

NEC REPORT ON YSA PERSPECTIVES FOR 1968 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

In July, the Socialist Workers Party will announce that it is running candidates for President and Vice President in the 1968 elections. The names of the candidates will be publicly announced near the end of August.

This election campaign will become the central focus of all forms of YSA activity in the coming year and a half, as it has been in past election years. We must do more thinking now about the political importance of the 1968 elections and how we can maximize the opportunities of the SWP campaign.

The 1968 election campaign occurs in the context of the continued escalation of the Vietnam war and the penetration of the war effects into all aspects of American life. The war escalation has served to widen the divisions that exist in the ruling class over the tactics of imperialist foreign policy, especially in Vietnam. This division in the ruling class has been one of the main factors in the development of the antiwar movement. But the division has also been deepened by the antiwar movement itself and the sentiment it represents.

The differences in the ruling class reflect themselves in the discussions and maneuvering now going on around perspectives for the 1968 presidential election. The Vietnam war and its impact dominate national politics. The debates and discussions about the war that take place in the next year will resolve around the 1968 presidential campaign.

The strategy and tactics of members of the two capitalist parties who have misgivings about the war are determined by two major factors: the possibility of organizing opposition within the Democratic Party to Johnson's re-nomination, and the possibility of a Republican presidential ticket and platform critical of Johnson's continued escalation of the war.

There are those who promote Robert Kennedy as a "peace" candidate and a Democratic party alternative to Johnson. There are reform Democrats and SANE leaders who have publicly announced they prefer a liberal Republican to Johnson and have suggested a ticket like Percy and Morton to oppose Johnson. The Republican Party congressional "white paper" on Vietnam, issued after April 15, and the recent news conference held by eight Republican congressmen calling for "de-escalation" have laid the basis for a possible

"peace" alternative to Johnson.

Not only is the ruling class already trying to come to grips with the 1968 elections, but so are many people in the radical and antiwar movements.

The Communist Party, our most important political opponent in the radical movement, is faced with a tactical problem. They are confronted with the likelihood of an unpalatable choice between Johnson and a Republican candidate; and three decades of Democratic Party work makes it difficult for them to support a "progressive" Republican.

Given this situation the CP feels their best alternative is a Henry Wallace - type candidacy. But the CP does not have the 80-100 thousand members that it had during the Progressive Party period, making it virtually impossible for it to organize a new "peace" party. Nevertheless they hope that they have sufficient forces to bring about a third presidential ticket. There is no contradiction between the CP supporting a third presidential ticket and its Democratic Party perspective. On the contrary a third "independent" ticket will provide them with the anti-Johnson cover that they need for their basic work in the Democratic Party. The CP sees the forces organized around the antiwar movement, especially the Student and National Mobilization Committees, as an essential part of the troops for a successful peace ticket venture.

The growth of the antiwar movement and the deepening radicalization especially among young people has stimulated a progressive search for a way to escape the effects of the capitalist monopoly of political parties. Formations like the National Conference for New Politics, however, were created to consciously channel sincere attempts to break with capitalist politics towards class collaborationist politics.

The NCNP has called a convention for Aug. 31 to September 4 to be held in Chicago where they are planning to discuss strategies for the 1968 national elections. In their newsletter New Politics News (vol. 2, No. 2) they state that, "The questions facing the conference will obviously have to include: whether to fight Johnson's renomination in the primaries and at the Democratic Party convention; whether to run a third party ticket (like a King-Spock ticket); or whether to emphasize local politics and community organizations."

Their orientation towards drawing sincere activists into class collaborationist politics is illustrated by the fact that the Lowndes County Freedom Organization is one of the organizations that has been invited and that John Hulett is listed as a member of the preparatory committee that is calling the convention.

The numerical weakness of the socialist parties and the absence of an independent political arm for the labor movement creates a situation where it is difficult for radicalizing youth to break from capitalist politics. The relative quiescence of the organized working class leads many of these youth to reject the working class as the agent of social change. Coupled with the powerful pressure exerted by the capitalist class this creates a high susceptibility to supra-class politics and third partyism, both forms of class collaboration.

Although they would publicly deny it, it should be kept in mind that the CP, NCNP, and other class collaborationists seeking a "third" or "independent" alternative to Johnson could end up supporting Johnson by November, 1968. Just as the Middle East conflict rapidly turned many doves into hawks, forms of "new", "supra-class", or "peace and freedom" politics leave their supporters vulnerable to demagogic peace appeals, by even a Johnson, at some new stage of the Vietnam crisis, or in relation to any new crisis for American imperialism.

To all these forms of class collaborationist politics we want to counterpose the SWP class struggle campaign. The SWP campaign will offer an independent working class alternative that is concrete and differentiated from all the phony varieties of "independent" or "new" politics.

The SWP's 1968 election campaign gives us a greater opportunity to increase our programmatic and organizational influence, recruit dozens of new people to the YSA, and deal heavy blows against the CP, than any election campaign the YSA has participated in.

Even without the election campaign the recruitment possibilities of the YSA are excellent and our participation in the campaign can accelerate this process. The campaign occurs at a time when the radicalization among college and high school students is growing. Our participation in the Student Mobilization Committee

and campus antiwar committees has put us in touch with hundreds of youth many of whom are potential recruits to the YSA. As a result of our work in the antiwar movement, the growth of the YSA has been increasing at a faster rate than ever before. One or two requests to join the YSA come into the national office each week.

We have done more than any other radical youth group to build the antiwar movement, the principal radicalizer of youth today, and we would be committing a serious blunder if we should default and let some other organization or organizations do all the recruiting from this movement.

Our activity around the election campaign will be an excellent way of drawing these radicalizing youth closer to us. Besides offering them a class struggle opposition to the war in the electoral field it will serve to engage those who are not yet ready to commit themselves to membership in the YSA in socialist activity. Thus the campaign can be a transmission belt to recruitment to the YSA.

The 1968 presidential campaign will be two campaigns wrapped in one.

First of all, it will be an antiwar campaign. It will educate and propagandize against the war to the American people as a whole, taking advantage of the press coverage and radio and television time available during the campaign, to tell the truth about the war. It will expose the Democratic and Republican parties as war parties. It will explain that the enemy is in Washington not Vietnam and that the only solution in the interests of both the Vietnamese and American people is to bring the troops home now. It will show how the war is rooted in American imperialism and is not simply a mistake on the part of the capitalist rulers.

As the recognized leaders of the antiwar movement's left wing we will project our program for the antiwar movement. We will urge it to take those steps necessary to build a genuine mass movement involving trade unions, the black community, GI's and youth.

We will try to deepen the opposition to the war and the participation in the periodic mass actions among these layers. As in the 1966 campaigns, we will be supporting the "peace" ticket

and in this sense we will seek and obtain support, contributions and openings on the basis of our clear antiwar stand. The YSA can also take advantage of the SWP's long standing record of opposition to war from World War II through Korea, the Cuban missile crisis, and Vietnam to educate radicalizing youth.

The SWP campaign, however, is more than an antiwar campaign. It will be a socialist propaganda campaign around a clear class struggle program that ties together the black, labor, and antiwar movements.

Special emphasis will be placed in the campaign literature and propaganda on a program of political independence for the labor movement and the black community. This is capsulized in the demands for a labor party and a black party. While there is no immediate prospect of a labor or a black party the objective need for such formations is clear to a growing layer of militant youth. This vanguard is open to these ideas which are our concrete alternative to supra-class peace politics.

The most immediate concrete gains from this socialist election campaign will come from our ability to attract educate and recruit the best of the young militants against the war to the YSA. We must educate them to recognize that their own radicalization is a symptom of the deep crisis of the capitalist system, a crisis that will inevitably and profoundly effect the American working class. We must teach them that socialism is the only rational road out of this crisis.

This will not simply be a campaign where we routinely run candidates and make the record for socialist electoral action. We must approach this campaign with a crusading spirit to win the idealistic and radicalizing youth to the YSA. The only limit to the extent and effectiveness of our campaign is the speed and intensity with which we throw ourselves into it. We must begin now to think about how the YSA is concretely going to participate in the election campaign.

The NEC has had a preliminary discussion on the election campaign and is considering a number of ideas. First, we project the formation of a youth committee for the SWP candidates. We will try to make this committee broader than the YSA and we are thinking out ways that we can make the national steering body of this commi-

ttee as broad as possible, maybe being able to draw in certain notables from the very beginning. The best time to publicly announce the formation of the youth committee would be the same time that the candidates are announced.

Second, local chapters of the youth committee can be established wherever there are supporters of the campaign and can become the major vehicles for carrying out our electoral activity in the youth arena. These high school and college committees could be an excellent way of drawing radicalizing youth closer to the YSA where we can educate and recruit them. We should give special attention to the fact that there has been an increased radicalization among high school students opening up an important new arena for recruitment to the YSA. Already a number of locals have done serious contact work with high school students and have begun recruiting them on a modest scale. High school students interested in socialist activity can be attracted to the YSA through activity in high school campaign committees. The enthusiasm and activism of high school youth will be an important ingredient in contributing a vibrant and crusading spirit to our electoral activity.

Third, we discussed the need for the youth committee to issue a considerable amount of propaganda materials that will be lively and at the same time get across our political program. It would be best if the youth committee had some brochures, buttons, posters, stickers, etc., ready to go when the school year starts. Already discussions are underway with the SWP's campaign committee to coordinate the various kinds of literature that should be put out.

Fourth, we are considering the opportunities for the youth committee in launching a campaign to build the Oct. 21st March on Washington. Not only would this serve to build that action but it would help to identify the youth arm of the campaign with the most important antiwar action coming up. We have also discussed the need for a brochure along this line as well as several regional tours. These tours would serve to build Oct. 21 while at the same time promoting the election campaign and the formation of youth committees. They would put the YSA in touch with youth on many

new campuses throughout the country giving us an inside track to radicalizing youth in many areas.

Fifth, in line with regional tours in the fall we also considered the possibility of a fall or Christmas conference to build the youth committee in as impressive a manner as possible. We haven't chosen a particular date, though we are considering the possibilities of a conference in Washington on the evening of Oct. 21 or during the day on Oct. 22, Christmas vacation, and the spring. An attempt would be made to hold this conference at a time and place that would maximize participation by YSAers as well as anti-war militants, etc.

Sixth, we want to utilize the campaign to take advantage of the dilemma that our opponents are in, particularly the CP. We want to reach the ranks and peripheries of our opponents many of whom we have made contact with in the course of our antiwar work, while at the same time exposing their leaderships. We will appeal to them to support our campaign at every turn. We want to put them on the defensive. When they refuse to support the campaign we can use it as a means of putting even greater pressure on their ranks. Our activity in support of the SWP campaign can be a real weapon against our opponents and we want to utilize all the opportunities to apply this weapon.

Seventh, we have discussed the role of the YS as the principal campaign organ for the youth arm of the campaign. It should cover some aspect of the campaign or the political issues involved in the 1968 elections in every issue between now and November, 1968.