

SOCIALIST  
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## FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF AN ANTI-WAR PROGRAM

The formation of the program of the New York Student Federation on an anti-war basis was predicated on the development of an anti-war sentiment on campus. The fact that this sentiment has not yet taken root is indicated by the fact that the Federation is today de facto essentially socialist in composition. The proponents of the idea that the Federation should adopt a socialist program point to the socialist nature of our personnel as a basis for our becoming a socialist Federation. Yet it would seem that the Federation has on the basis of its anti-war program already attracted the bulk of the socialist elements on campus. There is no socialist opinion of consequence which refused to join the Federation because it is not socialist. Thus by adopting a socialist program we are not going to broaden the recruitment possibilities of the Federation because the socialists are already in it. Instead we are going to limit our growth.

The argument that we must be socialist in order to be consistently anti-war, that we have to use socialist arguments anyway are reasons that are good for all time and all anti-war movements. This would mean that every anti-war movement must be socialist in order to be consistent. The proof of the necessity for a change in our program must come from a specific characterization of the consciousness of the student body and the political period, past and prospective, which affects it.

If we must be socialist if we are anti-war in order to be logically consistent then no anti-war movement can exist ever. The argument that we are known as socialist anyway is true only in a very limited sense. We are known to those who know the members of the Federations as socialists but to a large proportion of the reading public we are known only in terms of our program.

If we change the program of the Federation to socialism and retain its third camp character the resultant program will be essentially the program of the SYL. The means that any concept of a broad Federation disappears and we are left with a narrow program which cannot appeal to the student body. If we have not grown with a broad program, comparatively speaking, then it is to say the least highly illogical that a narrowing of the program of the Federation will result in recruitment. Any student who would join a socialist anti-war Federation would join the present Federation. Proof of the fact that socialism will not help us to grow is afforded by the fact that the member socialist clubs have not grown. A student who refuses to join the present Federation because it is not socialist is a political animal which does not exist. The student who says, "Well, what are you people for?" will not be satisfied if you say that we are for socialism. This type of query means, what are you doing? Are you fighting discrimination, are you

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aiding the labor movement etc. on an action level. His politics are extremely primitive. He will not be satisfied with anything as abstract as socialism. His politics are a Stalinoid liberal product and a concept as intellectual as socialism will have little effect.

The anti-war sentiment on campus may not catch on now although it will be stimulated by the draft, casualty lists etc. One thing is certain though. The anti-war spirit will grow faster than the socialist sentiment. If we are too radical for the student body today we will be even further removed from the student consciousness were we to become the third camp socialist.

From a long range point of view an anti-war program has living potentialities. If we maintain and improve the circulation of Anvil we will become and even are now to a certain extent a recognized and established political tendency. When the anti-war sentiment grows we will be able to function as a focal point for its growth.

The proposal that we form anti-war clubs I think flows logically from an anti-war program. Apart from Anvil, the Federation exists only through its member clubs. If an anti-war program is correct in general then it should be correct in concrete. Wherever practical anti-war clubs should replace socialist clubs.

In summary, from the immediate point of view there are no elements who would be attracted to a socialist federation who are not already in the Federation. From the long range point of view an anti-war sentiment will develop before a socialist one and is on this basis that a program based on opposition to both war camps is practical.

Gertrude Blackwell

It is my opinion that it is time to reconsider some of the assumptions and predictions we made in guiding us in our student work in New York, especially the assumption that within a reasonable period there would be a growing student resentment to the war politics and actions of Washington. From this prediction we concluded that the SYL should advocate the establishment of an anti-war organization on the New York campus, broad in program and at the same time militantly anti-war, which would be able to gather in the expected growing number of anti-war students. It was this approach which dictated our pressing for a non-socialist, anti-war student Federation in New York. We felt that a socialist federation would narrow the organization down and keep out any student who is opposed to war but not sufficiently advanced politically to trace the causes of war to Capitalism and Stalinism and accept socialism as an alternative.

In the one year of the existence of the Federation it has seen no growth. Friendly relations have been established with some pacifist groups and individuals but nothing much more than that. The future, despite the Korean events, will not bring much of a change. In the coming period there may be an increase of anti-war sentiment but it will be slight and will not assume any militant form or give itself to development by militant anti-war organizations. An anti-war organization can only grow when there is a positive and spirited anti-war sentiment on campus. It will not make any headway when the "anti-war" sentiment consists solely of personal fear and psychological dislocation. In other words even the kind of "anti-war" sentiment that does exist on the campus is not conducive to building an organization.

I think therefore that we are missing the boat. The Federation and the magazine it is primarily responsible for, Anvil and Student Partisan, offer excellent outlets for socialist education which are partially missed without a socialist program and orientation. I do not think that a socialist Federation will be any less attractive than an anti-war organization. In spite of the theoretical broadness of the latter, a socialist organization will be more attractive to many students, and might even succeed in attracting members who would not see much point in joining otherwise.

The Federation and Anvil and Student Partisan are explicitly opposed to both Washington and Moscow. But what is offered programmatically and editorially as an alternative? Absolutely nothing. An alternative to capitalism and Stalinism is not "peace" or "anti-war" but the presentation of a social alternative to the two dominant social systems in the world today, i.e. socialism.

If this were a period of positive anti-war sentiment then these questions would not be so important. But the small number of people attracted by the Federation are usually of the more sophisticated variety who are looking for answers to basic questions. How many of us who have sold Anvils have come across the student who asks "Well, but what do you stand for?" It is true that the magazine can have socialist articles. But that is not as effective as a socialist editorial policy nor does it answer the programmatic needs of the Federation.

There is a contradiction in the present structure of the Federation. All of the clubs in it except one are socialist while the Federation is anti-war. Yet all the advantages, real or imaginary of an anti-war Federation and disadvantages for a socialist Federation offered by comrades who favor the status quo exist for the Socialist clubs on campus now. If a socialist Federation is too narrow then it is at least as true that local, college socialist clubs will likewise be too narrow for the expected growth of a healthy anti-war sentiment on campus. But while I think that advocating anti-war is more consistent I think that it is even more incorrect for if carried out it would mean devitalizing the college clubs.

The proposal of comrade Berg seems to me to be insupportable because it is unreal and undemocratic. The editorial board and the magazine it edits is subordinate to its sponsors. Most of the editorial board members are members of the New York Student Federation Against War. To have the editorial board hold a socialist policy while its sponsors are non-socialist in program means that the editorial board and the magazine become independent agencies. How is it possible for any organization to say one thing in its program and to have its editors say something else in its publications

v Supposing somebody wanted to join the Federation because he thought that on the basis of an editorial in Anvil and Student Partisan it was a socialist organization. His probable confusion would be no less than that of a non-socialist federation which publishes a socialist magazine. It would be the same thing as the ISL remaining socialist while the N.I. becomes a pacifist or merely anti-war, or vice-versa (ISL? anti-war; LA, pacifist)

Even if a mass anti-war sentiment were to develop in a few years I would still favor the organization of a socialist federation today. Our immediate problem is to educate as many students as possible to socialism. This need for socialism on campus was never greater than it is today. A socialist national student magazine and a socialist N.Y. Federation and as many socialist clubs as possible throughout the country could help to revive socialism on the campus. It will make us better prepared to meet the requirements of a broader student organization when that becomes a real possibility

Finally, if the clubs and magazine were socialist there would be nothing to prevent this socialist student force from participating in anti-war united fronts with other groups, locally and nationally, and there would be no additional handicaps in occasional joint activities with liberal students such as in the SDA.

Julie Falk

## FOR MAINTAINING THE ANTI-WAR PROGRAM ( with modifications)

The projection of an anti-war student federation was predicated upon the assumption that there would be a development of anti-war sentiment upon the campus. Those, who are now recommending a change in orientation either no longer believe this to be valid or, more probably, had a too grandiose and utopian view of the content of that general assumption.

Our view of our perspectives recognizes the smallness and isolation of the socialist movement and does not envisage any mass growth in the present period. This includes the growth of mass organizations on campus. What the aforementioned assumption does reasonable include as its content is the fact that anti-war sentiment is larger than socialist sentiment. By anti-war sentiment we do not understand a well-defined revolutionary 3rd camp position-But precisely what the term states, a vague amorphous, anti-war sentiment.

This anti-war sentiment on campus is not widespread. The attitudes of the overwhelming majority of students can best be described as a cynical and apathetic acceptance of what is and a resignation toward what will be. But here and there one finds politically naive, non-socialist pockets of resistance to war. It is to these that the federation should address itself.

What has the federation achieved up to now? Not very much. It has brought the various socialist tendencies on campus closer to each other. That's all. Every club except one in the federation is a socialist club. True. But how much more progress would a socialist federation have made. At most it would have been exactly the same as the above. In all probability however it would have made less progress because a socialist 3rd camp organization would be identified as solely an SML affair.

But even in the best case, the federation on a socialist basis would have been exactly where it is now-with no future growth in sight for it in the present period. On an anti-war basis (with several modifications or rather additions) such a growth is possible and this possibility will increase as the cold war gets still hotter, and as college students begin to receive "greetings from the President of the U.S." letters.

Here and there individuals and small groups whether presently unaffiliated politically or affiliated in such groups as SDA, the Young Liberals, UWF etc. will develop anti-war sentiments and will respond to a 3rd camp anti-war program. No one can, of course, offer assurances that this will happen but it seems more probable than a socialist development on campus and is certainly worth trying for another year or two. The question of the nature of the constituent clubs in the federation has been raised. It has been maintained, that to be consistent with the above the socialist clubs in the federation should be transformed into anti-war clubs or "Anvil" clubs. The desirability of this varies from campus to campus and such decisions should be made in each case on the basis of the specific conditions existing on each campus.

To the main center of the federation propaganda (anti-war) should be added two other centers of propaganda and activity: "Labor Party" "Jobs". The former will aim at the large labor party sentiment which existed in 1948 and some of which still lies dormant. The latter will be directed at the ever - increasing problem which students face in regard to employment. These two areas of propaganda and action together with the anti-war and civil rights areas will offer us material with which the federation can do work and on which basis a growth is possible. At the same time it will offer the SYL a broad and broadening arena in which they can put forward their unique point of view, and from which it can gain adherents.

Max Martin



## FOR THE MAINTAINANCE OF SOCIALIST STUDENT ORIENTATION

It is now one year since the formation of the New York Student Federation Against War. When formed it was anticipated that it would be possible to build a viable anti-war movement on the campus. It was believed that in response to the pressures of the cold war and the economic difficulties facing students upon graduation that there would be an increase in anti-war sentiment and a perceptible radicalization of the campus. Therefore in this environment an anti-war federation would have a basis for existence and growth. The Federation while consisting almost entirely of socialist clubs would be able to attract students who did not consider themselves socialists.

However this situation has failed to materialize. The student body has not experienced any radicalization and there has not been the growth of a militant anti-war sentiment. On the whole the student body has remained apathetic politically and patriotic in sentiment. The outbreak of the war in Korea is witnessing a greater solidification of the patriotic sentiment against the "communist aggressor." In face of this development, the Federation has failed to make headway or to recruit even limited numbers of students. It is now apparent that in the present period there is no basis for the growth of an anti-war federation on the campus.

The present period has seen the failure of any other student groups to grow. This phenomena is not limited to the Federation alone. Groups that purported to be broadly progressive such as SDA, and "peace movement" as the World Federalists have had a similar experience.

The students that the Federation has been able to reach in its activities are limited to those who already have our point of view, that is a socialist point of view, and a few pacifists here and there. This is only inevitable in view of the lack of growth of any general anti-war sentiment. The circulation of the magazine, Anvil and Student P artisan, may be close to four thousand but the response has been limited to a handful.

Therefore, in view of these general conditions on the campus today what should be the orientation of socialists, and granting that there is the need for a federation or co-ordinating committee between the radical students on various campuses. Socialists should attempt to continue the type of activities in which they have participated for the past year on the club level, that is, maintain the socialist clubs. At the same time, in accordance with their strength they should attempt to participate in broad student issues as they arise. To make their main activity anything other than their broad socialist activity would be entirely unrealistic. This is not put forth with an idea that it would greatly increase the size of the clubs though in practice it would not be restrictive of the scope of their activity. The burden of proof of the viability of the clubs and the Federation rests with those who have an alternative point of view, as well as the presentation of a proposal to change the character of the clubs.

There are two orientations that are contrasted to that maintenance of the present socialist one: (1) that the Federation be broadly progressive much as the American Student Union and be primarily concerned with academic freedom, civil liberties and unemployment, and (2) that the Federation be anti-war in orientation in order to capitalize upon the development of a future antiwar sentiment.

To propose that the Federation be broadly progressive in character is to be talking about another time, in the past or in the future, but not of today. The general political apathy on the campus today exposes the illusory nature of this conception. The National Student League and the American Student Union were broadly progressive but they lived in another day and age when there was a general radicalization of the student body. In addition, the Federation clubs do not have the forces that would enable them to engage in mass student work, and what strength they do have would be dissipated without fruitful results.

Not only would this be impossible for the clubs to engage in this type of activity, but it has been even for organizations who have made it their main activity, this is the liberals. Groups such as the Young Liberals and SDA, not to speak of YPA have been unable to make any headway in face of the present conditions. Their reason to be is their liberalism, of one type or another, what would be the justification of a federation of socialist clubs purporting to be broadly progressive in face of their inability to grow. It would be a case of self-deception.

The other orientation counterposed to a socialist one is that the Federation maintain its present formal anti-war character. It is merely formally anti-war, for in the day-to-day activity of the clubs and what activity there is by the Federation, the orientation is socialist. Once again the clubs in the absence of a militant anti-war sentiment have had to fall back to the arguments that justify their existence -- the socialist arguments. Even in the best days of the NSL, the basis of the organization was not its anti-war character and the Oxford Pledge, but rather that it was essentially broadly progressive. In fact there never has been a viable anti-war movement by itself, but rather it was built around an organization that was essentially broadly progressive and that was the basis for its growth and activity.

But it is in the day-to-day activity of the Federation that best illustrates its present unviability. This has in part resulted from the "split personality" of the Federation. On the one hand it attempts to recruit students on a more or less broad anti-war platform, and then it tells them to join the socialist clubs that constitute the Federation. Thus in practice only if the student is a socialist would he join the Federation. There is no internal basis for recruitment of non-socialist anti-war students.

The other factor that made the Federation only formally anti-war was the point of view expressed by the members of the Federation. To the students that we were able to reach by the direct sell-

ing of Anvil and Student Partisan, and in the activities of the clubs we performed as socialists. To those who were interested enough to discuss the Federation with us, we ran across the problem of having to explain what we meant by "anti-war." And invariably it meant that we had to rest our argument on our socialist point of view. Therefore anyone who came in contact with the Federation student knew him as a socialist. This came up at the same time we were pressed for a positive program, and once more we had to explain that we are socialists. In fact it has been this lack of a positive answer to the problem raised by the magazine that is one of its weaknesses.

It is because the Federation is not an organization in itself to which it recruits a general membership, but rather a federation of clubs, that the character of the Federation is determined by these clubs. And with one exception these clubs are socialist. Therefore the Federation has been likewise.

No matter what one's point of view may be -- broadly progressive anti-war or socialist -- it is necessary that there be a consistency between the character of the Federation and the clubs that constitute it. Any dualism would constitute a serious internal weakness.

But even if one is for the changing the character of the clubs, there is still the burden of proving that this type of federation can be more viable today. It may develop at some future time to build an anti-war and broad progressive federation, but then what would prevent a socialist federation from participating in its formation with other tendencies.

The continuation of the socialist character of the clubs (and the Federation) would give the Federation the widest possible latitude in its activities. That is there would be no need to counterpose anti-war and socialist activity as is now inherent in the anti-war point of view. The clubs would engage in all types of activities in accordance to their strength as well as being socialists. And it would not limit the scope of its appeal for the people we are able to reach today are already socialist to one degree or another.

There is furthermore the need to maintain a center of socialist thought on the campus today. At a time when socialist ideas are under attack from almost every quarter, it is necessary to have clubs that are willing to defend these ideas and ideals. To give this up in the pursuit of an anti-war movement that has no basis for growth today would be foolhardy at best and undoubtedly weaken what forces we have today on the campus.

It is necessary that we put forth the positive program of socialism as opposed to the patriotic and Stalinist line, and by that to give meaning to our anti-war agitation. It is only through the building up of the socialist forces and cadres on the campus that we will best be able to benefit from the radicalization of the campus in the future. It has always been the radicals that provided the backbone of the mass student movements, and today we should attempt to build the radical group.

Dear Comrades,

This letter is in answer to a request for an opinion on the orientation of Anvil and the Federation. In a previous letter I indicated that I thought that without the Federation formally adopting a socialist program the editorial board could express socialist opinions in its editorials. Now I think that, the whole problem of a national federation and the problems connected with building it have to be discussed first.

It simply isn't a question of the line of an editorial or two, to be decided by our fraction. We have not assembled the forces that do exist and can be assembled now by efficient preparation of a national conference of students who are third camp in their approach to the international situation.

I am in favor of a thorough, formal, technical etc. decision on the character of the federation when I see what it can fit together. Till then, we have to be ambiguous. Now, what form can this ambiguity take. Trade unions are not political organizations yet they adopt political resolutions and campaign on political problems. Further, they adopt programs for the re-organization of society, such as the paper program of any social-democratic union in Europe today. What separates them and distinguishes them from a political party is that adherence to the program is not a requirement of membership in the union.

At this point, I can hear a howl go up—the federation isn't a union! And it isn't, but it isn't a disciplined political party either. It's just a collection of campus clubs, that really are heterogeneous, even though we do ninety per cent of the work. I am in favor of the federation maintaining as its basis for membership a formal program which is third camp and not explicitly socialist, until and unless a national effort proves that we cannot assemble anything but acknowledged socialists anyway. But there is no reason why the federation as it is presently constituted can't look at itself and say to itself and to its readers, we at present are predominantly socialist. Here is our interpretation of what is going on in the world today and what to do about it. However, we have organized a federation on a more minimal basis in N.Y. and we'd like to organize such a federation nationally. Here is the program on which we would cooperate with non-socialists (pacifists, Maximalists, world-governmentists etc.) in setting up such a nationalist student anti-war movement.

Julie seems to worry that it would be undemocratic for the editorial board to write whatever it wants politically. But this is a mere technical objection, overcome simply by having the federation exec and the two Chicago clubs authorize the editorial board to put forward socialist arguments editorially while maintaining the present federation program as a basis for rallying a national student anti-war movement. But I want to emphasize that all the attention is being paid for the one point. As at present constituted it makes very little difference what the Anvil program is.

The thinking and the work in N.Y. should be concentrated not on how to maneuver around with Anvil as it exists but how to prepare a national conference. I am convinced that a good job of preparation with a reasonably impressive appeal, sent all over the country might bring surprising results. Such a conference should be held sometime in November. Invitations to send at least observers could be sent to SLID and UWF chapters., and to FOR and other pacifist groups. It would be an awful hash but we'd be the central element without any difficulty and we might get considerable support.

Fraternally,

Saul Berg

FOR MAINTAINING THE ANTI-WAR PROGRAM

Dear Comrades,

1. On Saul's proposal for coming out for Socialism in editorials but not in the program or masthead. Falk is against this because it is undemocratic. True. Also to those that take Socialism seriously, it is unthinkable to call for Socialism in an editorial and not contain it in a formal program. It seems to me that when one calls for a "little" thing like the overturn of the present society and the construction of a new one, it deserves consideration in the formal program.

2. On the proposal to change the program to Socialism for Anvil and NYSFAW. I will discuss this under three sections: Chicago, New York and my ideas for the magazine.

A. Chicago. At the U of C this Fall we will have a very large, capable and active fraction. The SYL of the U of C and the Politics Club have an identical program. In print the Politics Club is a revolutionary Marxist group that is for a Labor Party. Barry and I are for changing the nature of the Politics Club. I think it will be foolish and harmful for both groups to state as Saul proposes the same program. The only differences will be that the SYL will be part of a national organization, be more disciplined and is on the subversive list. I advocate the Anvil program for the Politics Club, emphasizing anti-war work. Saul is against this because the Stalinists have an anti-war front group, and he thinks that it will confuse people and make it difficult to distinguish between the Stalinist front group and our own as the only difference is that they support Russia and we do not. He thinks it will be difficult to compete with them so he is in favor of a Politics club program that will allow him to compete with the SYL on campus.

We have a golden opportunity at the U of C and it would be a crime to miss it. In the past the only way that we could counter-act Stalinist anti-war work was through a socialist line. For the first time we have the forces to help build a specialized anti-war group that would be able to compete with the UP front group. That is why I am against changing Anvil to a socialist magazine. If that happened, there would not be much of a point to changing the Politics club away from Socialism to the present Anvil program. The Politics club is now in a bad way, most of its activists are SYLers. Some pacifists did propose to Saul the founding of a new club based on the Anvil program. But he told them there is no need to do that as they can join the Politics club, which permits non-socialists to join it even though some members would be Marxism in public speeches. As yet they have not joined the PC club. Under my proposal they would, and the PC could become a large club.

B. New York— The NY SYL is not in good shape. The socialist clubs at CCNY, Columbia and NYU are weak. Some comrades reason that since all the clubs except the one at night in CCNY are socialist and since we tried to recruit to the Anvil program and failed, let us try and recruit to a Socialist Federation. The ~~mistake~~ in this reasoning is that the Federation is a piece of

recruit. Why did everyone think that Socialist clubs would recruit on the basis of a non-socialist program as outlined in Anvil. The clubs need more meetings, activity etc. How does this come about merely by a change in the name of the Federation. It is an illusion and will be harmful to morale to think that the proposed change will make the slightest bit of difference. At best Anvil will bring people to a socialist position in isolated parts of the country, but not in New York or Chicago. Anvil by itself did not recruit to the anti-war position; it will not recruit to the socialist position.

The comrades did not really give the Anvil program a real test for it was an anti-war magazine backed by Socialist organization. It is necessary for it to be backed by anti-war clubs. And that brings me to the third point.

C. I am for the building of a network of clubs based on the Anvil program. The socialist clubs at CCNY, Columbia and NYU are almost dead. They have been tried and failed. They should be changed to Anvil clubs. I am for changing the name of the Politics club to the Anvil club. The clubs in NY should adopt this name too. The Debs club at Brooklyn is viable and should remain as it is. It will be easier under this proposal to handle the isolated colleges that have a few people that have come to the Anvil position. They form a club also with the same name and program. It will also permit the clubs to be broader and discuss the cultural articles in the magazine. It seems to me that it will be easier to attract people on the campuses in NY under such a set up. It will really be a change for the NY comrades which seems to me to be what they are really looking for and need.

The magazine is successful and the clubs in NY are not. The proposal of comrades in NY is to bring the Anvil to the aid of these clubs. This is an incorrect tactic. It is necessary to bring the clubs that are weak to the Anvil.

I wish to add further that any socialist propoganda can and should be made through the name of the Debs club or better yet directly in the name of the SYL by the SYL on the U of C campus.

There is a reason for the sake of "public opinion", to which we should only turn one deaf ear. Even people in Chicago who know that Anvil is heavily weighted with SYLers realize that this is not because we are trying to build a front. To change over to Socialism would be to dissipate this attitude; and lead some people to believe that it was all a hasty Leninist tactic from the start.

In short, I am against the proposed change.

Fraternally,

Leon Mann