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December 16, 1968

TO ALL ORGANIZERS, NC'ERS, AND AT-LARGERS

Dear Comrades,

The attached report by Robin Maisel is being sent to you as an example of the kind of work every local can do to expand the political and organizational influence of the YSA in new areas outside the major cities.

We hope that comrades will study it carefully because this is the type of work every local will be doing on a regular basis in the coming period as part of the expansion program for the YSA.

Comradely,

Charlie Bolduc

Charlie Bolduc
National Chairman

The purpose of this report is to discuss the organizational expansion of the YSA to new campuses in areas comparatively distant from the major cities where we have had locals for many years.

The basis for this new kind of expansion is the deepening of the youth radicalization on campuses which until recently were more or less quiescent. On these campuses there are hundreds of newly radicalizing students who are reaching revolutionary conclusions in the absence of organized socialist tendencies.

These students build on the previous years experiences of the antiwar movement and the black struggle. Their mood is favorable to black nationalism. They are antiwar activists. They are sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution. They reject Stalinism. They support socialist democracy in Eastern Europe. They are on the verge of joining the YSA, and in numerous instances one could make a good case for their owing the YSA back dues.

A tremendous number of these students are on campuses where the YSA has never had a member before. Many of these campuses are outside the major industrial cities. For example, in the Illinois-Indiana area seven eighths of the college students go to school on campuses outside of Chicago. They are spread over a large geographical area (about 350 miles long by 300 miles wide). There is a feeling of isolation on those campuses.

The task then is to recruit these potential YSAers and produce a growth of the YSA in as economical way as possible without sacrificing political education or organizational norms.

The isolation of the campus radicals stems from an understanding that as individuals on a campus far from a major city they are off the beaten track and far from the centers of political activity. As individuals this is the case. As members of an organization their political isolation can be overcome. That in and of itself is an inducement to join the YSA.

A potential recruit to the YSA sees the need for an organizational form for his political activity. He is aware that SDS is unable to grapple with the political questions of the day because of its lack of perspective and program. He is aware of the necessity for an organization in addition to the antiwar committees as a vehicle for socialist ideas. He could try to form an organization, but he is one of a still relatively small number of socialists on one campus and the wherewithall for building a national organization is lacking for him.

The YSA is able to provide him with a national organization with international ties. As a member of the YSA he shares a common program and perspective with young socialists very much like himself across the country and over in the next county. He has a

weekly newspaper, a monthly magazine, and a bi-monthly theoretical journal. He has a publishing house, a literature distribution agency, leaflets, buttons, posters, pamphlets, teachers, speakers, etc. All of a sudden his isolation has been broken down.

This is the case for a YSAer joining a local in Chicago or Los Angeles or New York and should be the perspective for YSAers in Kokomo, or Sante Fe, or State College, Pennsylvania.

The expansion of the YSA to campuses away from the major cities makes the YSA a truly national organization with a huge pool of cadres. A large, and growing segment of those cadres can and must be recruited on the campuses where they are now, out of the way places some distance from the major cities. They are ripe and over-ripe for recruitment. They are basically socialists without an organizational affiliation whom we can train and educate within the YSA.

Since March of 1968 about 65 new comrades joined the YSA in the Illinois-Indiana area outside of Chicago in eleven cities and towns. I believe that just this figure alone would justify our work in the area outside of Chicago. Eighteen months ago there were just three YSAers outside of Chicago in the same area.

More than half of the almost \$1000 raised for the election campaign in solicited direct contributions from professors and and sympathizers came from new sources in the Illinois-Indiana area. Whereas a year ago the Chicago local had just about no contacts outside of the city, there are now contacts in just about every city of 30,000 or more population in Illinois and Indiana and a huge potential for growth in terms of new locals and at-large members. It is a reasonable perspective to think of having 12-15 locals of the YSA in the Illinois-Indiana-Missouri area by summer.

How is this kind of organizing done in the area? The first task is getting contact with the outlying campuses. This is done through a series of trailblazes. Just about every local in the country has done this and has a good list of contacts.

The next step is doing intensive work on the most promising areas. In Chicago we used a series of extended campaign tours around the elections as the means for doing this.

Letters were written to the contacts on the outlying campuses asking them to set up a meeting and literature table for the tour team, to provide housing, and hopefully to get an honorarium for the speaker. Providing an activity for the contacts was very important. Some of the areas panned out and others were scratched from the list and replaced with new areas. A lot of time was spent talking with the contacts. Taking a sleeping bag and air mattress

was important because the most promising contacts very often lived in small apartments and had a tendency to take pity on the tour team and would try to put them up at the home of some less promising contact who had an extra bed.

From each of the extended tours we expected to sell a large number of subscriptions and literature (from a very impressive and colorful display) and to single out the best potential recruits for intensive and consistent work.

This work consisted of laying out the perspective of the YSA to become the dominant socialist youth organization, explaining how the YSA works and fielding any number of questions on the black struggle, the antiwar movement, socialism, etc., and doing a good deal of listening.

The extended tours, four in all, clocked about 10,000 miles in Illinois and Indiana.

After each tour correspondence was maintained with the contacts. Personal letters of a political character were written to each one of the most promising contacts. This was in addition to the numerous thank-you notes. Consistent letter writing was very important. A hit and miss approach is a sign of unseriousness to any serious young radical.

The Chicago local decided that the regional work would have to be the full time assignment of an experienced comrade. The local would have to sacrifice the services of a leading comrade in Chicago for the regional work. The executive committee would apportion the work load to take up the slack. It was decided that it was a necessary expenditure of a comrade's time and the local would adjust its work accordingly.

The Corresponding Secretary had the responsibility of spending most of his time on the road recruiting new comrades and helping new recruits to build locals. There are no short-cuts or gimmicks or get-rich-quick schemes which can take the place of consistent work.

The regional letter became an organizing tool for the new comrades. It comes out regularly, about every two weeks, and the comrades have come to expect that it will arrive just about on a bi-weekly schedule, depending upon the time of year and the tasks. The letter is not a gimmick. It is a political organizer. Each issue reviews the main tasks of the YSA in the antiwar and black struggles, sales, subscription drives, education, and major campaigns such as the election campaign or the French events. It also carries news of the activities of YSAers all over the area. It breaks

down the isolation of the comrades outside of Chicago and gives a certain amount of direction from the activities of the Chicago YSA and SWP branches.

It is important to service the new locals and at-large members. The work in the area must include providing teachers and speakers. The organizer of this work must carry news and be able to help in getting the new locals off the ground. But this "servicing" goes beyond the areas where we have comrades to areas where we want comrades. The Corresponding Secretary of the Chicago local has clocked about 35-40 thousand miles since February in the Illinois-Indiana-Missouri area.

The financing of the work is a burden which falls on the larger locals who are able to find the necessary money somewhere. We did not think at first that we could afford it, but because we felt it politically justified to make that type of expansion we went ahead anyway and the money was found somehow. A good deal of it was found in the ranks of the new contacts, particularly among professors. With the end of the election campaign more resources will be available for this kind of expansion, while, of course, at the same time some contributions will dry up. I believe it is possible to get contributions for special projects, such as freeing one person to work in new areas, from the same sources who made contributions during the election campaign. As the work expands, new sources will be found.

It is important that the local take work in new areas seriously. That means making a special assignment, providing desk and file space for it, and giving it a high priority, over some tasks which are of a routine nature but less productive in terms of recruitment.

In addition to consistency in terms of touring, correspondence, the regional letter, etc., it is necessary to be a bit audacious. Routinism has to go out the window. Huge amounts of literature should be consigned out of the bookstore for traveling sales. Contacts should be encouraged to take on projects such as setting up tours, selling the press, raising money, etc. The organizing and speaking tours should hit the campuses like bombshells, with fancy displays, aggressive sales pitches, a "don't take no for an answer" attitude. When asked what I'm doing on a campus, my stock reply is "I'm from the YSA. We want to build a chapter here."

Robin Maisel
December 11, 1968