recruitment work by the Michigan-Indiana Young Socialist team. During the first three weeks of their tour, the Michigan-Indiana team has already recruited 12 new YSA members.

Comradely,

RICK BERMAN

Rick Berman
YSA National Office

SUGGESTIONS ON RECRUITMENT

By Michigan/Indiana YS team

Initially we were probably too informal regarding contact work. After the first meeting we held on a campus we went out with contacts to a local eating and drinking spot. Later we decided that this was probably not the best atmosphere for seriously discussing politics or joining the YSA. We decided to try a more serious approach after the meeting, setting up individual meetings with people to talk about questions they might have and more concretely posing the question of joining. In general, this proved to be a correct decision. The next week we recruited six new members, four at a "join the YSA" meeting.

Just being on campus, setting up a lit table, hawking the Young Socialist, and passing out campaign literature draws a lot of attention to the organization and puts us in contact with students who are interested in radical ideas. We tell anyone who buys a paper to stop by the campaign table and we give them a leaflet for our meeting.

Anyone who comes up to the table is talked to about the campaign and the YSA. "Are you interested in socialist ideas, active in any organizations, would you like to endorse the socialist election campaign and work on building a meeting for one of the candidates, are you interested in joining the Young Socialist Alliance -- good, let's go talk about it." We found that by taking the time to immediately sit down and talk to someone who expressed an interest in joining, we could engage in very effective discussions on their questions about socialism and joining a group like the YSA. For instance, one team member ran into a person during a sub blitz the first night on campus who was interested in "getting active in an organization," and he immediately stopped to talk to her. He only sold one sub to The Militant that night, but that person joined the YSA this week and is helping us sell out the bundle!

We decided to hold our "join the YSA" meeting on Wednesday night. We decided to do that in order to allow time later in the week for further discussions with people who might become interested there in joining and want more time to think about it. Eighteen people came to the meeting and four joined the YSA.

After the talk and a brief question and answer period, we broke up into smaller groups, one team member talking to two or three people each who stayed to talk about joining. This gave us an opportunity to get down to business, get at people's real questions, explain more thoroughly what the YSA is and why people should join. Four people joined right there and paid their initiation fee. Two of these people we had talked to before. One other person thought it over for a couple of days and joined on Saturday. The most important thing is just making time and creating situations in which to have these discussions with people. If a person couldn't stay after the meeting or couldn't stop to talk at the table, we set up a time to meet them later. Nobody ever stood us up!

Generally, this seems to be a very aggressive approach. Anybody who stops to talk or even browses is told what the YSA is and what we are doing on campus: building support for the Camejo-Reid campaign and building the YSA. One-to-one discussions are the best way we've found to aggressively go after and recruit people who are interested in the YSA. Working together as a team is important in this. For instance, if one team member becomes involved in a serious discussion, someone else has to take over the lit table and the other person should sell or pass out leaflets or Bill of Rights brochures. Many times at-large members can staff the table and free up team members for contact work, Pathfinder adoption, etc. Also, by concentrating on selling, doing publicity, and holding a meeting in the first half of the week, it's possible to leave time on Thursday and Friday for follow-up work with contacts, traveling to nearby campuses to sell (take a contact or new member along), speakers bureau work, or Boston work.

We want to draw in the activists who are looking for an alternative. We want to answer their questions about socialism and the YSA. We want to pose our program and strategy for building social struggles as the only effective way to replace the bankrupt capitalist system with socialism. Just asking people what they think is a good way to get at the barriers that are holding them back from joining. Maybe someone doesn't understand how we think it is possible to build a movement powerful enough to challenge the rulers now in power. Maybe someone doesn't understand our support to Black nationalism or how we expect to defeat racism. These are some of the most common questions. The point is to draw these out and explain how through a strategy of independent mass action, we intend to build a revolutionary party and a revolutionary youth organization that can lead mass struggles to a socialist conclusion. We are building the YSA and SWP to play that role through our work around issues like Boston and our support for the SWP election campaign.

Most important is to devote as much time as is necessary to this kind of contact work. This is where team work is really important. One team member may be tied down for one or two hours talking to an interested individual. Sales may suffer that day because of it. But if one or two people join the YSA as a result of these discussions, these new comrades can help make up the difference and start to help build the YSA.

March 6, 1975