

# LEFT WING BULLETIN

J

U

N

E

1957

Vol. 1, No. 4

10¢

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorials	
I. Comrade Arlon, 1955 and 1957 . . .	1
II. May Day 1957 -- 1000 Present, but Who Was Absent? . . . . .	2
III. May Day 1956 and 1957 -- Shachtman Speaks . . . . .	3
IV. On Second-Class Citizenship in the YSL . . . . .	4
Arrivals and Departures . . . . .	6
Letter to Frank McGowan . . . . .	7
Unity and Revolutionary Socialism By Tim Wohlforth . . . . .	9
The YSL and the Working Class By Martha Wohlforth . . . . .	15
What is a United Front? By Tim Wohlforth . . . . .	19
A Head Without a Body By Max Shachtman . . . . .	25
The Cannonite Menace By Tim Wohlforth . . . . .	31
Draft Resolution on "Perspectives for American Socialism". Part II, "The Situation in the United States" By Shane Mage . . . . .	37

Published by the Left-Wing Caucus of the  
Young Socialist League

EDITORIALSI. COMRADE ARLON, 1955 and 1957

The latest issue of YSR (Vol. 4, No. 3) contains within it a very important resolution on "Unity and Relations with Other Socialist Groups" proposed by Arlon Hussing. This resolution, if it passes, will mark the end of the YSL as a broad nationwide socialist youth organization.

The real meaning of the right wing's unity proposal as the death knell of our movement is amply illustrated in this one resolution. It states: "Unity between the Independent Socialist League, the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation, and the YSL shall be given first priority at all times, even over the numerical growth of the YSL." (Emphasis added). Thus sacrificing the YSL to this unity proposal it goes on to ban recruitment to the YSL from the SP-SDF. This means concretely that should unity between these groups not be consummated in the near future but instead, should the SP left wing be (as could easily happen) forced out of the SP-SDF we would turn our backs on these people.

However the most significant section of the resolution is the one which declares membership in the SWP or AYS and the YSL to be incompatible. For the first time in the history of our movement we place a group on the proscribed list. This of course is good preparation for entrance into the SP-SDF with its infamous "anti-Leninist" oath.

This means that the YSL, if it passes the Arlon resolution, will be announcing to the world that it has changed its course -- it has scrapped its

---

The LEFT-WING BULLETIN is published under the following section of the YSL Constitution:

Article seven, section four: "Minority tendencies or caucuses may publish their own material for internal and external distribution, but they must make clear that these publications do not represent the views of the organization as a whole. All national and local mimeograph and mailing facilities shall be open to such tendencies or caucuses for use at cost."

All signed material in this and all subsequent issues of the LEFT-WING BULLETIN represents the views of the individual author or authors and not necessarily the views of the Left-Wing Caucus as a whole. Statements or resolutions that "officially" represent the views of the Caucus will be clearly labelled as such. Unsigned material and Editorial Statements represent the views of the Editorial Board. In any event it should be clearly understood that nothing published in the BULLETIN necessarily represents the official viewpoint of the Young Socialist League.

Address all communications to: Wohlforth, 305 E. 21 St., New York 10, New York.

plans of becoming a broad organization containing all of the nation's radical youth. This means that in the youth field, at least, the right wing is not interested in that "all-inclusive party" it is always prattling about. It is for excluding an important section of America's radical youth before it even enters the SP-SDF.

We of the left wing counterpose to Arlon's 1957 resolution the Arlon amendment of 1955, before the present "Cannonite menace" hysteria gripped the movement. This 1955 amendment, endorsed by the Los Angeles YSL, stated: "The YSL particularly welcomes to membership without discrimination, members of the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party."

In supporting this amendment Comrade Arlon had the following to say (YSR Vol. 2, No. 3):

"In the NAC resolution as amended we intend strongly to affirm the admissibility or desirability of dual membership. By broadening the membership, even if only in one or two units, we can make a reality of the YSL's claim to be the organization of all socialist youth. The YSL has a powerful weapon to dissuade other socialist organizations from establishing competing youth groups, and an even more powerful attraction to those socialistically-inclined youth who are bewildered by the existence of several competing sects, but who, without yet making a final decision on difficult theoretical issues, can join a broad youth organization which asks no specific theoretical commitments.

"In ordinary campus or industrial fraction work, there is no reason why the existence of dual members in more than one organization should cripple YSL activity any more than the YSL's existing internal differences now do.

"The existence of diverse tendencies in the YSL should serve to stimulate political discussions and education, which are at best sadly neglected and often treated with contempt in both the SP and the SWP. We have no intention of making the YSL primarily the arena of struggle between the ISL and SWP, for instance. We feel, however, that there is little danger from this source. The normal procedures of democracy and discipline provide adequate protection from deliberate disrupters, and the superior programmatic and theoretical equipment of the Third Camp majority in the YSL can cope with any political problems which may be raised."

It seems that the YSL's present "unity" line and witchhunt within its ranks has done more to disorient those who once thought clearly and to dis-  
unite the radical youth in this country than to provide any sound basis of unity.

## II. MAY DAY 1957 -- 1000 PRESENT, BUT WHO WAS ABSENT?

On May Day over 1,000 people gathered in Central Plaza in New York and hundreds were turned away for lack of space. The audience at the united May Day celebration was largely Stalinist in composition and included anywhere from 50 to 100 Stalinist youth. Yet nowhere to be seen was the YSL. Now obviously the YSL could not have a speaker on the platform (who would have been free to say what he pleased to this "captive" audience of Stalinists) for this would have dirtied the name of the YSL. To stand on the same platform with

the butchers of the working class? Never! However one would think they would at least deign to send down Anvil salesmen and members to contact and talk to the Stalinist youth.

But they couldn't spare the forces, for they were all dressed in their Sunday best and gathered with ... the other butchers of the working class, the SP-SDF. There they hobnobbed with 70 year old men, listened to "Comrade" Goldberg attack a Bund member for daring to criticize Isreal on May Day, and heard an SPer criticize a comrade for using "a Communist salute" while singing the Internationale. Of course they were not allowed to speak on the platform. That would be expecting too much from our "friends." They were allowed in the door, weren't they?

For the record, one must note that Thomas' absence from the mass united May Day did not go unnoticed. A letter of his was read to the audience which stated that he (Thomas) would not stand on the same platform with "communists of either the Stalinist or Trotskyite variety" except in order to debate them. It went on to castigate "Leninists" and other sundry evil people. Needless to say the audience was not too impressed with the "all-inclusiveness" of the SP-SDF.

### III. MAY DAY 1956 AND 1957 -- SHACHTMAN SPEAKS

At the May Day meeting here in New York Shachtman always gives a "short" talk for the purpose of assessing the accomplishments over the last year and looking into what the future has in store for the revolutionary movement. In 1956 this was a traditional talk which commented on the accomplishments and sacrifices of the ISL over the past year, its heroic fight against the Attorney General's list and the Herculean labors of its New York staff in holding the organization together and in putting out Labor Action.

This year the tone was different and the meaning of his talk ominous. For instance, he informed us that "it is not possible today to build a socialist movement on the basis of our politics." This is, to say the least, not a particularly encouraging statement to make on May Day and in itself tells more of the real motivation of Shachtman than a million tactical justifications from Harrington or Denitch. He is frankly stating that the last seventeen years of existence of the WP-ISL has been a waste of time and that in this country you have to have rotten politics in order to build a sizable movement. This is in our opinion an unsult to the working class in this country as well as an intolerable blow on May Day to those who have struggled under the most severe hardships in order to keep a movement going which they felt would flower once drought of reaction passed.

To us this statement seems more based on Shachtman's personal demoralization than on reality. The ominous aspect of the whole business is that this retreat of Shachtman's is clothed in a "unity" proposal and that Shachtman intends to sacrifice the YSL too in the process. The YSL, more than any other organization on the political scene, has in our opinion shown its viability in a difficult time. It is no time now, when prospects are brightening for the revolutionary movement, to scuttle the YSL just because Shachtman has given up hope.

Another statement of Shachtman's requires further explanation. He

stated: "You know I have not always been a democratic socialist." When, Comrade Shachtman, were you not a "democratic socialist"? Was it when you and others were struggling to build the Communist Party on the liberating principles of Lenin and Trotsky? Was it when you collaborated directly and personally with Trotsky to build a section of the Fourth International in this country? Was Trotsky also not a "democratic socialist"? Was it during the early years of the Workers Party when you considered yourself a part of the Fourth International? Was it the time of the Goldman affair when you urged WP-SWP unity? When, Comrade Shachtman, did you suddenly become "kosher"?

It also might help if you define what you mean by "democratic socialist". We know what the SP-SDF means by this term. It is a synonym with them for "social democratic." Is this what you mean also, Comrade Shachtman?

All in all it was a sad May Day for Shachtmanism in this country.

#### V. ON SECOND CLASS CITIZENSHIP IN THE YSL

At a recent NAC meeting Tim Wohlforth announced his intentions of going on a national tour to put forward the ideas of the left wing within the YSL. He volunteered full information about the tour including where and when he was going to speak. He then offered to utilize this speaking tour for the benefit of the YSL as a whole by speaking in public in the name of the YSL and under the discipline of the NAC on "non-controversial" topics. He suggested that he would be willing to go to any campus on the way that the YSL was interested in and in other ways attempt to build the YSL as a whole while on tour.

The right-wing majority on the NAC flatly turned down Comrade Wohlforth's offer with a motion stating that on no subject that they could conceive of did Wohlforth represent the views of the YSL. Among the topics they listed was the Labor Probe -- a question on which the YSL has never taken a position.

This move on the NAC was followed by the New York YSL Executive Committee unanimously turning down an offer from Comrade Wohlforth to speak on Peter Fryer's book, Hungarian Tragedy. (Incidentally this topic was also put on the "proscribed list" by the NAC with Harrington commenting that Wohlforth might "call for revolutionary parties in Hungary.") It followed this up with a unanimous decision to turn down a request from Shane Mage to speak on Algeria when he was in town.

Comrades Mage and Wohlforth in the past have spoken at New York forums, conducted New York classes, spoken on campus for the YSL for a number of years, and have been sent on short tours by the NAC.

This is an attempt on the part of the YSL right wing to prevent the left wing spokesmen from appearing on public platforms as a legitimate part of the YSL. It is an attempt to enforce a sort of second-class citizenship upon them and a refusal to recognize the left wing as a legitimate part of the YSL representing a quarter of the membership and most of whose leaders have held responsible posts in the organization since its founding. All this is but

another reflection of the right wing's campaign to label a quarter of its own membership as "hostile elements", "agents", "disrupters", "not in the Independent Socialist Tendency", and the like.

This is a not-too-well disguised attempt to prepare the way for an expulsion of the left wing. We in the left wing have stated on a number of occasions -- and repeat here once again -- that we are unalterably opposed to a split in the ranks of the YSL.

We have seen no signs of a similar feeling on the part of the right wing and this latest action by the NAC points out that in reality the expulsion of the left wing has already begun.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Arrivals

"I declare myself a supporter of the Left-Wing Caucus and wish to be recorded as a signer of the 'Left-Wing Declaration.'

"I have hung back until now in reactivating myself in the YSL and in coming out for the left wing. With the appearance of the 'Newark' resolution and its substantive endorsement by the left wing, I am able to see prospects for the YSL going forward on such a basis." -- Emily Cavalli, Apr. 17, 1957.

"Dear Comrades,

"I hereby declare my full support to the left wing. Needless to say I totally and emphatically reject Shachtman's position on entry into the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. I believe the SP-SDF to be a reformist and liberal sect." -- Alex Kitson, May 6, 1957.

"I am a revolutionary socialist, and, therefore, a member of the Left Wing." -- B. Durand (former NEC alternate), May 12, 1957.

Departures

We take note from statements published in YSR that Comrades Frank McGowan (see letter on p. 7), Harold Bram and Paula Bram have resigned from the Left-Wing Caucus. We realize that the Brams have favored unity with the SP-SDF from the beginning but wish this unity to take place on a healthy basis. They did not trust the comrades of the right wing to carry out such a unity. We feel that the right wing has not changed one iota of its former position and today are preparing for entry and not a negotiated unity with the SP-SDF. Furthermore they are pledged in a number of statements to refrain from really pushing their program in the SP or for struggling for leadership in the SP as they realize that such a step would lead to a split -- something they fear far more than political capitulation. However the Brams may feel on the question of affiliation to the caucus, we sincerely hope that they will fight for their own point of view and not simply support the right wing.

In conclusion we might state that contrary to the impression given in the Brams letter, we of the Left Wing want unity, that is, we want unity of all radical youth in this country on the basis of a principled but broad program. This is why we have advocated participation in the Muste forum while the right wing opposed it. This is why we favor participation in united front activity with the entire radical community while the right wing in reality opposes it. This is why we favor the youth of the SWP (and all other radical youth) joining the YSL while the right wing declares these youth to be "hostile" and if it endorses the Arlon resolution will be preparing to exclude them. It is precisely because we want unity that we are forced to oppose the present right wing's proposal which is in reality a step backward in the struggle for a united militant youth movement in this country. -- The Editors.

LETTER TO FRANK MCGOWAN

305 E. 21 st St,  
New York 10, N.Y.  
May 6, 1957

New York

Dear Frank,

I just happened to be glancing through my files and came across the first issue of the Left-Wing Bulletin. It was written just a little over two months ago, but it certainly seems like a long time from those days just following the plenum when we organized the caucus.

Your article caught my eye and I decided to read it to see if I could somehow figure out why you left the caucus. I thought there might have been some political disagreement hidden in your formulations or that you hadn't understood what we were talking about.

To my surprise I found that your article expressed the views of the Left-wing Caucus completely, concisely and with considerable skill. It no doubt played a role in clarifying the thoughts of many of the comrades in the movement on the question of unity. In a forthright fashion it spells out the arguments of the right wing (they have added nothing new since) and point by point refutes them from a revolutionary socialist perspective.

The question then came to my mind -- and this is why I am writing you -- what flaw have you since discovered in your own argumentation? What mistake or mistakes did you make then in your otherwise clear thinking? What was the political reason for your leaving the caucus?

Let us take a look at what you said: First you refute the "gross over-estimation of the potential ideological power of the SP name and tradition" on the part of the right wing. You then point out that "the SP has the superficial appearance of a potentially broad organization because it has from time to time developed an abortive left wing. But the basic organizational structure of the SP has for the past 40 years been based on the right wing: on trade union bureaucrats, municipal government machines and petty-bourgeois intellectuals connected with publicity and financial resources"(emphasis yours.) You then conclude that "the right wing bureaucracy is the SP" (again your emphasis).

However, Frank, you state that even if this party could be the center for a "broad" Debsian party you would not favor joining it, for the differences between reformism and revolutionary socialism are meaningful today and not just at the time of the seizure of power. You note that the proposed party would have a right-wing program. "Such a program does not criticize the existing political system forcefully and concretely enough to elicit a demand for a labor party. Moreover, such a social-democratic party would be tied to the trade union bureaucracy and would stand in the way of rank and file movements against



the bureaucracy which must precede any movement toward a labor party."

Your statement on leaving us did not make a single concrete criticism of our approach towards unity. It in no way attempted to refute your own statements, partly quoted above. In fact, it gave no political reason for leaving us. It stated that you "reserve criticisms of the majority position." I would very much like to hear these criticisms, for as yet I have heard only a parroting of the right wing's line. As far as I can see you have on all occasions since you left us repeated what the right wing says and added no criticisms or anything original of your own.

This of course is your right. I understand the tremendous pressures exerted on every member of our caucus to give in and to go over to the other side. This makes life a lot easier in the organization: then one is on the "inside", receives all the scuttlebut, can laugh at the left wing with the others, and is given plenty of responsibility in the unit. I am aware of these pressures, and know that some cannot stand up under them. This is human nature and it is to be expected.

However "natural" it may be, it of course cannot be respected in any way, shape, or form as permissible conduct in a serious socialist. It is because I believe that you are, or at least that you have the capability (as witnessed by your article) of being a serious revolutionist that I am writing you. I will offer you no new arguments. I request only one thing of you: refute yourself.

Fraternally,

Tim Wohlforth

## UNITY AND REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

By Tim Wohlforth

There is a little touch of unreality in much of the unity and regroupment discussions which are going on today. For instance, the right wing of the YSL has its fantasy of the SP-SDF and its glorious tradition; of the miracle-working powers of the entrance move which will solve all the difficulties facing radicals today; the myth that anyone else in the radical movement is interested in Shachtman's move; and the feeling that a mass party can be built in this period just so long as one's politics are rotten enough.

Other elements of the left tend to get wound up in somewhat unreal proposals for unity on the basis of two points, six points, 21 points and what have you, which while the approach itself is correct tends to be presented without a direct analysis of present day tendencies and of the movement of these tendencies. Thus there can be a touch of unreality in these proposals, something which can be solved not so much by rearranging the points or by writing better resolutions but by presenting in discussion form an analysis of this period and of the real prospects for unity in it.

I will attempt to do this here and to sketch the point of view from which I, personally, advocate the proposals on regroupment of the Left-Wing Caucus.

### The Approach of Revolutionaries

So many people these days get lost in proposals, negotiations and tactics that they lose sight of our central task in this period of the decay and collapse of capitalism. What has held back the working class since the degeneration of the Russian Revolution has not been so much a lack of revolutionary actions on the part of the working class. There have been plenty --- witness the German, Chinese (1927), Spanish and more recently Hungarian revolutions.

What has been lacking is a conscious revolutionary arm or vanguard of the working class, that is, revolutionary parties. It was in fact the lack of such parties with a correct Marxist analysis which led to the defeat of the working class many times over the last thirty years.

Thus the historic task of revolutionary socialists, i.e. Trotskyists, is to participate in building revolutionary parties and a revolutionary international. Such a task cannot be put off until just preceding the day of the revolution (or after the revolution, as the NAC "Stalinism" document suggests). Then it will be too late. It must be built today and every day regardless of the extent of reaction in the country and regardless of the small forces we have to work with. We must remember that the Trotskyists started in this country with less members than the YSL today and did not register significant gains until after five years of isolated existence.

The above is simply the ABC of Marxism of today --- positions developed by Lenin and held by all Trotskyists ever since. It was on this basis that the SWP and the Workers Party as well functioned these many years; it is part of the tradition held jointly by all Trotskyists.

Thus every proposal for regroupment or unity must be judged in this light, from this perspective. The question must always be asked: will this move help

or hinder the building of a revolutionary party in this country? However this does not mean that we take a categorical or sectarian approach to the question. Such an approach would state that since revolutionary parties are the necessity of the day we must under all conditions have a pure revolutionary party with a pure program affiliated with a pure revolutionary international. This is a non-Marxist approach which sees only the rigid form -- revolutionary party -- instead of the ever continuing and changing process of the formation and building of the revolutionary cadre no matter what devious form it may take in one period or the other. There is no simple and formalistic answer to the question. Thus, as I have pointed out earlier, the same move -- entrance into the SP -- can be a revolutionary one in one period when carried out in one way and a capitulatory move in another period when carried out in a different way. Anyone who finds this contradictory does not understand Marxism.

In summary, while we have no rigid forms that we insist on keeping in all periods and under all circumstances, we still judge every unity or regroupment move from the point of view of its role in building a revolutionary party in this country and a revolutionary international throughout the world.

#### The Thirties and the Fifties -- An Historical Analogy

For the second time in the history of American Trotskyism we are entering into a "regroupment" period. It is important to note both the similarities and the differences between the two periods -- between the thirties and the fifties.

By 1933 a certain movement began to take place among the American working class which had remained relatively quiescent until that time. These upheavals produced in their wake a new group of radicalized workers. The famous Auto-lite strike, for instance, was led by the Musteites and the Minneapolis strikes were under the leadership of the Trotskyists -- the Dunne brothers, Dobbs, Skoglund and others. The radicalized workers produced two important radical movements independent of the Stalinists and Trotskyists: the Muste formation which began as a union opposition group and the left wing of the SP.

The Trotskyists approached this new development in the first place by a general declaration in favor of unity of revolutionary forces. They laid their program on the table as one possible basis for unity and asked others to do likewise. Concretely they implemented this general approach with a unity campaign directed towards the Musteites which led to unity on a compromise program -- but essentially a revolutionary one -- and also by an entry move into the SP. They did not attempt to call their entry move "unity" or anything of the kind. It was a frank move, taking up at face value the claim of the SP to be an "all-inclusive" party -- a type of party which they were not in favor of and a claim which they did not believe. As they expected, the minute they put up a vigorous fight they were expelled. However, since a real revolutionary influx had taken place in the SP they came out with about twice as many as they entered with and with the majority of the youth.

Thus we see how the Trotskyists in the Thirties approached the regroupment problem in their day. It of course would be folly to apply the exact same techniques today, for today is very different from the Thirties and the regroupment problem takes a different form. Our regroupment proposals and campaign

must also take a somewhat different form.

Today there is a certain superficial similarity with the Thirties on this question. Again the radical movement is in a period of discussion and ferment; again many of the old barriers separating the groups are breaking down; again the Trotskyists are slowly moving out of a period of isolation -- of simple self-preservation -- into a period with greater possibilities.

However in many ways the differences between the two periods are even greater. In the first place the present regroupment discussions are not the product of a mass radicalization of the working class. No new influx of radicalized workers into the ranks of the radical movement is discernable.

To a certain extent the contrary is actually the case. We are still in a period of reaction. The pressures of the witchhunt combined with the relative inactivity of the working class has led many to give up hope, to move to the right. Those who still hold to the traditions of Trotskyism and to the ideal of building a revolutionary party remain few and the numbers who deserted this task are far greater. Thus to many the regroupment discussion is an escape from the tasks of revolutionary socialism -- a looking for a respectable retreat -- instead of a positive process for regrouping revolutionary forces.

The real "crisis" which brought on the rash of regroupment discussions was not the crisis in the economic system but rather an ideological crisis in world Stalinism precipitated by the Twentieth Party Congress and the Hungarian events. This "crisis" has made it necessary for revolutionary socialists to reconsider each other's programs; to work out a way of bringing the largest possible number of these Stalinists into the revolutionary movement.

The basic and important element in the regroupment discussion, then, is the search for a bridge to revolutionary socialism for those in the Stalinist movement who are repelled by Stalinism but who wish to continue the battle against their own ruling class. Any other regroupment discussion is decidedly secondary and is only important in that it may in some way be related to this fundamental task of reaching and winning over the Stalinists.

#### A Realistic Approach Towards "Adult" Regroupment

The first thing we must dispell from our minds is that any of the existing small "adult" socialist propaganda groups are going to be able to unite with each other in such a way as to further regroupment of revolutionary socialists. The ISL is moving to the right and will if successful in its entry campaign facilitate the regroupment of the social-democratic forces in this country, left and right. This, rather than facilitating revolutionary regroupment, will -- if it has any effect -- increase somewhat the threat from the right to the Trotskyist movement. Both Bartell and Cochran are moving away from revolutionary socialism and therefore any unity attempt with them would be futile and would fall apart in a few days. This leaves on the adult level only the SW which, regardless of what one may think of it on the Russian question, contains within it the largest group of revolutionary cadres in the U.S. and which will therefore, in my opinion, play a central role in the regroupment of revolutionary forces.

Thus we see there is no prospect of immediate regroupment on a progressive

basis of the various "adult" socialist groups. However, revolutionary socialists should continue to participate in discussions with all these groups as such discussions will lead to a comparison of the programs of the different groups for the benefit of those coming from Stalinism or new to politics.

The only real possibility for regroupment in this period therefore is with those now in and around the CP. These forces should be encouraged to organize themselves, to re-think the basic questions of Leninism and -- within the CP -- to carry out a struggle against both the reformist and Stalinist (both are intertwined) aspects of their movement.

The attitude of Trotskyists towards such a development should be one of friendliness and willingness to sacrifice programmatic purity in order to move these people into the mainstream of revolutionary politics. Trotskyists should take an attitude towards any such development within the CP as they took towards the Musteiters. They should say: Let's discuss program, and should you win a majority in the CP or, more likely, should you be expelled, then we will attempt to negotiate a unity on a principled basis. We on our side are certainly willing to make concessions in order to speed the regroupment of revolutionary forces in this country.

In the meantime Trotskyists should carry out the most aggressive united front tactic directed at the Stalinists. This tactic will have two functions: to advance the immediate needs of the working class and to expose the nature of the CP leadership to its own membership and offer the alternative of a revolutionary leadership in these struggles.

#### WHAT ABOUT THE YOUTH?

I for one am not a "Youth Vanguardist." I do not hold that the youth are always in the vanguard and should therefore be independent of the party. I feel that as a general principle the youth should be subordinated to the "adult" revolutionary party and be only a section of it, however important a section it might be.

However it would be foolhardy and bowing to sectarian formalism to apply this approach to all circumstances and under all conditions. Today we are entering into a unique period in the youth movement, a period when the youth in reality may very well play a vanguard role for a short while. The reasons for this flow both from the characteristics of youth and from the characteristics of this rather unusual period.

It must first be noted that regroupment possibilities on the "adult" level seem rather dim to the realist, as I outlined them above. However many of the factors which produced this situation, which forced so many of the radicals of the older generation to the right, have had much less of an effect on the youth. The youth is not as tired, as worn out. They are not so poisoned by old antagonisms and they are not so wound up in their personal life and ties that they feel as much pressure to retreat.

Furthermore the "crisis" which has hit the CP and its periphery can have a greater effect on the youth, who are not so solidly entrenched in Stalinism and who, when they are repelled by Stalinism, are not so likely to simply fade into a quiet bourgeois existence. Also since student forces make up the pre-

dominant elements in the radical youth movement these forces tend to respond to and react to trends before any large section of the working class does. This makes these intellectual elements more unstable at times but it also makes them more receptive to revolutionary ideas today. The Hungarian Revolution has a tremendous impact on the thinking of these students and can go a long way in bringing revolutionary consciousness to them.

Thus there is a great possibility that regroupment of militant forces on the youth level can precede adult regroupment. For instance, while unity between the ISL and the SWP is not possible unity between the YSL and AYS is possible. While we strike off the books the Cochranites as playing any progressive role in regroupment of 'adult forces', there is the chance that youth today centered around the American Socialist or Monthly Review can be brought into a common organization with revolutionaries. Or while the entrance of the ISL into the SP-SDF is a retrogressive step the entrance of the YPSL or other left social democrats into a broader youth movement would be progressive.

However, in order for such a development to take place such a youth movement must remain independent of any adult group for a period. When I say independent I mean it and I mean a type of relationship far different than that now existing between the ISL and YSL. Today the YSL is in fact--in reality--affiliated to the ISL as it shares the same office, the same press, ISL members dominate the NAC and everyone follows the ISL line. We thus have all the disadvantages of affiliation and none of the advantages. Instead of having official representation on the ISL PC, the PC has no official representation on our NAC. While Comrade Martin reports, I am sure weekly, on the events in the YSL to the PC, he has not once reported to the NAC on the discussions going on on the PC in the almost two years I have been on the NAC.

The future YSL if it really wants to play a role in youth regroupment must be really independent so that it will be open to those who belong or look to other adult groups than the ISL-- so that a broader more divergent youth movement can be developed.

We do not state that such a regroupment should take place around our politics. We state instead that such a regroupment on the youth level can be based only on certain broad criteria: anyone can join such a group as long as he opposes actively Stalinism and capitalism. The role of Trotskyists within such a group will be to educate in a revolutionary direction -- to help develop the best revolutionary political program as is possible within such a group. We do not and should not pretend to be what we are not. We don't have to claim that all we stand for is opposition to capitalism and Stalinism. We state frankly that this is enough as a basis for membership or some negotiated unity but that within such a group we wish to push for a revolutionary Leninist program on all points.

Such a regroupment on the youth level could put plenty of pressure on the adult field. It could thus also help further whatever regroupment occurs on that level. We of the youth could state that we do not wish to affiliate with any of the adult groups as they now stand but will wait and see what happens. We will judge a little later which group, if any, we may wish to affiliate

with.

### Conclusion

As the above analysis indicates, we of the YSL have a crucial role to play in facilitating the regroupment of revolutionary forces in this country. The right wing has declared its incompetence to play this role by its proposal to dissolve the YSL into the social democracy and thus to prevent it from becoming the focal point for regroupment on the youth level. By so doing they are perpetrating a split in the ranks of radical youth forces at a time when we should all be uniting. Let us hope that the coming convention will rectify this situation by turning down the proposal of the right wing and opening up the YSL to all radical youth as an independent center for radical regroupment. It was to facilitate this development that the Left Wing Caucus was formed and it is on this basis that we intend to continue the struggle.

THE YSL AND THE WORKING CLASS

By Martha Wohlforth

One of the major items up for discussion at the coming convention is "Tasks and Perspectives" for the YSL. This involves an evaluation of the means by which we shall attempt to expand the YSL and insure its political and organizational stability in the coming period. One of the most urgent tasks before us, the strengthening of our base in the working class, is not even mentioned in the resolutions of either the majority or minority of the NAC.

Any organization which speaks in the name of the working class and attempts to give leadership and direction to that class, that is, any socialist organization, must obviously be a part of the working class, not only in its ideology but in its membership as well. This is as true for a socialist youth organization as for any other. The two main functions of a socialist youth organization are 1) to bring young workers and students into contact with socialist politics, and to involve them in day-to-day struggles for our ideals, and 2) to train and develop a cadre of serious, militant socialists who will devote their lives to the struggle for socialism. This second task is no less vital than the first. The youth who are attracted to the YSL because of their idealism, their healthy revulsion against the bourgeoisie, and their intellectual curiosity, will not remain in the socialist movement for very long unless they develop a firm, lifelong identification with the working class. If they do not do this, then socialism will mean to them nothing more than a discussion club and a congenial social milieu, and will have no hold on them when they leave the campus and assume adult responsibilities and a stake in this society.

Without a proletarian base, all other socialist activity becomes meaningless! The YSL when it was formed was fully aware of this, as is shown by the following excerpt from the "Tasks of the YSL" resolution passed at the founding convention:

"The YSL does not insist that every member orient himself toward the shops. It will, however, never tolerate any attitude of contempt toward the role of the socialist militant in industry because it is fully conscious that such militants, their numerical increase and closer co-ordination, and their increasing influence among the advanced workers are the prerequisites for a viable socialist movement without which all other activity loses its ultimate reference and becomes sterile, useless and self-defeating."

Thus a proletarian orientation is a necessity for any serious, stable socialist movement, including the youth. This is especially true at the present time, when the prospects for fruitful trade union work are brightening. The widespread support given to the dues protest movement against MacDonald in the Steelworkers, and the increasing militant resistance in the UAW to the speedup, the runaway shop, etc., are signs that the working class is beginning to end the quiescence of the past few years. Furthermore the prospects for the continued prosperity of the economy are somewhat dim, even according to the bourgeois economists. Thirdly, the development of the Negro struggle has now made obvious to large numbers of Negro and white workers the utter bankruptcy of both capitalist parties; therefore socialists should with all their



might press, from within the union ranks, for a labor party.

This orientation should not and need not detract from our emphasis on the campus. It is not an "anti-intellectual" orientation. The socialist movement needs and respects serious intellectuals. However, throughout the history of the socialist movement it can be seen that in general, those who come to the movement on a purely intellectual basis, those who do not combine with their ideas a militant spirit and a firm identification with the working class, those who do not feel comfortable in a working class environment, are just visitors in the movement.

### Perennial Discussion, No Solution

The problem of a shop orientation is not a new one in the YSL. It is a difficult problem to discuss, for the reason that no member of the YSL has ever, to my knowledge, stated that he is opposed to this type of orientation. Resolutions and motions on the subject are passed at every convention and plenum. Every year or so one of the worker comrades in the ISL addresses the New York Unit on the subject and instils some enthusiasm into some of the newer comrades. A motion may be passed; an industrial committee may be set up; but shortly the enthusiasm dies out and things resume their ordinary course.

Although no one is opposed to a working-class orientation, several weighty considerations are brought up each time the subject is discussed, the essence of which is: "We all agree; but you can't do anything merely by passing resolutions; we have passed resolutions for years to no avail; since we have always failed it is pointless to keep on trying."

I, for one, refuse to be convinced by this defeatist and demoralizing attitude on such an important question. I believe something can be done. An analysis of the reasons for the failure of the YSL can help point the way to a solution.

That we have failed in this task can be denied by no one who examines the situation in the New York unit. In this, the largest section in the YSL, five or six comrades (including one IAC member) have managed to find their way into the labor bureaucracy, while not one has found his way into a meaningful union situation. Five or six comrades, at least, have industrial skills which are not being utilized; the comrades are either not working, or are working in tiny non-union shops outside the main stream of industrial life, or flit around from one job to another, making any union activity impossible. Well over half of the members of the unit are neither students, nor entrenched in a professional career in the bourgeois world. Most of these people work at petty, meaningless, low-paying office jobs at which they are not happy.

### Why Have We Failed?

The main reason why the YSL has been unable, in New York at least, to develop a working-class base is that most of the members come from a petty-bourgeois environment. Their contacts and associations, their experiences, and their families exert a constant pressure on them to share the views and aspirations of the middle class. The very thought of giving up an academic or professional career in order to work in a shop is abhorrent to many of them. Even if not, it is very difficult to explain to parents, teachers, and friends

who live in an alien world, why you have decided, after years of time and money spent on schooling, to abandon a bourgeois career and disappoint those who had such "high" hopes for you. The closest you can get to the labor movement and still be "respectable" in terms of middle-class values is to secure a position in the labor bureaucracy.

This is why our resolutions on industrialization, which have concentrated on urging college graduates to take up an industrial skill and enter a shop as a life-time perspective, have had little or no effect.

There are two means of gaining a foothold in the working class. One is to place comrades in the shops. This has been our main emphasis and it has largely failed. The other is to recruit directly from the working class. What few working-class members we have, have come to us more or less by accident. A deliberate attempt to recruit working-class members would not succeed under the conditions existing at present in New York. The two basic reasons for this are the petty-bourgeois background of most of the present members, which cuts off a "natural" means of contact with the working class, and the atmosphere which pervades the New York meetings and which is derived from this petty-bourgeois background of the members.

It is difficult to describe an "atmosphere", or to pin a class label on it. However the atmosphere in New York is such that when a worker does turn up at one of our meetings, he does not feel at home and rarely comes back.

The most outstanding quality of this atmosphere is a lack of seriousness. A meeting has never been known to begin on time; the discussions drag on till all hours of the night with no concern for people who have to get up at 7:00 a.m. to work; during the meeting people are constantly entering and leaving the room, passing notes, reading, or conversing. The discussions are dominated by the very articulate and well-educated leadership. The intellectual wizards vie with one another to see who can bring up the most obscure analogies, who can express himself in the most abstruse manner, who can excell the others in wit and sophistry. No conscious effort is made to develop the new comrades as writers and speakers. Only the most audacious and aggressive of the less experienced comrades dare to express themselves at a meeting.

An important indication of the extent to which the New York membership is removed from the working class is the prevailing habit of making cynical jokes about workers, which reflect a lack of faith in the ability of the working class to carry out its tasks. These cynical comrades (although they are, thank god, not the majority, they set the pervading tone) are proof of how removed the N.Y. membership is from the working class. The N.Y. members are fully aware of the social composition of the unit and these jokes, addressed to fellow petty-bourgeois intellectuals, show that they accept that social composition and are not trying to change it.

One concrete result of this atmosphere is that several of the worker comrades in the ISL who live near New York consciously avoid N.Y. meetings. More serious, even, is the effect of this atmosphere on many of the contacts who drop around. One of the several examples of this involved a Negro youth who attended one of our meetings for the first time. In informal conversation afterward, he expressed an interest in the YSL and wanted to know what its

position on the Negro question was and what it was doing about it. We had just started to tell him, when one of our intellectual wizards broke in on the conversation and insisted on expounding to the youth, who was unfamiliar with socialist politics, his opinions on an abstruse historical subject of interest only to sophisticated radical intellectuals.

### Some Modest Proposals

What can be done to remedy this unfavorable situation?

1. Give leadership and direction to those comrades who are already working. Have them meet regularly with an experienced worker comrade in the ISL. Attempt to place them in shops where there are already one or two ISL comrades, where they can be of some real help and are not isolated. And of course, the first principle to be observed, is that every comrade who has a job of any sort, including office jobs, must join the appropriate union. If his shop is unorganized, and he cannot get another job, he should join the union as an individual if that is possible. The working comrades should, besides meeting regularly among themselves, give regular reports to the unit. I am aware that this has been suggested before and even attempted in a half-hearted manner. I am sure, however, that if it is seriously done along with the four following proposals, which have not been attempted, it will be of considerable help.
2. Place more emphasis on high school work. We should resume the practice of street-corner speeches outside of the high schools. We should distribute regularly at the major vocational high schools, and at concerts and other affairs where teenagers are likely to be.
3. Increase our activity in working class neighborhoods and organizations. Every comrade who is not in a good union situation and is not on campus should participate actively in some mass organization. The YSL should attempt to participate in cases and issues involving youths of minority groups, such as the Santana case.
4. The press should be geared more to the interests of workers. Challenge should have articles on the many questions and problems involving young workers; Challenge has had virtually nothing on the labor movement since the founding of the YSL. As for Anvil, in spite of the many articles on the labor movement that a serious theoretical magazine could contain, of the five issues that have appeared since the founding of the YSL, three have had nothing remotely connected with the labor movement.
5. Meetings should be shorter (not more than two hours) and should begin on time, regardless of the number of people present at the moment. While cultural topics should have their place, the emphasis should be on political topics of interest to young workers as well as to students.

## WHAT IS A UNITED FRONT?

By Tim Wohlforth

The present "Draft Resolution on Youth and the Campus and YSL Perspectives" adopted by the NAC contains within it a whole series of misconceptions about the real meaning of a united front -- misconceptions which have been held for some time now in our movement.

I will attempt first to describe what a "united front" has traditionally meant to revolutionary socialists since the days of Lenin and then to deal specifically with some of the formulations in this resolution as well as in the similar resolution adopted at the last convention.

### The Leninist Conception of a United Front

Trotsky describes the position on the united front drafted by himself and adopted by the Comintern in its early days as follows: "The Communist Party proves to the masses and their organizations its readiness in action to wage battle in common with them, for aims, no matter how modest, so long as they lie on the road of the historical development of the proletariat; the Communist Party in this struggle takes into account the actual conditions of the class at each given moment; it turns not to the masses only, but also to those organizations whose leadership is recognized by the masses; it confronts the reformist organizations before the eyes of the masses with the real problems of the class struggle. The policy of the united front hastens the revolutionary development of the class by revealing in the open that the common struggle is undermined not by the disruptive acts of the Communist Party but by the conscious sabotage of the leaders of the social democracy." (What Next, pp. 72 f.)

The above quotation contains all of the fundamental elements of a united front policy adopted by a revolutionary organization. While drafted in order to deal with the reformists it is just as applicable today to both the reformists and stalinists and was in fact pushed during a later period by Trotsky as a tactic towards the stalinists on many occasions.

Thus the united front is a temporary working agreement between organizations with contrary politics but who have a basis for united action on some current progressive demand of the working class. It is not in any sense "political collaboration" and is not based on political agreement, but rather is a method of acting jointly where such agreement in fundamental politics does not exist. As Trotsky put it, "Agreement on fighting actions may be made with the devil, with his grandmother and even with Noske and Grzesinski." (The Only Road, p. 58.)

Also, united fronts are not based on any opinion as to the "sincerity" or "legitimacy" of the parties involved. In fact revolutionists go into united front actions with reformists with the assumption beforehand that the reformists will if possible sabotage the venture. For instance the Bolsheviks blocked in a united front with Kerensky against Kornilov even though they knew beforehand that Kerensky was working closely with Kornilov and carrying out his policies.

United fronts do not mean -- and are incorrect and should be opposed if they do mean -- any sort of conciliationism with the party one is uniting in action

with. As Trotsky put it in The Strategy of the World Revolution: "The most important, best established and most unalterable rule of every maneuver says: One's own party organization should never be diluted, united or combined with another, no matter how 'friendly' the latter may be today. Such a step should never be undertaken which leads, directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination of the party to other parties or to organizations or other classes and therewith limits the freedom of one's own agitation, or a step through which one is made responsible, even if only in party for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, not to speak of kneeling before another banner."

Lastly, united fronts are based on the working class as it is presently organized and must be conducted through the leadership of working class organizations as presently constituted and with their existing leadership. The famous "United Front from below" is in effect not a united front but rather a call to all workers to join and fight under one's own banner.

The purpose of every united front action is twofold. First it is a means whereby the whole working class can be united in action for its own advancement at a time when it is divided politically. In a certain sense even the trade unions are "the rudimentary form of the united front in the economic struggle" (What Next, p. 91) and the soviets or workers councils as exemplified in Hungary are the highest form of the united front.

The second purpose of a united front is to expose the leadership of the organization or organizations one is uniting in action with. It shows concretely to the members of the other organization that in common action it is not we who mislead and disrupt the working class but their own leaders. Thus a united front campaign is a method of reaching and winning over the members of the organizations one blocs with. Those who have faith in their politics should have no fear about uniting in common action -- "with the devil", if need be.

Thus while a united front is also negotiated (in the open) with the leadership of an opponent organization, it is in reality aimed at the membership -- aimed at uniting in action the members of the various organizations and at winning them over to revolutionary leadership.

It is for the above reason that in concrete cases it is always the revolutionary, disciplined group which knows what it wants, that always takes the initiative in a united front maneuver, and which always gains from it. This is why revolutionaries usually have to force reformist and stalinist organizations into united actions by pressure from their own ranks.

#### The 1955 Tasks and Orientation Resolution

I doubt if any movement has ever passed a more confused, incredible and politically harmful position on the united front than that passed by the YSL at the last convention. This has caused the right wing itself to change its line on united fronts under the pressure of the events. However, it is worthwhile to take a look at the following paragraph (14) of the resolution which explains why the YSL favors united fronts with liberals and opposes them with stalinists:

"While liberals are the defenders of the imperialist policies of one side

in the cold war, and the Stalinists of the other it does not follow that we adopt the same attitude toward both. The liberals when they enter into a particular action to protest the firing of a teacher, join an anti-ROTC campaign or oppose the sending of U.S. troops to Indo-China do not demonstrate the same meaning and consequences as when the Stalinists propose the same thing. The liberal is opposing a particular action of the cold war policies at home or abroad from what is objectively a democratic position, and not from the point of view of defending or justifying a totalitarian force. It is a step toward our point of view or it is a step we can support because if carried to its logical conclusion it would lead closer to our position -- for civil liberties and a democratic foreign policy. Not so with the Stalinists. The objective meaning and consequence of their actions leads to or is part of their support of the Stalinist camp."

Thus the YSL places itself in concrete reality closer to the defenders of American imperialism than to the defenders of Russian imperialism. We see even at this date the seeds of movement towards the social democracy and away from a revolutionary third camp position.

But aside from this fact, the above quote (which remains the attitude of the right wing) removes from the discussion one element sometimes brought in by the right wing: the class nature of the American CP. There is no doubt about the class nature of liberalism. It is frankly capitalist and in the capitalist camp. Yet we are for united fronts with liberals. Thus whether or not the CP is a working class party is irrelevant to the present discussion of a united front tactic towards them.

However the above quote has two main faults: 1) It is not what it says about the Stalinists that is wrong but what it says about the liberals; and 2) In any case, what it says is irrelevant to the question of a united front tactic.

It is absolutely correct to state that Stalinism as a movement acts as the agent of the Stalinist bureaucracy and is not sincerely dedicated to the struggles it engages in. The March on Washington movement during World War II, for example, proves that the Stalinists will sabotage the struggle of the Negro people if it suits the needs of Kremlin foreign policy. Its perfidious rôle in the trade unions during the war also proves this.

The paragraph contends, however, that the liberals' support of American imperialism has no deleterious effects on them -- that everything they struggle for they struggle for sincerely and will not sabotage. They have an "objectively democratic position" whatever in the name of Marx that creature is. This is as absolutely incorrect as the former statement is correct. For instance, the liberals as an organized movement in World War II clasped hands with the Stalinists and played the same reactionary role by their unconditional support of Roosevelt. After the war the liberals instituted the witch hunt and defended it under Truman; they supported the Korean war, etc. In other words their support of American imperialism led directly to their sabotaging the class struggle in this country in World War II and the struggle for civil liberties following the war.

The conclusion of this is not that we should not have united fronts with

either group but rather that we should have united fronts with both of them, realizing all the time that either one of them may very easily sabotage the whole affair.

The reason why we wish to have united fronts with supporters of both American and Stalinist imperialism is that on concrete issues such as civil liberties and civil rights there is a basis for joint action of the entire "radical" youth and because it offers us a chance to expose the leadership of both the Stalinists and liberals in action and thus win over a section of their membership by showing that only revolutionary socialists can struggle consistently for these demands.

#### The YSL's Present Draft Perspectives Resolution

The present draft resolution of the right wing on tasks and perspectives contains within it the line on united fronts adopted at the last plenum. This confused section, which in no way attempts to grope with the mistaken position of the YSL in the past or shows one inkling of an understanding of what precisely a united front is, has only one sentence which contains political meaning: "... all units, fractions and members at large must discuss with the N.O. all questions of their activity in respect to Stalinist youth organizations." This means concretely that the YSL has no policy and has decided in lieu of a policy to let the NAC decide in each case. The rest of the section is a hodge podge of irrelevant and ridiculous matters such as whether or not we call the stalinist youth "comrades"; how our attitude should be dependent on the particular tendency the group is part of inside the CP; how "we should try to raise the political criteria of opposition to totalitarianism and dictatorship everywhere" (this is a suggestion that we "unite" with the stalinists on only those questions which disunite us -- in other words we oppose the united front); and it contains the following gem: "At the same time we do not have a policy of excluding Stalinist organizations from United Front activities nor are we in favor of including these groups under all circumstances" (i.e. we do not have a policy).

The utter inability of the right wing even to understand what a united front means is shown in the section of the resolution dealing with the AYS. It states: "While we are not against participating with the AYS in joint activity, it should only be on the basis of firm political agreement. In no case should our third camp politics be subordinated to vague and misleading Cannonite formulations."

An insight into the mentality of the right wing can be gained by comparing this section with the section on SDA: "We should attempt to cooperate with liberal students wherever possible and to draw them into joint activities on many political issues -- civil liberties, civil rights, etc." No statement here that "our third camp politics should not be subordinated to vague and misleading liberalistic pro-imperialistic formulations." (By the way, while the resolution takes an extremely "hostile" attitude towards the AYS it calls for remaining "on friendly terms with" SLID.) This dual standard of softness towards the liberals and extreme hardness toward the Stalinists, and even worse, toward fellow revolutionary socialists like the AYS, pervades everything the right wing writes or says. This tells us more about the direction of the development of the right wing than a million theoretical formulations.

However this statement shows no understanding of the united front. In the first place, in all united fronts with anybody one keeps one's organizational independence and politics. One unites not on what we disagree about (third camp politics) but on what we are in agreement on: civil liberties, civil rights, the Hungarian revolution, and the like. Thus we keep our politics crystal clear and assume no responsibility for the politics of the other participants in the united front actions, but at the same time we do not ask that our specific politics be the basis upon which the united front is formed. To hold this view is not only to be sectarian but in reality to be opposed to the united front.

I repeat: The united front is a method of joint action of those who disagree on fundamental questions and has nothing to do with political collaboration or organic unity of one sort or another.

#### The Right Wing's Real Position on the United Front

In reality the right wing is opposed to a united front with the Stalinists and uninterested in a united front with fellow revolutionary socialists. As I pointed out in a previous article (LWB Vol. 1 No. 2) the New York YSL, which is under the domination of the right wing, opposed a united front on the Algerian question. They specifically wished to exclude the CP from such a venture. Their reasoning was that the CP was in reality the enemy of the Algerian workers and had acted as such in the past.

This is absolutely true, and this is exactly why we propose a united front to them now when they state (demagogically to be sure) that they defend the Algerian people.

Here we have a classic example of the best type of united front. We take the CP at face value and demand that they join with us in a protest on Algeria in defense of the Trotskyists and others who are today being jailed by Mollet. If the CP accepts it is put into conflict with its tacit support of Mollet, and if it turns it down we have discredited it in the eyes of its own members and have raised ourselves in their estimation.

wing

However the right/turned down this golden opportunity to test the Stalinists (and also to test, by the way, the social-democratic friends of the right wing) and in fact has done NOTHING of any nature on the Algerian question despite profuse assurances to the contrary.

Another example of the right wing's attitude is their reaction to my proposal that we go into a joint May Day celebration with the Stalinists and others that would protest various things which we were in agreement on. We would have been given complete freedom of speech and could have addressed an audience of over 1,000. In turning down this excellent opportunity to speak to Stalinists and participate in a united front of all radicals on May Day the right wing got very indignant about standing on the same platform with the Stalinist butchers on May Day. (This did not prevent them from singing the International with the social democrats, also known for their butchery of revolutionaries.) No doubt given certain circumstances the Stalinists would shoot us again, but as Trotsky remarked in 1940 to a similar point: "Yes, I know sometimes they shoot us." (This was shortly after the May 24, 1940 machine gun attack on him.) He said, "Do you think Lewis or Green



wouldn't shoot at you? It is only a difference of circumstances." (Socialist Appeal, October 19, 1940). As Trotsky has said on a number of occasions, to treat the question on this level is "to put it on the plane of spurious sentimentality." (The Only Road, p. 59.)

Trotsky went on to say: "We can't let antipathies or our moral feelings sway us. Even the assailants on Trotsky's house had great courage. I think we can hope to win these workers who began as a crystallization of October. We see them negatively: how to break through this obstacle. We must set the base against the top. The Moscow gang we consider to be gangsters, but the rank and file don't feel themselves to be gangsters, but revolutionaries. They have been terribly poisoned. If we show we understand, that we have a common language, we can turn them against their leaders." (Stenographic draft of the June, 1940 discussions with Trotsky on the Stalinists.)

### The Task Before Us

The task we in the YSL have to face is similar to the one outlined in 1940 by Trotsky. We must reach the membership of the Stalinists -- "to set the base against the top." There is only one way to do this, and that is the aggressive use of the united front technique. Such a technique not only will help advance the immediate tasks of the working class, but will lead to the destruction of the Stalinist movement and the winning over of a significant section of it to revolutionary socialism.

To stand aside from this task as the right wing does in order to remain "pure" in the eyes of the bourgeoisie and its representatives in the socialist movement, is to step aside from the struggle in a sectarian fashion. Such a move is in my opinion just as disastrous within the framework of the small radical movement today and the tasks of revolutionaries within it as the CP's ultra-leftist line was within the context of the epochal tasks of the German working class in 1933.

## A HEAD WITHOUT A BODY

By Max Shachtman

(Editorial Note: The following article by Max Shachtman is reprinted from the June, 1938 New International as part of the general policy of the editors to present documents relevant to the unity discussion. The article not only helps to document the fundamental change in attitude towards the Socialist Party undergone by comrade Shachtman but in its way still has much relevance today. The treating of the question of sects and the description of the SP as a sect with "neither the revolutionary intransigence and principle of a Marxist sect without masses, nor the masses of a large and growing reformist party without revolutionary principle" hits the nail on the head today almost twenty years later. One needs only add that the SP-SDF of today is no longer a "centrist" sect but has completed the cycle to reunite with the SDF and become a right wing social democratic sect. Another comment by Shachtman deserves special mention in the opinion of the editors: "To condemn the Comintern is pretty easy nowadays and sometimes pretty cheap. It would be more serious if the SP were to sweep clean the thickly besmirched doorstep of its own International." This challenge applies a thousand fold today when it is even cheaper to attack Stalinism and when the "doorstep" of the 2nd International has been besmirched even more if possible by the tragic role of "comrade" Mollet in Algeria.)

\*\*\*\*\*

It is a long time since a convention of the Socialist Party of the United States has met in such a state of internal apathy and amid such general indifference towards its deliberations on the part of the labor movement and the public in general. The bourgeois press, which has in the past accorded the S.P. national assemblies an attention more or less befitting America's second minority party, dismissed the Kenosha convention with obscure paragraphs. The labor press was scarcely more concerned, if at all. In significant contrast to its attitude towards the Chicago 1937 convention, the Stalinist movement and press devoted, this year, virtually no attention at all to the gathering of the Socialist Party.

No great wizardry is required to explain this state of affairs. The American Socialist Party has succumbed to a malignant malady known as centrism. The progressive development of the party signaled by the victory over the ossified Old Guard at the Detroit convention in 1934 and confirmed two years later at Cleveland, when the Old Guard finally split away, was abruptly arrested a few months after the Chicago convention last year. Terrified by their own verbal audacity, the party centrist made common cause with the right wing of Thomas-Hoan-Laidler.

They launched a red-baiting expulsion campaign against the "Trotskyists" as a prerequisite—we quote one of the expulsionists—to putting the party on the auction block in the New York municipal elections where it was sold, without bids, to the LaGuardia combination, amid the applause of the Stalinists.

The mass expulsion of the left wing, carried out in as brutally bureaucratic a manner as ever under that Stalinist regime for which Thomas, Tyler and Co. profess such a virgin abhorrence, ripped the revolutionary heart out of the Socialist party. Whole state and local organizations of the party disappeared from the roster; the decisive majority of the youth organization came over to the Fourth International, leaving the old party with an all but empty shell; large numbers of members, in addition, dropped out of the party, disgusted and disillusioned by the turn in policy and regime of the official leadership. Except for the sovereign state organization of Wisconsin, an autarchic principality of the right wing whose frontiers cannot be crossed by out-of-state party representatives without visa in hand, the rest of the party was reduced in the following months to a rather expanded but not overly active propagandist sect. That is the Socialist Party today.

Sects, very often, have their virtues which compensate in part for their smallness, lack of influence, isolation from the mass movement into which the revolutionists are sometimes driven by powerful waves of reaction. They can have no other justification than a firm adherence to soberly worked-out revolutionary principles and an uncompromising struggle to defend them from all petty bourgeois attacks.

On the other hand, an organization without a very clearly defined program or set of principles, or one which does not yet have a fully developed revolutionary doctrine but is only in the process of elaborating it, can justify its existence at certain periods on the condition that it is moving towards the left, is permitting the unhampered expression of revolutionary currents, and is bringing masses of workers into its ranks on that basis. It is in this sense that every genuine step forward, every mobilization of the masses in a revolutionary direction, is worth a dozen programs, more accurately, a dozen confused or underdone programs.

But here lies the tragedy of the present-day Socialist Party. It has neither the revolutionary intransigence and principle of a Marxist sect without masses, nor the masses of a large and growing reformist party without revolutionary principle. It is a centrist propaganda group, with the weight of political emphasis placed at the right. The Kenosha convention did not fail to underline this fact, as a few points will reveal.

1. Neither during nor after this convention was any appeal made to the "unattached radicals" to join the ranks of the Socialist Party. After the victory of the "Militants" at

Detroit, this appeal was frequently repeated, in particular by Norman Thomas. It was attractive and exercised a strong influence on many revolutionary militants who, revolted by Stalinism, were nevertheless reluctant to join a "small group," however corrects its program. The S.P. then appeared to be developing in a sound direction and offered them the right of presenting and defending a consistent revolutionary position in its ranks. This democratic aspect of the S.P. compensated, in the minds of these militants, for many of its defects.

The party leadership took this right seriously only in the hope that it would not be seriously exercised. As soon as it was, the bureaucracy abrogated it by administrative ukase. It has no intention of restoring it. So far as the left wing is concerned, there is no need of restoring it-for the left was expelled long before the convention and was as completely unrepresented in its sessions as it is in the ranks of the party. So far as the right wing is concerned, there is no need of restoring it either-for right wing was never deprived of the right to criticism, inside the party or outside, to autonomy, and freedom of action, regardless of conformity with the official party line.

2. The anti-war line resolution unanimously adopted at the convention is of a piece with the most recent development of the party. Compared with the by no means adequate resolution of the Chicago convention a year ago, it marks a tremendous shift to the right. About petty bourgeois pacifism, or pacifism in general, there is literally not a single word, not one. In Chicago, under pressure of the left wing, the party at least formally disavowed pacifism. This year it left it unmentioned, for otherwise how could a unanimous vote be obtained? About imperatively needed proletarian independence and a class struggle policy in the fight against war, again, not a word. About using the social crisis in the course of war for overthrowing the bourgeoisie, not a word, although this was clearly indicated a year ago in Chicago. As for the "biggest" enterprise of the party-the "Keep America Out of War" movement-the resolution is as silent as a carp; it doesn't even mention it. The active social-patriotic position of the Second International-of which the S.P. is the American section-might just as well have been an obscure phenomenon of the Middle Ages for all the reference made to it in the Kenosha resolution. The vital question of the defense of the U.S.S.R. in war, and its relationship to the question of Soviet-imperialist alliances against another imperialist group, is simply ignored. (Such an attitude is called: "giving leadership to the workers".)

But for that we find a program calling for "the abandonment by the United States of all imperialist ventures, whether of an economic, financial, or military nature, in Latin America," the only criticism of which can be that it is not supplemented by a point calling for the abandonment of immodesty in all brothels, superstition in all churches, and cretinism in all cretins.

One could continue almost indefinitely on this unhappy document without reaching bottom. But important is the fact that its radical introductory ponderosities ("Was has its root in imperialism", is one earth-shaking example) simply have the purpose of covering up the completely reformist work of the party. And what is decisive is, as the Greeks say, ou gnosis all praxis-not the theory but the practice. The pacifist practise of the S.P. in the "Keep America Out of War" movement, on the one side, and the perfunctory radicalism of a convention resolution which prudently omits mention-much less condemnation-of this practise, there is a picture of centrism for you, of the closed compartments in which it segregates its deeds from its words.

3. The trade union resolution is not less in character. If there is one thing that the S.P. leadership fears more than isolation from the unions, it is "offending" or irritating the American trade union bureaucracy. Even more threateningly than in the past, however, this bureaucracy is today the most pernicious obstacle in the path of an independent and aggressive development of the labor movement. No real progress can be made without smashing it, and replacing it with a leadership based on class struggle policies, free from contamination with subordination to the bourgeoisie and its parties. The healthy movement of their ranks is there, it requires only direction, consciousness, encouragement, organization. The role and record of the Lewis-Green machines require no re-telling here. But the S.P. is quite able to hold a national convention and adopt a resolution on the trade union question which has not a word to say about this vital, fundamental aspect of the problem. It is as if it does not exist for the party. The resolution expresses the usual concern over the split between the A. F. of L and the C.I.O.; so, God knows, does everybody. It urges, you may rest assured, unity and rank and file pressure for it. But a call for the organization of all militants to fight for the class independence of the unions, for a class struggle policy, for a serious battle against the bureaucracy which subjects the unions to the bourgeoisie-that, you see, would not be a "judicial" and "realistic" trade union policy.

4. "The Socialist Party," reads the anti-war resolution "repudiates isolationism and narrow nationalism in all its forms." Good. Very good. Then it endorses internationalism? Also very good. And it intervenes in international questions? Apparently, for it does not hesitate to chide the Stalinern for its warmongering. But the S.P., we believe, does not belong to the Stalinist International; it is the American section of the Second International. Is that something like being affiliated to the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks or the Phi Mu Sorority? Or is it to be taken seriously? Then what has the Socialist Party to say about the ignominious role of M. Leon Blum, fellow member of the International, during his premiership? What has it to say about Sr. Juan Negrin, fellow member of the International, and his suppression and imprisonment of followers of Caballero, also a fellow member?

What has it to say about Major Atlee, another fellow member, and his passionate cries for bigger and better aviation and the defense of the Empire? What has it to say, in short, about the thoroughly chauvinistic, pro-war position of the whole International and its leadership? To condemn the Comintern is pretty easy nowadays and sometimes pretty cheap. It would be more serious if the S.P. were to sweep clean the thickly besmirched doorstep of its own International first.

But about its own International and associate members, the Kenosha convention had nothing to say, absolutely nothing! It did, it is true, "condemn the actions of the Communist International and the conservative political elements of Loyalist Spain in denying civil right to the left forces". But the "political elements" it speaks of include-indeed, are headed by-"comrades" Negrin and Prito, of the Socialist Party. Isn't it what those accustomed to strong language would call loathsome hypocrisy to condemn one gangster and to cover in silence another, just as guilty, only because he happens to be a member of your lodge or sorority?

It should be borne in mind that especially in these crucial days, with the war threat more imminent than ever, living internationalism is the only true touchstone for all those who call themselves socialists.

\* \* \*

The Socialist Party today has neither numbers nor revolutionary principles and program. It does have Norman Thomas who heads a small coterie that dominates the party. The S.P. is in reality a head without a body.

Thomas has described a magic circle beyond which his "left" critics-if we may be pardoned the adjective-dare not go. Up to the rim, and no farther. For, as they say among themselves in awed-horrified whispers, if this or that point is pressed (i.e., if we take our radical talk seriously), Thomas will drop out, and then what will be left of the party?

One illustration out of literally hundred will suffice. During the intense debate over the S.P. capitulation to the LaGuardia-A.L.P. bureaucracy in the last New York election campaign, Tyler, Zam, Delson and confreres denounced Thomas as a traitor to the party and the principles of socialism, and his policy as treason. These are scarcely terms to be bandied about lightly. The treasonous Thomas-Altman policy was the one actually followed, as is known. Now comes the highest authority of the party-its national convention. Our "Clarityite" heroes, who talked so big last October, have a majority of the convention votes. Do they propose that the convention condemn the policy pursued in New York, that is, condemn the traitors to socialism and thier treason? Their blood, never very rich, freezes at the very thought. For this lamentable "left" wing, which

takes very seriously the ever-present threat of Thomas to leave the party if he does not have his way or something very much like it, does not take itself seriously. It understands quite well how little indeed it represents today.

Poverty and misery give birth and sustenance to religion. Solace for an empty stomach is often found by the wretched in the adoration of an icon. The S.P. today is pretty well reduced to the icon of Norman Thomas. That is why he so thoroughly dominates the party and, in the public eye, is the party-all that is left of it. That is why he has his personal political column in the party press. If his views therein coincide with the official party line, no matter; if they do not, no matter. (See, for a characteristic example, the conflict between the Thomas approach to the LaFollette party and the official party statement.)

A head without a body-for where the body should be there is not the flesh and blood of numbers, the pulse of life, but an ectoplasmic emanation of centrist verbiage and political hypocrisy.

M.S.

THE CANNONITE MENACE

By Tim Wohlforth

(Note: This article was submitted on April 15 to YSR for publication. For technical reasons it has missed the last two issues of the YSR. In the interest of speed we are publishing it here.)

Introduction

The last issue of the YSR (Vol. 4, No. 1) strikes a new low, in my opinion, for political discussion in our movement. We are a movement that has always prided itself in its serious and thorough internal discussion. This last issue is a blight on our otherwise fine record of internal debate.

The tone of the issue was set by Mike Harrington's lead article in the previous YSR (Vol. 3, No. 4) "On the 'Left-Wing' in the YSL" with its "beautiful" first paragraph containing hardly one true word: "With the formation of the 'Left Wing Caucus', the YSL is confronted with an organized, sectarian tendency. But more than that, the politics of this grouping are not those of an ordinary, loyal faction: rather, they lead in the direction of a split toward the Cannonites."

The issue as a whole contains very little that can be described as political argumentation on the basic question facing the movement: the question of unity and with whom? As a substitute the comrades of the right wing have engaged in a smear campaign unparalleled in our movement. It is the type of campaign that should make every decent comrade in the YSL turn away with disgust. It is a sign of the political bankruptcy of the right wing, as well as of the low level to which they are willing to sink in a political struggle.

Because of the great bulk of slander in this issue I cannot answer each individual slander and will have to deal with the basic categories of slander.

I Read the Same Thing in the Daily Worker!

The first category of slander is that which bases itself on a well-worn theme: If the left wing or even one left-winger says something which the SWP has also said, this ipso facto proves (1) he is a Cannonite agent and (2) what he says is wrong. This line of reasoning is known in this country by another variant. Someone gets up and speaks for civil rights. Someone else gets up and says, "I read the same thing in the Daily Worker" and the argument is over.

As an example of this I refer the comrades to Comrade Oppenheimer's analysis of Dave Carleton's piece. Comrade Oppenheimer, after writing what is in actuality an excellent defense of the left wing's position on unity, decides to slander the left wing in order to make himself "kosher." He puts it this way: "If the younger members of the 'left' caucus will examine the writings, i.e., terminology, characterizations, theory, of their leaders they will find a remarkable resemblance to the writings of the Cannonites." He then proceeds to liken the characterizations of Dave Carleton (who, I understand, happens to be anti-SWP) to those of the Militant. What he actually describes is a conception of centrists held in common by all sections of the Marxist movement since



the days of Kautsky.

Comrade Mel Becker uses the same approach to slander Comrade Shane and myself. He first informs us that we are not Cannonite agents in the police sense. He then goes on to point out that the CP, likewise, is not an agent of the Kremlin in the police sense. This leads him to the position that Comrade Shane and I "react in a similar fashion" to the SWP as the CP does to the Kremlin. Along similar lines I have been called a "semi-official representative of the AYS" at a New York business meeting.

What does Becker offer as proof of this fantastic charge? Only what he thinks is a similar change in the lines of the Left Wing and of the SWP on regroupment. It just so happens that Comrade Shane and myself at the plenum last September introduced substantially the same proposal on regroupment that we have been advocating since. At that time we emphasized that we favored a broad regroupment on a principled political basis. However the comrades of the right wing refused to listen to us and claimed that we were for some sort of revolutionary cadre regroupment. At that time the SWP had no position on regroupment to my knowledge. Their line came out a little later and when it did it emphasized the question of "defense of the Soviet Union" -- a question we explicitly excluded as not being crucial to regroupment. They have since revised this stand somewhat and I for one am glad to hear it.

However the real point here is not whether any particular position advocated by Shane or myself or the whole left wing is or is not similar to that of the SWP on the same question. It is the technique involved. Instead of answering the political points raised by the minority, the comrades of the right wing have decided to use the "red herring" technique: Just tack a label onto your opponent's argument, call it "cannonite", and then you don't have to answer it. In other words they have decided to substitute the smear technique for political argumentation. Their scare word, instead of being "commie" or "red" is "Cannonite."

#### What Be Cannonism?

Although the left wing in general and Comrade Shane and myself in particular have been characterized as being "Cannonites" this term has been used so much and in such varied ways towards us that it is very difficult to find out precisely what the right wing means by it.

Traditionally the Trotskyist movement in this country has been split between two different tendencies -- those who hold to the slogan of defense of the Soviet Union and those who oppose it and substitute in one form or other the concept of the third camp. Is it the accusation of the right wing that the left wing has formed a bloc on the basis of the defense of the Soviet Union? This happens not to be true. Of the five leading comrades of the left wing, one is a bureaucratic collectivist, two are state capitalists, and two (Shane and myself) are in the process of working out our ideas on the question. (I myself at the moment am dissatisfied with all three theories as they have been expounded and refuse to be pinned down to any of them until I have had time to think about it.) However the left-wing caucus, though overwhelmingly against the slogan of "defense of the Soviet Union", has no position on this question and holds that a militant socialist youth movement must include all

sections of the Trotskyist youth as well as other youth regardless of important theoretical differences on the Russian question.

The right wing, by also accusing Comrades Jim and Scott of being Cannonite agents in the "general sense" as well as characterizing the caucus as a "Cannonite tendency", make it clear that this is not what they have in mind. A "Cannonite" to them seems to be anyone who is for the continuation of the revolutionary struggle, i.e., anyone who opposes the entry move into the SP-SDF and who considers himself to be in the camp of revolutionary socialism. If this be Cannonism then we have been correctly characterized as a "Cannonite tendency."

At the same time Shachtman has also been a Cannonite until recent years. In the following quote Shachtman sums up his views on the basic divisions in the radical movement in this country:

"The militant worker who has reached the point of understanding the need of conscious political organization, sees before him three main movements that speak in the name of socialism.

"One is the Socialist Party or reformist groupings similar to it. The utter helplessness and futility of the social-democratic movement in the deepening crisis of capitalism, and its foredoomed efforts to move toward socialism or even to preserve capitalist democracy by the method of class collaboration, repel thousands who seek an effective socialist solution of the crisis.

"Many thousands more are even more violently repelled by the official Communist, that is, the Stalinist party. They have begun to understand that Stalinism has nothing whatsoever in common with socialism or the interests of the working class, that it is an instrument for perpetuating the totalitarian police state in Russia, and that it aims to establish a similar state for a small reactionary bureaucracy in every country of the world.

"Many militants who, for these reasons, are attracted to the Trotskyist movement, which embodies the authentic ideas of socialist freedom, are puzzled and even disheartened by the existence of two Trotskyist organizations in the United States which, at least at first glance, seems to represent an unjustified division. There can be no doubt about it: just as the split in the Trotskyist movement reduces to a considerable extent the possibilities of the growth of this movement -- and these possibilities are now very great and encouraging -- so the overcoming of this division by a sound union of the two parties would greatly increase the possibilities of growth and would within a very short period of time make the united Trotskyist movement a significant force in the working class and the political life of the country." (Shachtman, Introduction to Goláman on Unity, 1947).

If Comrade Shachtman no longer agrees with this estimation of his tendency which places it squarely in the camp of revolutionary socialism and in antagonism to the camps of social democracy and Stalinism let him say so. But until he does it is quite clear that according to the reasoning of the right wing he is a "Cannonite."

### The Right Wing's Loyalty Oath

A number of articles in the last YSR have reduced the entire question of unity to simply a matter of loyalty to the "independent socialist" tendency. Anyone who has disagreements with any aspect of this line must be screened out of the organization, or if that is impossible at the moment, must be branded as "disloyal" and urged to leave "for their own good." The best example of this line is Comrade Denitch's "fraternal" piece. In this article, Denitch in the interests of "socialist regroupment" openly calls for a split in the YSL and politely requests that we leave the YSL.

The difference between himself and the left wing, Denitch pretends, is between those who accept "the YSL as our revolutionary tendency" and those, namely the left-wing caucus, who do not. He also makes it clear, here and elsewhere, as have other spokesmen of the right wing, that we are outside of the "independent socialist tendency." Exactly what this tendency is is difficult to surmise. It seems to be a euphemistic title for the traditions of the ISL-WP and the YSL right wing for the last several years as interpreted by Shachtman and Martin. It is strange to hear such an accusation from Bogdan when for a considerable period of time while he was still a member of the SP at least three of the leading comrades of the left wing were part of this tendency while he was not. Comrade Jim Robertson, for instance, whom Bogdan has so recently slandered, was a leading member of this "tendency" since 1948 when Denitch was doing God knows what and when that other great spokesman of the "independent socialist tendency," Mike Harrington, was still building the Catholic Church.

But the important question is the attempt of the comrades of the right wing to identify loyalty to the YSL with loyalty to the right wing of the ISL. If one develops within the framework of the broad YSL politics differences with the body of theory developed over the years by the WP-ISL one is branded as "disloyal." By so doing the comrades of the right wing are in a sectarian fashion describing the politics of the YSL in such a way as to exclude us.

Suppose, for example, the entire left-wing caucus of the YSL, constituting about one quarter of the membership to date, should decide to join the SWP ... so what? Is the YSL or is it not broad enough to include those who look in another direction than does the right wing? If it is not, say so and repudiate our past claims towards broadness. Make our past three years of existence a living lie if you care to.

As a matter of fact the left-wing caucus is not composed of members of the SWP, is not directed by the SWP, and has no formal relations with the SWP. This statement will have no effect on the right wing as they will continue to label us as a "Cannonite tendency." They do this for two reasons. First, it saves them the bother of treating us in a political manner, that is, engaging in serious political discussion with us. They instead merely label us as "Cannonite" and leave it at that. This is an admission of their own weakness on the theoretical and political level. It is also an uncalled-for compliment to the strength of the left wing's politics and ideas.

The second reason for this hysteria is the most ominous. In fact it should scare every member of the YSL who wishes to see our movement preserved. Implicit in this characterization and smear campaign (explicit in the case of Bogdan) is

a conscious preparation on the part of the right wing for a split in our ranks. They are already trying to prove that the left wing is hostile, not a part of the YSL, and wants only to subvert the YSL. They are thus preparing the membership for some sort of expulsion. The membership of the YSL must be on guard against any move by the right wing in this direction. Regardless of our different views on the question of unity, let us at least keep the YSL unified. I hope that the plans of the right wing for socialist youth regroupment include the left wing but I see no signs of it.

However we on our part want to make it clear that our conception of unity specifically includes the right wing. We are for the preservation of the YSL even with its present leadership and even if this leadership is working towards unity with or dissolution into the SP-SDF. We on our part pledge ourselves to stay in and build the YSL as long as a YSL exists that will grant the left wing its elementary democratic rights. But I must again warn the membership that all signs point to a preparation for a split on the part of the right wing. I hope I am wrong and that the right wing will correct me on this.

The whole argument over "loyalty" reaches into phantasmagoria when one looks objectively at what's really going on. The right wing under the inspiration of Shachtman is preparing to scuttle the entire movement in an unprincipled attempt to enter the SP-SDF. The ISL hopes to drag along the YSL in this venture. We of the left wing have opposed this move, hoping to preserve the YSL, including its right wing, and on this basis to build a broad militant youth movement in this country comprising as many radical youth as possible. This becomes "disloyalty" in the eyes of the right. I again repeat: Disloyalty to what? Certainly our attempt to preserve the YSL (regardless of whether you agree with us on this point) cannot be construed as disloyalty to the YSL. What they are accusing us of is disloyalty to the right wing of the YSL and the followers of Shachtman in the ISL. But our basic loyalty to the YSL forces us into opposition to this group in our organization and as principled socialists we must and will fight this group, for their road leads to the dissolution and end of our movement.

#### Is Shachtman Trying to Split the YSL?

News has been filtering back to New York on Shachtman's role on his national tour. He seems to have used the opportunity to publicly attack a section of the YSL on a number of occasions and invite the SWP to take, if they wished, a section of "his" youth.

I have received the following report from Comrade Worth in Chicago: "Somewhat more serious was Shachtman's charge, at the open meeting at the U. of C. on Saturday night, that the left wing caucus amounted to the 'victims' of an SWP raid. Scott accused him of slander. Shachtman spoke of certain 'secret' correspondence which established his point. We should demand that he produce them. (Comparison with Sen. McCarthy's erstwhile tactic might not be amiss). I strongly suspect that Shachtman's counter-intelligence department relies heavily on material that we voluntarily circulate." I understand that Comrade Shachtman repeated this charge at a recent NY ISL meeting.

I understand that the Chicago unit has demanded that Shachtman produce this material. I, too, demand that he do so or if not make a public apology to the Left-Wing Caucus at the first opportunity.

I, myself, wonder whether Comrade Shachtman is conducting himself in the most fraternal manner toward the YSL as a whole, when he publicly slanders a section of the YSL, constantly refers to the YSL as "his youth", and decides that he is going to hand over a section of the YSL to the SWP.

A clear-cut statement on the part of Shachtman and/or the ISL-PC (I understand there is a formal difference between the two bodies) that the ISL intends not to interfere with the orderly internal debate in the YSL and that it has no intentions of engineering a split in the YSL, would be most helpful. I certainly hope the YSL has not broken its previous commitment not to organize its members in the YSL in a disciplined factional way.

### Conclusion

I wish to make a special appeal to all the members of the YSL regardless of their views on the unity question. I realize the atmosphere has gone beyond the point where it can be entirely reversed. The effect of the "Cannonite" scare technique has been made and no amount of retractions (I doubt if we will get any) will help the situation too much.

All I can do is appeal to all of you as political people to not allow the right wing to brainwash you into viewing the whole controversy as one of loyalty vs. disloyalty. I appeal to your political good sense to consider the political arguments of the left wing and weigh them against the political arguments of the right wing and on that basis make your choice.

The question facing you is of the utmost importance. It in essence is: Shall we continue on the fine basis we have been able to build over the last three years and work for a real socialist regroupment of the American youth? Or shall we retreat from the whole regroupment process into the arms of the SP-SDF and unite not with the radical youth in all its various sections but rather with a handful of people in the YPSL?

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON "PERSPECTIVES FOR AMERICAN SOCIALISM"

Submitted by Shane Mage

(Note: Part I of this resolution, "The International Context", was published in YSR, Vol. 4, No. 3. Part III, "The Socialist Movement in the U.S.", was published in the LEFT-WING BULLETIN, Vol. 1, No. 3. Part II, "The Situation in the United States", was submitted for publication in YSR, Vol. 4, No. 3, but it did not appear. Since we feel that this resolution should reach the membership as soon as possible to contribute to the pre-convention discussion, we are printing it here. The Left-Wing Caucus has not taken a position on this resolution.)

II. The Situation in the United States

1. The objective conditions which have faced American socialism for the last decade remain in force today. American capitalism remains prosperous. Full employment continues to exist, with rare local exceptions. The capitalist class is enormously self-confident in its unheard-of power at home and in the world. The labor movement is politically and socially quiescent, and on the defensive in the class struggle. Nevertheless, the economic and social forces pointing toward a qualitative transformation of the present objective situation are building up within the confines of the present prosperity.

The Economic Conjuncture

2. The enormous capitalist prosperity of the past decade has been nourished and sustained by four major factors: a continuing high level of military expenditures, a high rate of investment in new plant, large-scale housing construction, and large consumer expenditures, principally for durable goods.

3. The war economy continues to be a basic aspect of American capitalism. However, the level of military expenditures has been stabilized at slightly below Korean war levels, while the economy as a whole has continued to expand. Military expenditures are therefore becoming relatively less decisive as an economic factor. However, if these expenditures are to aid capitalist expansion they have to expand themselves, not contract relatively. War production today thus represents a floor beneath the economy, not a sustaining factor in the present prosperity, certainly not a dynamic factor for further economic expansion.

4. As in every capitalist boom, the dynamic force behind the present prosperity is capital investment, the production of the means of production. Over the past decade American capitalism has completely renewed its industrial plant, and is now embarking on the "second industrial revolution" of automation. As long as American capitalism can maintain its current rate of investment it will not have to face a major crisis.

5. The long term maintenance of a high rate of investment depends on two factors: the ability of capitalism to produce a sufficient quantity of surplus value to maintain a high level of investment, and its ability to realize the surplus value produced. In other words, the capital for investment must be provided either by present or past profits (reserves, bank loans), and there must be a market for the eventual product of the new industrial plant.

6. American capitalism has not yet used up the resources for expansion available to it. However, there are indications that the point of exhaustion is approaching. In 1956, despite the full employment and continued growth of the national income, not only did the rate of profit fall, but the mass of profit declined slightly. The threat of inflation and the related high interest rate both indicate a relative scarcity of investment capital. The chronic crisis of the farmers, retail merchants, and small business, as indicated by the decline in farm income and the increase in business failures, is another manifestation of the fall in the rate of profit. The super-profits necessary to the great monopolies can only be maintained at the expense of the small producers share in the global mass of surplus value.

7. Despite record high wages, the tremendous rate of consumption which has been an outstanding feature of this prosperity has only been maintained by a tremendous expansion of consumer credit. The installment plan represents a mortgage on future markets for present advantage. The outstanding consumer debt cannot be expanded indefinitely. At a certain point it becomes inflationary, i.e., represents a drain of capital resources away from production into consumption. However, any attempt to restrict this credit would immediately mean a sizable reduction in the market for consumer goods, with spiraling effect on the rest of the economy.

8. The nature of this process is shown in embryo by the present troubles of the housing industry. Like consumer goods in general, the production of homes has to a decisive extent been financed by credit, particularly by "GI loans." The recent increases in the interest rate were motivated by the pressing necessity for American capitalism to avoid inflation -- a necessity which all responsible spokesmen for the capitalists stress above all else. But the increase in the interest rate on GI loans and home loans in general had the effect of a sharp slash in consumer demand. The rate of housing starts has fallen off by 1/3, to well under the 1,000,000 mark.

9. An important incidental aspect of the "automation" boom is the reappearance of absolute unemployment, of a permanent reserve army of unemployed. This is most conspicuous in Detroit, where 100,000 former auto workers were unemployed even though auto production was at capacity levels. The spread of automation will reproduce this situation in many places. It can be expected to have a double economic effect: as in all instances of technical progress involving a radical change in the organic composition of capital, the reduction of the industrial working force will involve a diminished base for the production of surplus value, resulting in an intensification of the present tendency toward decrease in the rate of profit; more immediately, the existence of a reserve army of unemployed will narrow the consumer goods market both absolutely and relatively, because the unemployed will have much less to spend and at the same time will exert a depressing influence upon wages. The social effects of this phenomenon are obvious -- it will place a strong pressure upon the employed working class to fight for radical measures, and at the same time threaten to create a mass base for a fascistic movement if the proletariat fails to give important assistance to the unemployed, all this even within the context of a "prosperity"!

10. Another important factor in the present boom is the position of U.S. capitalism as the dominating force on a diminished capitalist world market. This has had its share in maintaining U.S. prosperity in the post-war period, but under conditions of incipient crisis it could become a negative factor.

Already the U.S. is facing serious competition from the rebuilt capitalist economies of Western Europe and Japan. Should the shaky economic systems of these countries approach collapse it would mean serious economic difficulties for world-oriented American capitalism.

11. Thus all the "classical" tendencies toward capitalist crisis are in full operation at the very height of the current boom. It is, of course, impossible to predict the exact date of the onset of a crisis, nor its depth and scope. It is nevertheless true that a crisis is inevitable, and that the longer it is delayed by various artificial inflationary expedients the more "hair curling" it will be, as Secretary Humphries has remarked.

12. It is completely false to think that the "Permanent War Economy" represents a formula by which capitalism can escape the boom and bust cycle. All that military expenditures will do in the event of crisis is to provide a floor under employment, which would prevent the existence of unemployment on relatively as large a scale as in the 30s. Even this "blessing" would be secured only at a frightful cost in inflationary tendencies.

13. The War Economy will above all mitigate none of the social and political consequences of capitalist crisis. The American economy, the American workers, the American people as a whole, the American role in the capitalist world, are all geared to relative full employment. The emergence of mass unemployment would not have to reach the relative levels of the 30s in order to pose the choice of socialism or fascism to the capitalist class, and to the proletariat as well.

14. It is probable that the full-blown capitalist crisis will be preceded by very serious economic tensions. This is particularly true if the capitalists react to the beginning of a recession by an intensification of inflation. In such a case the working class would be immediately menaced by a sizable decline in living standards. In that event an epoch of radicalization and stormy social struggles could open well before the capitalist crisis had assumed its classical form. The "harmony" of today's prosperity covers over the explosion which seethes below its surface.

#### The Political Scene

15. American politics in the year 1957 presents a picture of complete stagnation. The two capitalist parties have as complete monopoly on political life as they have ever had. The differences between them have faded beyond the vanishing point, so that it has become a commonplace of what passes for political thought in America that the real difference is not between Democrats and Republicans but between "liberals", Democrat and Republican, and "conservatives" in both parties.

16. The tradition of "liberalism" in particular has long since become completely meaningless. The liberals of today represent neither social protest nor civil libertarianism of any sort. The New Dealers never were a positive force for social change or in defense of civil liberties; the New Deal represented a concession by American capitalism to working class pressure and an adaptation to changed historical circumstances. Since the beginning of the war, not a single new piece of socially progressive legislation has been enacted. Since the same time, starting with the Minneapolis



trial, the liberals have been in the vanguard of witch-hunting and police state actions. Today the "liberals" of the Democratic Party are virtually indistinguishable from the sophisticated big business Republicans. The result is the phenomenon of "New", "Modern", "Liberal" Republicanism. In proportion as the liberals have adapted themselves to the needs of big business, the direct spokesmen for capital have adopted the "liberal rhetoric."

17. The political role of the organized working class has been that of spear-carrier for the heroes of the Fair Deal. Consequently, the political influence of the labor movement has fallen to an all-time low. Labor is incapable of putting through a single one of its minimal demands for progressive legislation. Labor is without political defense against the attacks of the most militant, reactionary sections of American capitalism, as shown by the current "rackets probe." The campaign for "Right to Work" laws has broken through in the industrialized state of Indiana, and is spreading.

18. If labor is to become an effective force politically it must do in the political field what it has done in the industrial: present itself as an organized and independent class force. That is why for two decades the central point in the socialist program for the labor movement has been the formation of a labor party. The first step toward the rejuvenation of American politics must be the break of the labor movement with all varieties of capitalist politicians, and most particularly the "liberal" variety, and the establishment of the independent class party of American labor.

19. Only in one sphere of American life does there exist a strong and radical movement for progressive social change. This is the awakened mass movement of the Negro people for full social and political equality. It is symbolized most dramatically by heroic actions like the Montgomery and Tallahassee bus boycotts, and by even more heroic struggles for school integration and voting rights throughout the South, in the face of organized physical and economic terrorism. On a deeper level, it represents a new consciousness in the broad masses of the Negro people of the possibility of successful struggle under present conditions, and relying upon their own resources. It represents the tendency of the Negro people to create their own organizations of struggle, often thru the channel of the NAACP, but also in entirely new and original forms like the "mass meetings" of Montgomery.

20. At every stage of the Negro struggle, it comes up against the political domination of white-supremacist capitalism. The industrial and agricultural capitalists of the South require Jim Crow in order to divide the white and Negro workers and farmers. Thus they perpetuate often miserable and always substandard wages and working conditions for all the southern workers, of town and country, of both races. The political representatives of southern capitalism, in Washington as on the local level, are both the most rabid white-supremacists and the worst enemies of the labor movement. Northern capitalism requires the alliance with the Southern racists against labor, and is absolutely unwilling to disrupt this alliance by doing anything to help the Negroes beyond what is extorted from it by the pressure of the colonial revolution.

21. The destruction of Jim Crow requires the destruction of the open-shop system of the South. Both require the destruction of the political supremacy of southern capitalism. Here also, the creation of an independent labor party is the indispensable first step, indissolubly linked with an all-out class struggle

campaign to unionize the South. In this sense, the Negro struggle of today represents the vanguard struggle of American labor. The failure of the official labor leadership to give the Negro people more than platonic sympathy, and their knifing the Negro struggle in the back by their political alliance with the Southern racists (through the intermediary of the "liberal" Democrats) represent a direct betrayal of the immediate needs as well as the higher interests of the labor movement.

22. The need for independent political action is even more pressing for the Negro people than for the labor movement. By supporting the Democrats, the Negroes join hands with the Eastlands. Eisenhower and the Republicans have proven their unwillingness to give the slightest aid to the freedom fighters of the South. The next step for the Negro struggle is to enter the political arena in the great Northern cities even in advance of the labor movement. By breaking drastically with both capitalist parties the Northern Negroes would give the most effective possible aid to their embattled brothers in the South. In addition, a mass breakout from the two-party system by American Negroes would represent an enormous and irreversible step toward a labor party. Encouragement of such a breakout should be a central aspect of socialist electoral activity in the next period. Where the struggle has reached the level at which there is an independent Negro candidate on the ballot, socialists should give all-out support to such a candidate. Where the leadership of the Negro movement has not gone this far, socialists should, wherever possible, run their own campaign, offering themselves as a center for Negro protest against white supremacy and the two party system.

#### The American Labor Movement

23. The labor movement is potentially the greatest organized force in American social life. The merger of the AFL and CIO produced a united movement 15,000,000 strong, dominating all the key centers of the industrial life of the U.S. The merger strengthened the labor movement, or at least removed old divisions and disputes that had weakened it. Yet, in the period since the merger, American labor has been continually on the defensive. No new groups of workers have been unionized, no great social advances have been made, important strikes have been lost. The capitalists have taken advantage of labor's political impotence to pass anti-labor laws and to strike at the labor movement at its weakest point, the issue of corruption.

24. The actual weakness of labor, contrasted to its potential strength, is a result of the domination of the labor movement by a stratum of privileged bureaucrats. This phenomenon is a universal characteristic of the labor movement under imperialist capitalism. It has reached its highest point in the American labor movement. This is so because the world predominance of U.S. imperialism and the unexampled prosperity of the past decade have enabled U.S. capitalism to "bribe" enormous sections of the working class. The rising standard of living has made the big majority of American workers relatively contented with the system and their place within it. A labor movement virtually devoid of radicalism, interested only in immediate economic gains and not compelled to engage in militant struggle for most of those gains, has been the ideal culture medium for the growth of a swollen bureaucracy.

25. Every union, virtually without exception, is marked by this self-sustaining bureaucratic apparatus, controlling all positions from President of the International to organizer or business agent. In virtually no union does the rank and file have a controlling voice in the selection of its officers; the

apparatus decides, by its sheer weight or, when necessary, by force and fraud, Members of the bureaucracy are generally drawn from the workers in the shop, but they universally enjoy better wages and immeasurably superior working conditions than the rank and file. The threat of being forced to return to the shop is a powerful cement binding the bureaucracy together under the control of its top leadership.

26. The labor bureaucracy plays a dual role. All its power and privileges are drawn from its institutional position within the union, and its control of the union. It must therefore preserve, and, in its fashion, seek to strengthen the union. It must also defend the immediate economic interests of the workers, in order to retain their allegiance and membership. In this sense the union leadership is the actual leadership of the class struggle in its concrete reality.

27. At the same time, the labor bureaucracy is a stratum whose privileged position and way of life have integrated it into the structure of American capitalism. Just like the labor leaders of most countries, the entire perspective of the American labor bureaucrats is one of reforming capitalism, of merely improving conditions within the confines of the capitalist system. Unlike the social-democrats of other countries, however, the American labor leaders defend the capitalist system openly and avowedly.

28. The basic principle of the labor bureaucrats is the principle of class collaboration. The union leaders consider themselves "industrial statesmen" on a par with the representatives of capitalism, and their slogan is "mutual trusteeship". As a result their function is not to promote the interests of the working class as against the capitalists, but to attempt to reconcile the two, to their own advantage. Thus they seek to avoid any militant rank and file action, to suppress "wildcat" strikes. In return, they receive the economic concessions made possible by the boom.

29. Politically, the description of the union bureaucrats as "labor lieutenants of capitalism" fits perfectly. The union leaders were responsible for permitting the extension of the witch-hunt into the factory. Most of them have, indeed, played a shamefully active role in purging union militants on charges of "Communism" and "subversion", in order to strengthen their own control of the unions as well as to assist the capitalists. The political equivalent of "mutual trusteeship" is the servitude of the labor movement to the "liberal" leaders of the Democratic Party.

30. The social role of the labor bureaucrats, in relation to the rank and file, is a conservative one. In a time when the working class is passive, at present, it might appear to some that the bureaucracy is "to the left" of the membership, because it stands above the membership and therefore has to deal directly with social issues using a "left" variety of the "liberal rhetoric." However, the moment a real struggle is undertaken, the bureaucracy appears in its true colors as a right wing force, holding back the workers. This is obviously true of the efforts of the labor leadership to confine the Negro struggle within the prison of the Democratic Party. It also appears each time the workers attempt to act spontaneously over any local issue of class struggle. Every struggle against speedup must first overcome the resistance of the bureaucracy of even so "left" a union as the UAW before it is possible even to begin to fight the companies.

31. The lines of differentiation within the labor movement between "new" and "old" style unionists, "industrial" and "craft" unionists are largely being overcome. The merger of the AFL and CIO, and the bloc of Meany and Reuther at the head of the united movement, symbolize this process. The main line of differentiation within the labor bureaucracy today seems to be the issue of corruption. The corrupt sections of the bureaucracy are clearly a liability to the union movement as a whole, and therefore to the honest bureaucrats, under the conditions of today. The anti-labor forces are cleverly exploiting this fact by attacking the labor movement first in its rotten section. The "clean" bureaucrats seem to be conceding important ground to the reactionary offensive. The AFL-CIO executive committee has already surrendered the principle that the Fifth Amendment implies no guilt. This can, in the future, do enormous harm to the union movement.

32. The basic class-collaborationist orientation of the labor leadership has led it to react to the McClellan committee investigations as a legitimate legislative inquiry into corruption, not as the anti-labor smear campaign it is. The corrupt elements in the labor movement must certainly be eliminated. But the labor movement runs a terrible risk if it allows itself to forget for a single moment that the most dangerous enemies of labor involved in the current investigation are not at all the Becks and Hoffas but the McClellans and Mundts, and even more, the men behind the McClellans. The labor movement cannot protect itself from the small devils by an alliance with Satan!

33. While it is impossible to find principled differences within the top leadership of the labor movement today, it is highly likely that under conditions of social stress such a differentiation will develop between "left" and "right" wing elements of the bureaucracy. This differentiation will follow the lines of radicalization of the working class base of the bureaucracy. The decisive fact is the change in the working class consciousness; the change in the bureaucratic tops will be a secondary manifestation of this change. A section of the bureaucracy that moves to the left will not by that fact cease to represent a block to the working class struggle. Rather, it will be preparing itself for the historical role of the labor bureaucracy in all countries, as the last prop, the last defender of the decaying capitalist social order.

34. Within the context of the present boom there are pressures at work upon the working class capable, under certain conditions, of bringing about a measure of radicalization and the beginning of a break with the labor bureaucracy. Foremost among these is the tendency toward technological unemployment stemming from automation, referred to earlier. Going along with this are the phenomena of the runaway shop and decentralization, both placing strong pressure on employment and on wages in the already industrialized areas. Also of great importance is the tendency toward increasing intensity of labor (speedup) by which capitalism, faced with the falling rate of profit and intense competition characteristic of the mature phase of the boom, seeks to increase the rate of exploitation.

35. These problems cannot be solved by the traditional methods of unionism, concerned primarily with questions of wages, hours, and working conditions; and those "traditional" type demands which can be of some use, like "30 for 40", represent a concession far beyond the willingness of the capitalists to pay, and would have to be fought for with the most militant methods. In essence, the workers can meet the problems posed by automation and speedup only by a struggle

-44-

for power, only by realizing the necessity for workers control over the productive process. The labor bureaucracy is of course incapable of posing the question in these terms. As it fails to solve the most important problems because of its class collaborationist policy, the workers who will have to pay the cost of this failure can be expected to look for some other solution than that offered by the bureaucracy.

36. There are at the present slight signs of a molecular process leading toward radicalization of the working class. Of particular significance in this regard are the recent "Dues Revolt" in the Steel Workers Union and the defeat of pro-Reuther slates in many recent elections in formerly pro-administration locals of the UAW. In no sense do these represent a present change in the working class consciousness. Whether or not the tendencies represented by them develop into such a change in the near future will be determined by the extent to which they are reinforced by the development of a recession, by the advance of the Negro struggle, by international socialist victories.

37. The creation of a labor party is not an immediate likelihood. The labor bureaucrats have no intention of breaking their alliance with the capitalist politicians, and the responsible leaders of capitalism have no intention of forcing them to such a break by an all-out attempt to smash the unions. The present stagnation of American politics is essentially satisfactory to the labor bureaucracy, because it allows them to enjoy their privileges with peace and a good measure of public esteem. It is more than satisfactory to big business, which is able to weaken and domesticate the unions while enjoying unchallengable political supremacy. The natural tendency of the labor bureaucracy is to "grow together" with big business and with the capitalist state. Tremendous social and economic changes will be required to drive them apart.

38. It is, of course, impossible to predict in advance the exact and detailed steps by which the labor party will be formed. It is sufficient to realize that it can be formed only under conditions in which the policy of class-collaboration has become an intolerable burden upon the labor movement. In such circumstances the spontaneous class struggle of the workers will continually tend to exceed the limits laid down by the labor bureaucracy, in the political as in the industrial field. The labor bureaucracy will certainly attempt to place itself at the head of a labor party development, and will probably succeed in this. It will be attempting at every stage to restrain the movement. The force pushing the labor bureaucracy to the left will be the actuality or the threat of rank and file opposition; the stronger is that opposition, the more radical will be the program of the labor party.

39. The role of socialists in this process is to be the firmest and most consistent opponents of both the capitalists and the labor bureaucrats. The socialist tendency within the working class must be prepared to take a leading role in the rank and file opposition to the union bureaucracy, and must be prepared to fight for the leadership of the left wing of a labor party on the basis of a clear and militant socialist political program. The ability and freedom of socialists to play this role in the future must be a guiding principle in the process of regroupment in the present.