

LEFT WING BULLETIN

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1957

Vol. 1

No. 5

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SPECIAL FEATURE:

IN DEFENSE OF THE
AMERICAN FORUM

See pages 37-55

NEW FORCES RALLY
TO LEFT WING

11 JOIN CAUCUS IN ONE MONTH

Ex-LYler Joins Caucus
SPer Supports Left Wing
3 Arrows Club Leader Joins
The Stones Declare Themselves

ARTICLES by: Shane Mage, George Larrabee, Tim
Wohlforth, Danny Freeman, Richard Kenny, & others

CARTOONS

LETTERS

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

In the Left Wing Bulletin
of the YSL, Vol 1 No 5 1957,
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number the one unnumbered page)
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"Missing" is in quotes because
it seems as if no actual pages
are missing ... just that the
page numbering is screwed up.

MB ^{March}
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LEFT-WING BULLETIN

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July, 1957

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EDITORIAL: DEAR COMRADE -- WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

(Editorial note: We print the following letter in lieu of an editorial as it sums up the course of the current faction fight in the YSL. As we enter the most crucial convention in the history of the YSL, we feel it is essential that every member of the YSL stop for a brief moment, pull himself out of the heat of the current situation, and think of the broad significance of the events that have transpired over the past six months or so.)

June 20, 1957

Dear Comrade,

As you have been unavoidably absent from the YSL during the entire factional struggle, Martin has suggested that he and I write you presenting in summary the two points of view facing the coming convention so that you can decide on this basis which side you support.

As I write you there is one thing that has become absolutely clear to every member of the YSL regardless of his or her point of view: There exists in the YSL a division of the most fundamental nature. This division transcends the immediate organizational issues that are inevitable in any factional struggle and is the result of the two factions moving in two basically different and mutually exclusive directions. In this letter I will deal with this fundamental political division as it has developed, and leave all the petty organizational squabbles to those small minds incapable of understanding what has transpired in the YSL over the last few months.

The present struggle found its origins in the proposal for unity with the SP, which was first brought up on the ISL PC way back before the Stalinist movement broke wide open. Its fundamental nature was a proposal for a solution

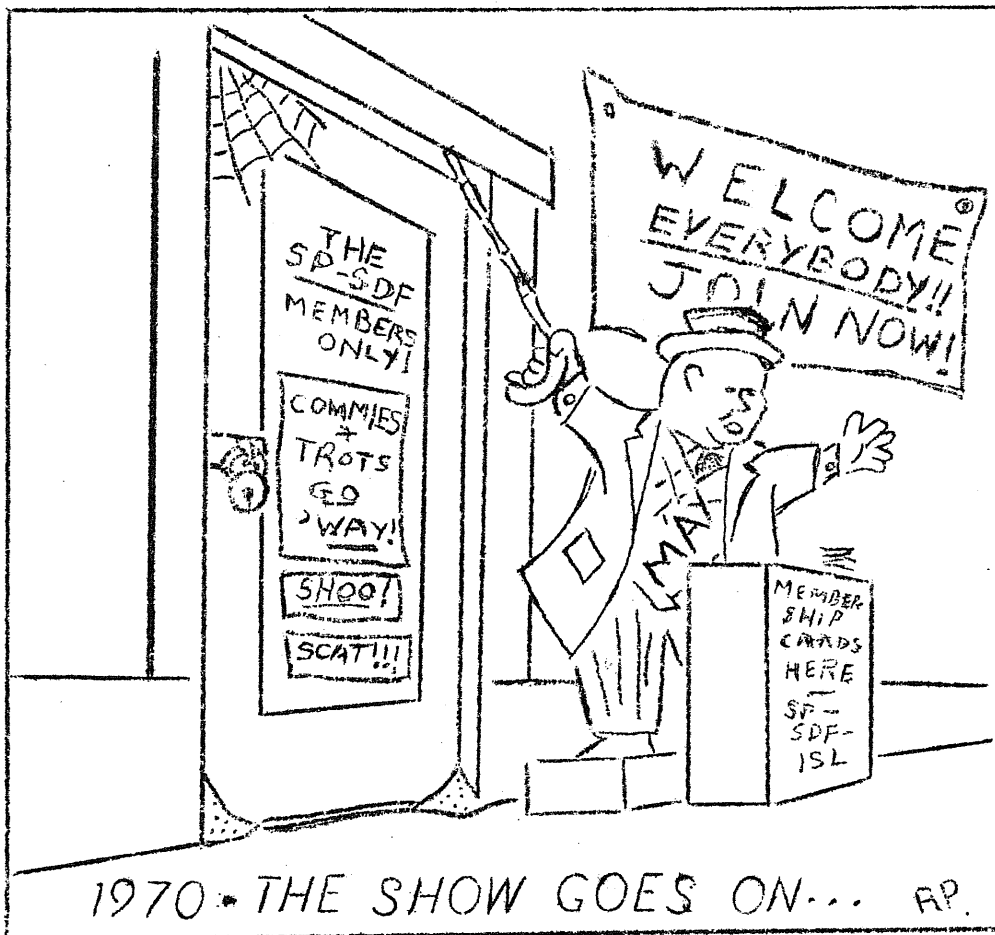
The LEFT-WING BULLETIN is published under the following section of the YSL Constitution:

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.

of the problems of the ISL, a solution which called for its dissolution into the SP. The YSL was faced with the new line at the September IEC plenum when it was placed in a matter-of-fact way within a document on another question -- on the electoral question. Then the YSL engaged in a lengthy dispute on the electoral question which, as everybody realized at the time, was the precursor of the present discussion. The issues involved in this discussion in many ways symbolized the present division. On the one hand the right wing called for support of the SP only in the election. It offered no real reason for this call other than its interest in wooing the SP. On the other hand the left wing called for the slogan: Vote Socialist -- Vote for any of the three Socialist Candidates. The right wing opposed this open and broad approach of stressing the fundamental issue of casting a vote against capitalism on the grounds that under no conditions could they consider a vote for the SWP. They rationalized this sectarian position by grossly distorting the positions of the SWP so much as to suggest that they were not even socialists. On the other hand they became quite eulogistic about the SP. Here we have an early hint of the direction of the right wing. They became hysterically critical of those on their left -- our fellow revolutionary socialists (regardless of our important differences) in the SWP, and overwhelmingly conciliatory toward those on our right.



A referendum was held on the issue and while the referendum was in progress the right wing proceeded to implement its position and support the SP candidates on a local level. They did so in an uncritical manner and on no occasion did either the ISL or YSL mention any criticisms it might have had of the pro-imperialist politics of Hoopes and Friedman. Further, the NAC threatened to take action against anyone who should support the SWP candidates. As it turned out, following the election (when it no longer mattered) the right wing was decisively defeated in the membership referendum.

At the January plenum the whole question of SP unity came up again. This time the lines were drawn and the right wing had succeeded in corralling a rather broad grouping behind the ISL position. The plenum occurred following the unity convention of the SP and SDF which united on the now famous "Memorandum of Understanding" which Comrade McReynolds has labelled "the worst, most shameful policies of the State Department and John Foster Dulles" and which called for full support to the U.S.'s "democratically established military agencies."

The position of the YSL right wing became crystal clear. There could be no doubt about it: they were for dissolution and entry into the SP-SDF on the basis of the "Memorandum of Understanding." Moreover they agreed to accept the right-wing leadership of the SP-SDF and to prevent any possible splits. This led to their adopting a policy that Gordon Haskell has described as being the "policemen of the left wing" in the SP-SDF.

This policy of the left wing clearly designated as capitulation to the social democracy. We pointed out that this would lead to further and further ideological retreats and finally to the liquidation of our tendency in any form. The events over the past few months have proved this contention to the hilt. Comrade Draper has in fact come out and labelled Shachtman's proposal as "systematic political adaptation to the social democracy." I can add little to this blunt statement.

The left wing, on the other hand, called for a broad regroupment of radical youth within the framework of the YSL (see Declaration on page 7 - Ed.). We felt that the YSL as it was founded, as a broad anti-capitalist and anti-Stalinist youth movement, could play a tremendously progressive role in regrouping America's radical youth and in offering itself as an alternative to those youth recently involved in the Stalinist youth movement.

We proceeded to organize a broad caucus on this basis. All of us had our differences and we still do have on the Russian question, the SWP, Hungary, etc. However we all agreed in rejecting the right wing's proposal of liquidation into the social democracy and in posing as a positive alternative the YSL as a basis for regroupment of America's radical youth.

At the time of the last plenum the atmosphere was poisoned by several organizational matters. A suppression of one of my documents had been committed by the right wing and in the course of defending this indefensible act some of the right-wingers actually suggested expulsion. Since that time lurking behind the entire discussion was the threat of some sort of organizational measure on the part of the right wing as a "solution" to the political problem they faced. We of the left wing have done our best to steer clear of such

organizational wrangles and to emphasise the political issues.

Over the ensuing months an interesting series of events occurred. On the one hand the right wing's approach to unity became narrower and narrower, and on the other hand the left wing opened itself up in a broader and broader way as the events developed. This has continued until there can be no doubt to any political person as to the nature of the contending forces and the direction of their movement. The right wing's development for the past few months can be discussed under three headings: ideological capitulation; flight away from genuine regroupment; and discipline, discipline, and more discipline.

In order to get an impression of the ideological capitulation of the joint ISL-YSL right wing, or what Draper calls having one's ideas "bent, fitted, filed, rubbed down, carved, trimmed or cold-storaged so as to ingratiate us as good dogs with the SP right wing", I will discuss two topics seemingly unrelated to the present unity controversy. Recently the right wing came out with an analysis of the Hungarian revolution. I attempted by a series of amendments to clarify certain vague sections and in this way to bring out clearly what the right wing was driving at. I soon found out. In order not to appear too revolutionary in the eyes of the social democracy, even in far-off Hungary, the right wing has retreated from a Leninist analysis of a revolutionary situation. I suggested that we call for workers democracy in Hungary, not just democracy in general. This was rejected. I suggested that we raise the overall tactical demand of all power to the workers councils. This was rejected. I suggested that we call for the formation of a revolutionary party in Hungary in order to lead the anti-Stalinist revolution to victory. This was rejected. I called for a direct condemnation of the call for military intervention by the UN. This was rejected. Thus we see that in order to remain "good dogs" with the social democrats the right wing refuses even in Hungary to raise the necessary revolutionary demands that would bring the working class to power.

Another example occurred more recently and is the most surprising of all. Noting the general trend of the movement of the ISL and YSL right wing, in one of my rash moments I suggested that soon these comrades would be in a position of supporting the Democratic Party. I must admit that I really did not believe that such a position would actually be proposed by the PC for the coming ISL convention. However I stand corrected. I have been guilty of underestimating the extent of the ideological flight to the right of the ISL. Once such a flight as this begins there is no stopping half way.

The recent PC resolution on the subject comes out against socialists running candidates against those endorsed by the labor bureaucracy -- i.e., against the Democrats. Its reasoning is much the same as that of the SDF, embodied in the "Memorandum of Understanding." The ISL feels we should not tell the workers, "Don't vote for Mr. Democrat", and certainly not, "Vote Socialist." Thus we see the extreme nature of the ISL's adaptation to the labor bureaucracy as well as to the social democracy. Questions that one thought were settled years ago are now being re-opened with the ISL adopting (and the YSL right wing always following) what Shachtman used to call "the warned over ashes from the cozy fireside of reformism, class collaborationism, and social patriotism."

In recent months, with the whole regroupment perspective opening up, the YSL right wing has been scurrying in the opposite direction. When approached by the SWP youth with a proposal of the entry of these youth into the YSL they flatly said no. This is contrary to the attitude adopted at the last convention of the YSL permitting dual membership in the SWP, and it certainly runs contrary to any claims of building a broad youth movement representing various tendencies within its ranks. In order to make the matter doubly sure, the right wing, on the basis of an impending resolution barring SWP youth, passed a notion on the NAC refusing the admittance of SWP youth before the convention. With this stroke the right wing made the convention resolution -- yet to be voted on by the membership -- binding in the pre-convention period. The net result of this was the turning down of the application of a YSL comrade's wife, who just happened to belong to the state capitalist tendency inside of the SWP and would have made a fine addition to our organization.

Secondly, the right wing seems to have developed an attitude of barring from membership all those it feels will support the left wing once in the YSL. It has turned down the membership of a former comrade of considerable standing, two comrades I recruited in Denver, and has recently tabled action on a comrade I recruited in Philadelphia (see statement p. 13). All signs point to a policy of closing the doors to all except supporters of the right wing. Harrington blatantly states that the right wing has been recruiting supporters to its point of view during the pre-convention period and is thus in a strong position.

However the crucial indication of the direction of the right wing is its attitude towards the American Forum for Socialist Education. This national forum group was set up by A. J. Muste, whom I am sure you know and remember for his address at the YSL founding convention. The purpose of this forum is to regularize the discussion that has been going on -- to ensure that it is conducted on an all-inclusive basis and to spread the forum discussions horizontally into new areas. The reaction of the ISL and YSL right wing to this promising development was identical with the right wing of the SP-SDF. They refused to participate in it because of its "stalinoid complexion" and other sectarian considerations. Thus in one corner facing the wall was the ISL and YSL right wing together with their pals of the SP-SDF right wing, and in the other corner was the entire radical public including the left wing of the SP-SDF. In reality, therefore, prior to the entry of the ISL and YSL right wing into the SP-SDF they lined up with the right wing of the SP-SDF against the SP-SDF left wing.

While Shachtman stood aside, the SP-SDF under the intense pressure of the witchhunt moved against its left wing and attempted to force its members off the Forum national committee. McReynolds capitulated but the rest held fast and in fact others in the SP-SDF joined the Forum in protest. I understand the SP-SDF right wing is right now bringing charges against the left wing, with Shachtman in tacit agreement with the right wing in its actions. It is not hard to understand why the left-wingers in the SP-SDF feel closer to the left wing of the YSL than the right. The left wing of the YSL came out in solid support of A. J. Muste and the Forum. As a step of defiance to the witchhunters and their friends in the social democracy, and with the full support of the left wing, I joined (as an individual) the Forum. Thus at the first public meeting of the Forum last week I addressed 600 people while the right wing was forced to do ineffectual "opponents" work of distribution and raising hostile questions from the floor.

The reality of the right wing's line is therefore becoming clearer every day. Instead of participating in a real regroupment of radical youth forces in America, it retreats from the regroupment discussion. Its "regroupment" proposal is a narrow "exclusive" deal with the right wing of the social democracy. It is even having troubles consummating this.

The Left Wing Caucus, on the other hand, stands for a broad, principled regroupment of all radical youth forces that stand in opposition to capitalism and Stalinism. We stand for full participation in the regroupment discussion and therefore offer our wholehearted support to the American Forum. As a result of this principled, yet non-sectarian approach, youth throughout the country are rallying to our proposals. Our caucus membership has nearly tripled since we started just a few months ago. It includes the most varied section of youth you can find anywhere -- anarchists, Shachtmanites, Cannonites, ex-LYers, Cochranites, state capitalists -- it includes fresh new elements, as well as those who have been in our movement for ten years or so. Further, we find support from all quarters -- from the SWP youth, from many ex-LYers, from supporters of the American Socialist, and even from SP and YPSL members (see p.²⁹ - Ed.).

Out of fear of the growing strength and influence of the Left Wing within the ranks of the YSL, and the growing respect for it in the eyes of the general radical public, the Right Wing responded with -- discipline, discipline, and more discipline. I do not intend to go into a tedious explanation of the charges and counter-charges. These are tertiary questions. Of great importance, however, is the general approach and tenor of these disciplinary threats. The YSL Right Wing is developing a concept of a tight, disciplined youth movement whose membership is tied to the ISL and whose only goal is its own liquidation into the SP-SDF. Any resistance to this line must be overcome, by expulsions if necessary. At present the Right Wing is preparing a long dossier aimed at my expulsion. It is also preparing constitutional and other changes which will make it impossible for the left wing to present its views in public. It also will bar dual membership or relations with the SWP. Furthermore it will prevent the recruitment to the YSL of any who support the left wing. By this series of moves the right wing intends either to force out the left wing, representing at least a quarter of the membership, or force it to capitulate in such a way that it in reality will not exist. Obviously no one in the left wing has any intention of capitulating, and we all look upon this combined action against myself and a general "leninist" tightening of the organization as the declaration of a de facto expulsion. Such a de facto expulsion will be followed shortly by a de jure one, we are convinced. At the coming convention we on our part will do all in our power to prevent such a rupture in the YSL.

The choice posed before you is a fundamental one: Either you solidarize yourself with the right wing, which is retreating from revolutionary socialism and adapting its ideology and organizational perspectives to the social democracy, or you solidarize yourself with the left wing, which is determined to build a strong militant and broad radical youth movement, opposed to both reformism and Stalinism, which can attract youth from the former Stalinist youth movement as well as the fresh forces now entering the radical scene. It is with the left wing that the future of revolutionary socialism lies.

Fraternally,
Tim Wohlforth
Member NAC, Secretary, Left-
Wing Caucus.

YSL LEFT-WING DECLARATION

The National Executive Committee has adopted a resolution calling for unity with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. This action calls into question the continued existence of the YSL as an independent organization of revolutionary socialist youth.

The NEC resolution states that it is for unity on the basis of the present political program of the SP-SDF. This program is reactionary and anti-socialist. In world politics the SP-SDF supports U.S. imperialism and its basic policies. In American politics the SP-SDF supports the labor bureaucracy and its alliance with the Democratic Party.

Genuine democratic socialism has nothing in common with these policies. On the contrary, the socialist movement can be built only by political struggle against the class-collaborationist and pro-imperialist politics of the social-democracy.

If the YSL unites with the SP-SDF it will be abandoning this struggle -- as is already shown by the refusal of the YSL national leadership to criticize the SP-SDF in public, and by the refusal of this national leadership to attempt to recruit members from the SP-SDF into our organization.

We are members of the YSL because we want to assist in the formation of a revolutionary democratic socialist youth movement in the U.S. We are not sectarians. We are willing to unite with all socialist-minded youth on the basis of the minimum program of genuine socialism: independent political action of the working class and the oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world, against both Stalinist and capitalist oppressors.

We consider that the basic question posed by the proposal for unity with the SP-SDF is: either to build the YSL on a socialist political basis or to liquidate the YSL in its present form on the basis of the anti-socialist politics of the SP-SDF.

We believe that this is a question of such vital importance that it is our duty to form a caucus in order to present our views to the members of the League and to save the socialist youth movement from the political disaster of the YSL liquidating itself into the SP-SDF.

We call on all members of the YSL who remain committed to building a real socialist youth movement here, in America, and now, in 1957, to join with us in this undertaking.

Signed:

LEFT WING CAUCUS NOW HAS 34 MEMBERS!

11 JOINED IN ONE MONTH!

The following 34 present or pending members of the YSL are now members of the Left-Wing Caucus. The eleven new members of the caucus, who have joined in the last month, are designated by an asterisk. Statements of members upon joining the caucus appear on the pages following this section.

New York Unit

Tim Wohlforth, IAC, IEC, former member New York Exec.
Danny Freeman
Sharon Gold (see page 11)
Martha Wohlforth, former member New York Exec.
* George Larrabee (see page 21)
* Russ Jones (see page 10)

Philadelphia

* Arthur F Chairman Three Arrows Club, Temple University (see p. 13)

Dayton Area Unit

Shane Mage, IEC
Judy Mage, IEC Alternate
Herschel Kaninsky
John L.

Chicago Unit

Scott Arden, IEC Alternate, Former YSL National Secretary
John Worth
Margaret Collins
* Frank A. Basch (see page 11)
* Bill Stone, IEC Alternate (see page 15)
* Jane Stone (see page 15)
* Jacki Booth (see page 12)

Denver

* Norman H.
* Mary Jane H.

(Continued on Following Page)

Berkeley Young Socialist Club, YSL

Jin Robertson, Chairman, former NEC member
Roger Plumb, Vice-chairman
Bill Durand, former NEC alternate
Stan Larssen
A. Thorstein
Gerard Abel
B. Gibetsky
Emily Cavalli
* Richard Kenny (see page 25)

San Francisco Young Socialist Club, YSL

Marion Syrek, Jr., provisional chairman
Dave Carleton
Alex Kitson
* Tony Steffen

Los Angeles Unit

Jerry Friedman

STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE LEFT WING CAUCUS

After attending several meetings of the YSL and hearing the viewpoints of the right wing and the left wing, I have decided that the Left-Wing Caucus has the correct approach to socialist youth regroupment. Knowing the direction of the right wing of the YSL, and knowing the party it is trying to enter, I cannot lend my support to the right wing and I shall give ample reason for this position.

1. The Socialist (?) Party does not defend the principles of socialism, economically, politically, or philosophically.

2. The Socialist (?) Party is run by dictatorial bureaucrats who have sold their socialist heritage for so-called capitalist respectability and compromise.

I have therefore decided to join and give my full support to the Left-Wing Caucus.

— Russell Jones, NYC

(More statements on following pages)

The right wing's proposal to regroup "democratic socialists" within the SP-SDF should cause all serious socialists to pause and take a long look at the SP-SDF. The SP-SDF is a tight right-wing organization; their attitude towards regroupment is not at all that of an all-inclusive party. The whole history of the SP since the time of the Russian Revolution has been that of expelling all left-wing tendencies whenever they threatened the rule of the right.

The whole regroupment proposition of the right wing then comes into question. Do we want a regroupment consisting only of what the SP-SDF calls "democratic socialists" (or in franker moments "social democrats")? Let's take a good look at these so-called "democrats." The SP-SDF speaks for "democracy" by speaking for American Imperialism. They make it quite clear in the "Memorandum of Understanding" that they support NATO troops to protect that other euphemism, the "free world." If support of the imperialist and reactionary aims of capitalism is synonymous with "democracy" according to the SP-SDF then I, for one, want no part of this party.

To say that the SP-SDF supports capitalism simply because of their fear of Stalinism is to be completely naive. The SP-SDF is not new to politics. It is its lack of a revolutionary program which has led them to become a right-wing social-democratic sect. And it is the YSL Right Wing's lack of a revolutionary program that has led it to chase after the SP-SDF and become social democrats in the process.

Therefore I believe that the Left-Wing Caucus has the only program for a viable regrouping of socialist youth -- a program of opposition to both capitalism and Stalinism. It is for these reasons that I have been actively participating in the Left Wing of the YSL these past few months.

-- Sharon Gold, NYC

I agree with the YSL Left-Wing Declaration. I also find the SP-SDF views on the American Forum and the YSL Right Wing's views on the American Forum and on membership in YSL of SWPers irreconcilable with their views on a broad "Debsian" party and broad socialist youth organization. I intend to build the YSL to be a true socialist youth league.

-- Frank A. Basch, Chicago

(Further statements and articles supporting the
Left-Wing Caucus appear on following pages.)

Pending my appeal for membership in the YSL to the National Convention in July, I wish to state here my agreement with the position taken by the Left-Wing Caucus in the dispute on regroupment. I am in agreement with the basic premises of YSL membership, as stated in the YSL Constitution; I wish to help build a broad, inclusive youth organization.

Since the most important need on the left is unity on a sound, even if minimal, basis of socialist politics, the worst thing that any socialist could do would be to unite with, or join, another organization for the sole purpose of maneuvering, or disrupting the work of that organization. Nothing could hurt my own party, the SWP, more than to work, while claiming to build the YSL, for its disruption. This is just common sense.

I agree with the Left Wing's attitude toward socialist regroupment, particularly in the youth field, because I feel that it best expresses the healthy desire of socialist youth to avoid the hostility and fragmentation on the left. I do not wish to conceal my political differences -- even where they exist with members of the Left Wing -- but insist that the regroupment of socialists will facilitate more than anything else the resolution of these differences in a progressive fashion.

As I said at the beginning, I agree with this as the basic premise of YSL membership. I do not think, however, that this end can be accomplished through entry into the SP-SDF.

-- Jacki Booth, Chicago

AN APPEAL FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE YSL*

From Arthur F
Chairman, Three Arrows Club
Temple University, Philadelphia

To the National Action Committee, YSL:

On Saturday, June 8, I received the harrowing information that, contrary to my impression otherwise, I never submitted an application for membership (albeit verbally) and never received progress reports on the possible acceptance of my application from the Philadelphia Organizing Committee of the YSL. I was really nonplussed and hoped that this action was not part of a conscious attempt on the part of the YSL to keep out all applicants whose sympathies lie with the Left-Wing Caucus. Incidentally, if this treatment of my application is not a conscious attempt at exclusion, then it is undeniably a case of gross negligence on the part of those who are supposed to be organizing a nationwide socialist youth movement ... a movement whose generation is charged with the task of struggling for the socialist reconstruction of society.

In any event, although I did apply several months ago to the Philadelphia Organizing Committee of the YSL, I am hereby formally applying directly to the NAC of the YSL for immediate admission to the YSL. I understand that since there is no unit in Philadelphia the NAC has the final decision in this matter. I know of several other persons in the area who will join a Philadelphia unit of the YSL if they learn that my application has been accepted. They are not willing to join the YSL on the narrow basis on which it has been functioning in Philadelphia, but the acceptance of my application would indicate to them the broad nature of the YSL.

I have been following the YSL closely for at least the past year. When the Philadelphia organizing committee set up its activities, I was in constant and close contact with that committee, attending, without exception to my knowledge, every bi-weekly political discussion program offered as well as informal discussion at which my membership in the YSL was strongly urged.

The past year has been one of political development for me to the point where, when the question of membership was first posed to me, I could not see the necessity or urgency for joining. I have not had a history of joining organizations; in fact I have never before submitted an application to a

* Editorial note: After waiting for months to have his application acted on by the YSL, Comrade Arthur's application finally reached the NAC on June 19. The right wing responded with haste to ... table the application. If this application is actually turned down by the NAC, it will fit into the pattern of excluding supporters of the left wing. This pattern has so far affected Elner Simms, a long-time member of the YSL and not even a member of the Left-Wing Caucus, but a person who has had a history of struggle against the right wing. Also two fine Denver comrades have been turned down, as has the application of a YSL comrade's wife who is a member of the SWP.

political tendency of any sort. Thus, something must have occurred to bring about this application for membership.

My politics are well known to the Philadelphia organizing committee. I am in basic agreement with those who characterize the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state and who advocate the unconditional defense of that state against imperialism while standing with the Soviet workers in firm opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy. There are, of course, many other important points which some might think should be mentioned in order to give an idea of my thinking. However, the position of an individual on the Russian question -- as I have recently heard Max Shachtman declare (and I quite agree) -- demarcates, if only in an over-simplified manner, the basic politics of that individual.

I mentioned that something must have occurred to bring about an unprecedented application for membership in a radical organization. The well-known emergence of the Left-Wing Caucus is that occurrence. That is, a left wing which calls for opening the doors of the YSL to all revolutionary socialist youth.

I am interested in the YSL as the prospective center of a regroupment of socialist youth forces in this country -- not a regroupment where you take two sticks from one pot, a couple from another, and so on, then put these in a single pot which contains the same sticks that you started with except now they are in one place. The perspective is broader than that. It concerns the layers of untapped youth which could be reached by such an organization as the one proposed. I think that the work I have done on the Temple campus for the past year or so is enough to convince me that such youth are not mere wishful thinking. Furthermore, to ignore what used to be considered Stalinist youth in a period where the reception by these youth of anti-Stalinist revolutionary ideas has a greater chance than ever before is a criminal error. Thus the organization should be a broad one that can appeal to the former Stalinist youth and to the new elements on campus.

That the YSL is not what I want it to be is self-evident. I shall not attempt an indictment of YSL policy, since that is not called for; my basic views on that policy are partially embodied in the resolutions and proposals of the Left-Wing Caucus.

I may be asked whether loyalty to an organization can possibly flow from such an outlook at the inception of membership. But let's put it another way: Cannot the majority's loyalty to the YSL be questioned, should it screen out minority applicants in defiance of its purpose of building the organization? Thus I feel my solidarity from the start with the Left Wing is a principled position, when in fact I see it as the viable section of the YSL, a group with ideas that have a significant perspective, and a group to which I am happy to offer my support and services.

-- June 16, 1957

WHICH SIDE WE ARE ON

by Bill and Jane Stone

Much of the sound and fury of this pre-convention discussion has not been unduly charged with significance, yet important points have emerged. Whatever minor differences exist in the majority leadership, this leadership has assembled together its heads and emerged with the proposal to put all its eggs in one basket--that tradition bound, made in U.S.A. receptacle, the SP-SDF. Comrade Arlon, one of these realists of the Ashcan School, has presented a "Draft Special Resolution" which apparently has managed to achieve some hitherto non-existent status--that of "pending (majority) resolution." Although this status is apparently one which the NAC finds difficult to distinguish from that merited by a resolution passed by a convention, Arlon's document certainly deserves special recognition; it clearly spells out the majority perspective. He proposes, "The Young Socialist League regards the unification of democratic socialists as its primary activity in the period following this convention . . . 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." This resolution clearly illustrates the majority position that unity with the SP-SDF is a consummation devoutly to be wished--and worked for at any cost. Faced with a tactic apotheosized into a universal panacea, those who attempt to vote with their feet by dragging them, while staying on the bandwagon, will be looking at bloody ankles. Having no other perspective but this unity, the leadership will be in no position to place any demands upon the SP-SDF; feeble hopes couched in such phrases as "as much autonomy as possible" must remain wistful sighs of aspiration. For the fact is, the YSL majority, following the lead of the played out ISL, has developed a line by which they can only lower themselves into the well of social democratic comradeship. It is as no mere maneuver, but rather a considered evaluation of the role of our tendency in this period, that the Pied Pipers march us "Column Right." If entry into the SP-SDF is the only indicated course, it is obviously not of prime importance how it is pursued. Treading the only path of righteousness, we must enter the portals (hopefully neglecting to abandon hope) however strait the gate. With such commitments, the raising of a series of qualifying democratic demands for unity is as reasonable as bluffing at slow-down poker.

The right wing, then, stands for unity. In order to achieve it with a minimum of friction, they are willing to jettison the ballast of the left wing and careen forward with an organization of streamlined singlemindedness. To coin a phrase, the situation has polarized. It has become increasingly impossible to play a "centrist" role. In Chicago, for example, the majority has assembled a phalanx through the raised factional shields of which few darts of objective reason can pierce. We cite as one symptomatic instance the case of Elmer Simms. After receiving the NAC position rejecting Simms' application for membership, and Comrade Tim's protest against its action, the Chicago unit adopted a position supporting the NAC. The Chicago motion was quoted in the NAC minutes; it was written by one of the present writers. The final sentence of his proposed statement was deleted by factional vote. It called merely for a simple democratic courtesy. As Comrade Simms had applied for membership before the deadline of convention franchise, it requested that should he, upon

further consideration, be admitted to the YSL, he be granted a vote for delegates. A small matter perhaps, but one which helped to convince us that it was the final hour when each must stand in his place. In determining our place we have had to cut through a number of secondary considerations in order to base ourselves on the fundamental politics involved.

Foremost among these secondary considerations are our objections to aspects of the functioning of the Left Wing Caucus. We have already indicated our opposition to admitting Simms into the YSL. This is but one of the Left Wing's tactics which we feel to be incorrect. They have insistently referred to the undemocratic nature and actions of the majority leadership. Although this insistence is not totally unjustified, it has been, at least, overdone. We reject also much of the polemical terminology introduced by the Left Wing, notably the expression "State Department socialism." This expression involves an inexact understanding of both the right wing and the State Department; in any case it does little to further the discussion. Although the LWC as a whole has not taken a position on national stalinism, the Chinese Revolution, etc., we regret, rather than ignore, the fact that the impetus for the caucus' formation came, in large measure from comrades whose positions on these issues we feel to be erroneous. Equally to be recognized and deplored are the illusions which certain Left Wingers hold regarding the SWP. In spite of the importance given to this issue by the majority (and the SWP) an examination of the facts shows that the LWC as a whole is neither interested in being, nor likely to become, in the clever phrase of the Philadelphia comrades, Cannon fodder. Any ambiguity on this question, in so far as it is present in the Caucus, we shall attempt to see removed.

Were purely tactical considerations involved, these objections to the LWC would assume greater importance. The majority orientation, however, while motivated by a variety of bases, involves an essential reevaluation of socialist perspectives. Albeit a certain concatenation of circumstances (the situation in the SP-SDF, pressures of the witch-hunt, the breaking up of the stalinist movement, etc.), has called into being this orientation, its significance and implication transcend the immediacies of the quotidian struggle. It is unfortunate, if understandable, that the majority has seen fit to introduce their orientation with little concern for its real implications. Optimistic guesses as to the hundreds or thousands of impatient ex's and vague unaffiliated radicals that may be trembling with second-hand maidenly desires for the SP-SDF should only Comrade Shactman be thrown in with the dowery, oceanically inappropriate analogies with the British Labor Party, vivid reminiscences dredged from history books as to the vitality of the Debsian tradition, or stupendously shrewd stethoscopic observations which conclude that the American working class is anti-stalinist, offer an inadequate substitute for real political analysis. Though sketchy, the Meier-Berg document must be welcomed as one of the few attempts to deal with any of the more fundamental questions. It would be unfair to give it less than the extended discussion which we might undertake had we but space enough and time; as it is, we will discuss some of the more immediate and frequent majority arguments.

Given the generally demoralized nature of the American left and its consequent search for some form of renovation, it would be naive to assume that the current regroupment discussions have been caused only by the situation in the CP. Nevertheless, the stalinists are the single most important factor in these discussions. The majority's attention to the stalinists reduces to a determination not to provide them with a "half-way house" and a statement that a good segment of them are also seeking an opening to the right. In so far as this latter is true, it contradicts the former; for the search of many stalin-

ists and stalinoids for an opening to the right and a breaking out of isolation is difficult to satiate short of activity in a mass movement or the Democratic Party. The SP-SDF is not likely to be a very attractive magnet for those stalinist types interested in a mass arena. Of course the comrades mean by half-way house one which is neither stalinist nor anti-stalinist; their mansion is high in the pure air, and they have no intention of assisting any stalinist in ascending to its heights. Though the way of the penitent pilgrim be arduous, the Celestial City of the SP-SDF-ISL-YSL awaits him. Although we should have no interest in providing any cover for stalinist politics, a refusal to extend ourselves even to the extent of participating in the ASFE is hardly an approach calculated to give us any influential role in furthering the development of true socialist politics among the stalinists and their sympathizers. But compared with the purity of their anti-stalinism this role is of no significance to the majority. This above all, the majority advises, to thine anti-stalinism be true, and it must follow as the hacks the line, thou canst not then be necessarily unattractive to the working class. If the problem were really a choice between attracting the working class or dissident stalinists, the choice would not be difficult. But if anyone seriously believes that this is the case, we can only advise him that there is a difference in ripeness involved. A policy which utilizes a principle, even as correct and necessary a principle as anti-stalinism, as a justification for avoiding meaningful and fruitful political activity, can only be described as sectarian. The majority's attitude, exemplified by its position regarding the Muste Forum, well deserves this description.

Having accused the majority of sectarianism, it would be standard operating procedure for us to reverse the proverbial coin. As much as we would like to do this, it would be unfair, for they can only be termed would-be opportunists. Whatever perhaps opportunistic positions they and their co-thinkers in the ISL have taken, such as their line on the labor probe, their strategical orientation cannot be so termed, for it lacks a foundation in reality. It would be an actually opportunistic move, and one based on an extremely mechanical conception of historical development, for a third camp socialist tendency to quite subordinate its politics in order to influence a segment of labor toward the development of a labor party. While the labor party slogan retains its validity, it should not assume undisputed precedence in determining socialist functioning. But however much the majority might like to think that their unity with the social democracy would increase significantly their influence on the labor movement, there is as little reason as there has been supporting argumentation to cause anyone to see this influence extending beyond that little which the social democracy already enjoys with the labor bureaucracy. This is another instance of the majority's confusing strategy and tactics through a magnification of the latter caused by an unwillingness to view the objective situation realistically. It is a hope born of despair.

From such a hope arises the majority's appraisal of the SP-SDF. We refrain from references to capitulation, the comfort of avoiding the subversive list, the general import of social pressures, etc., but something other than realism must be operative in the majority's confusion of a sanctuary with an arena. In selecting the SP-SDF as a center for socialist regroupment, the majority resolution speaks of that party's suitability for "a variety of reasons." Its arguments are based on "the general character of the SP." The SP is "by tradition and fact" broad and stands for "socialism in general," and so, if we enter, can serve as "a pole of attraction around which many

could rally." "Because of its name, tradition, and general character" the SP-SDF is in this key position. As there is nothing particularly catchy or euphonious about the title Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation, we may assume that its name is a subpoint under tradition or history. Regarding this tradition and history many good and bad things may be said. The good things are more "historical" than the bad. Debs belonged to the SP. The SLP can claim DeLeon (an admirable figure in many ways in our opinion and Lenin's), the IWW can claim Bill Haywood and Joe Hill, and the Republicans, Lincoln. Auld lyne syne apart, can anyone seriously claim that a tradition of free democratic discussion and all-inclusiveness is the tradition of the SP? The majority comrades apparently have an imperfect understanding of the situation within the SP even during the days of Debs. It was not just "the party of Debs." In spite of his strong personal appeal to the rank and file and voters, he functioned in a somewhat tangential relation (involving serious factional struggle) to the real structure of power in the party. We ask the majority comrades if the left wing of the old SP should have been willing to "freeze their politics" and not have formed the Communist Party? In any case, if this Debsian tradition has continued to be significantly operative in the SP, why is that party what it is today? It would seem that we are being presented with a modified IKD approach which rejects the historical experiences of the last forty years to return to a pre-1918 situation in which it is hoped there may be found some animation which has been suspended. The unfortunate fact is that the American working class in general has no particular concern today with the Socialist Party, whatever may be its tradition. Those people whom we are likely to attract will be attracted, we might hope, through a concern with present politics rather than past glories. While it is not true that the SP stands for "socialism in general" (whatever the hell this means), a proposal of merger with another sect is qualitatively different than forming a Politics Club. Achieving socialist regroupment is a process as difficult as it is desirable. It is not to be accomplished through the easy solution of dissolution and support of a recruiting drive of any of the existing sects, especially when that sect is extremely dubious about accepting recruits. We have seen no evidence to convince us that other socialist tendencies share the YSL majority's enthusiasm for the SP-SDF. Indeed, the SP-SDF's own left wing seems to have some difference with our majority in approach to the regroupment question. If we are sincerely interested regroupment, rather than in gaining respectability, we must avoid an orientation that at best leads to a premature crystallization of the presently fluid situation on the American left, and at worst, leads to an unjustified stifling of our third camp politics.

For all of our belief in the validity of these politics, we take no sectarian approach. It is true that the difficulties facing the American socialist movement today cannot be solved by any mere realignment of existing radicals. Nevertheless the current "objective situation" offers hopeful possibilities for a lessening of the fragmentation of the left and for broadening and strengthening our movement. The crisis of world stalinism is the primary cause of the presently fluid state of the American left in which much discussion of regroupment is taking place. The YSL, broad in nature and essentially the only socialist youth organization in the field, is in an ideal position to gain from this situation. In order to do this, however, it must be willing to sincerely explore various possibilities such as the AFSE. Any perspective which finds in one of the existing sects a panacea is to be rejected. For this reason we oppose the majority position; to its orientation to the right, we counterpose a policy of continuing to build the YSL and increasing our efforts to achieve

a regroupment on the left.

We are told that this perspective, that of the Left Wing, is impractical; it would make of our organization a raiding ground that would be most likely to fall victim to the SWP. It is true that this perspective offers difficulties. Any extended existence of a youth group without adult support is as undesirable as it is impractical. The situation is not conceived of as a permanent one, however. Various possible practical solutions could be achieved, one of which is suggested by the resolution of the Newark comrades. In any case, impractical as it may be, we should not barter our politics for some office space and a page in a newspaper. The essential opposition to this orientation, however, is one which is also applicable to any form of regroupment. If the majority comrades really believe that it is impossible for various tendencies to function together in a single organization with a common minimal program acting not as commandos, we must doubt the sincerity of their belief in the feasibility of any regroupment. Surely the YSL is in at least as favorable position as a "pole of attraction" in the youth field as the SP-SDF is in the adult.

We find ourselves, then, in fundamental agreement with the Left Wing Caucus. In joining them at this time we have in mind two objects. We wish, first of all, to do what we can to keep the YSL sufficiently broad and non-monolithic in order that a split may be avoided; and secondly, we wish to influence the LWC to act responsibly and to resist SWP blandishments.

Comrades, whatever notes of levity may have inadvertently crept into the preceding, we wish to emphasize the seriousness which determines our position. Claiming by right of a combined total of some eighteen years in the radical movement some small share of what Comrade Harris refers to as the YSL tradition, we feel we are not motivated by any infantile leftism in taking our stand. Because of our desire for socialist regroupment and our confidence in revolutionary third camp politics, we join the Left Wing Caucus.

LEFT UNITY AS A WEAPON AGAINST PHONEY SOCIALISM

By George Larrabee
Former member, Labor Youth League

The position of the Left Wing Caucus seems to me to be the most intelligent example of the approach needed in the contemporary struggle for socialism.

In order to bring to bear the fullest amount of militant socialist pressure against reaction, the two "socialist" camps that stand as stumbling blocks in this fight must be eliminated. One is "Stalinism", which is a system of collectivist bureaucracies that put across deals with capitalism once having gained state power, and the other is "yellow socialism", better known as "social democracy" (which I think is too good a name for these jackals), which serves as a leftish anchor of out-and-out bourgeois politics.

Only a left that rejects totalitarianism and imperialism under any name, whether committed by the Mollets or Khrushchevs, can have a future in this tyrant and imperialist-scarred world. Only a left that fully embraces democracy (without using "democracy" to capitulate to the reformists) can attract new people, the best, most sensitive, people, for the future struggles. These tenets should not be given up as even a temporary tactic.

To delay for tactical reasons in the fight against Yellow Socialism and Stalinism is to prolong the misery of the world. Stalinism and reformism are historically doomed because they act as a brake on progress, but they are dying all too slowly. This is the crime of those who orient towards the SP-SDF as a "more advantageous" position from which to fight capitalism. Crawling and kissing Norman Thomas' feet is no way to advance the welfare of mankind.

But I realize at this time that there is no stopping the Shachtmanite Right Wing of the YSL from its SP surrender. I can only ask that those with independent minds save their integrity. The SWP-ISL debate on the subject has become futile and pointless, and I urge both sides to go ahead with the struggle against capitalism and waste no more energy on "approaches" to regroupment. The SWP should seek organic unity with the Socialist Union of America and of course the left wing of the Communist Party. It should not conduct membership raids but instead try to bring about organizational unifications as discussions develop to make them possible.

Some say that the American Socialist and Monthly Review forces are tending in an SP direction like the ISL and the YSL Right Wing. I know of no evidence of this and it seems to be mainly wishful thinking. While we should argue now against any such capitulation, it would be wasteful to haggle on if such a capitulation did come to fruition. An SP-SDF that includes "A.S." and "M.R." forces as well as the ISL will have become a reformist regroupment because of the present capitalist prosperity that is temporarily with us. Conversely, when the economy dips and we come into a period of mass strikes and demonstrations, these one-time radical elements will find themselves being pulled leftward again, and elements within a Menshevik type party made up of the SP-SDF, ISL, and SUA will have more in common with a Bolshevik type party made up of the former Progressive Party, the former ALP, the SWP, and left Communists. Thereupon the regroupment discussion will be reopened for a united Marxist party once more.

I was, in a way, relieved when the SP merged with the SDF. This removed the SP's independence and took it off the ballot in the future. Now only the SLP remains on the ballot to make the socialist cause look foolish.

I was a Stalinist and belonged to a couple of Stalinist organizations (now dissolved) until the 20th Congress opened one eye and the Poznan and Hungarian revolts opened the other. This does not mean that I have become a Leon Trotsky Fan Club sectarian or a liberal Gatesite. I favor all socialist forces (the SP-SDF and Stalinists will obligingly refuse to join) coming together around a suitable program in a common party, a "Marxist-Leninist Debs" type party. Such a party should run its own independent candidates in some selected areas and support other socialist candidates in other areas. What I particularly see a need for at this time is an independent young workers' and students' movement, with no particular adult party or group being the "big cheese" over such a movement.

The healthy elements still left in the Stalinist and reformist camps will be attracted to a militant, united Marxist party and independent youth league whereas they will hardly even hear about a Norman Thomas-type SP-SDF-ISL, which at best promises to become an anti-Communist parlor pink association. Many in these camps will drift away and become apolitical if some kind of militant, principled, but broad and non-sectarian left party does not appear soon. Any hard-core Stalinists and reformists who will join the united party will have no influence because of their appallingly inferior ideologies. But it is crucial that this united party be formed, for only that type of party will have the gathered experience and outlook needed to defeat Stalinism and yellow socialism.

The proposal of the SWP youth group, the AYS, in the pages of the Militant, to join with the YSL in outright organic unity, completely allowing the YSL the unhindered position of being the country's only national youth group, is the most positive regroupment move to date, even more so than the unity committees and forums that have been set up. The SWP itself should make similar proposals in regard to the SUA and so forth. I recommend that the AYS flatly disassociate itself from any past statement of any SWP spokesman regarding the "destruction of the Shachtmanite youth" or some such phrase, and disavow any intention of membership raiding for the SWP, in order to remove from the discussion any ethical-sounding objections the Right Wing might make.

In the adult field, I feel that there is little genuine feeling for real unity among the party leaders. Most of these machine bureaucrats are out to rescue their positions, to weather the regroupment discussion period and save their petty careers. But the youth movement has not had a chance, except in the Right Wing of the YSL, to develop a petty bureaucracy calloused by years of duelling in the twilight zone of sectarian politics.

That is why I look for genuine unity to the youth -- the fresh, idealistic, perhaps romantic, but at least sincere, youth. This is the element I think will exert the independent pressure needed to fuse all revolutionaries from the Bevanite and Nenni socialists, the newly anti-Stalinist Communists, and so on, over to the Trotsky cultists, into a Fourth International that will be capable of the necessary tasks ahead ... the establishing of physical links and true solidarity with the Soviet orbit revolutionary working classes, the bringing of democratic socialism to Europe via the democratization and de-bureaucratization of the mass Social-Democratic and Communist parties in Europe,

and the establishment of a militant labor party in the United States, the body blow needed to stagger American imperialism and bring the whole world capitalist order tumbling down.

Once the phoney socialisms, Reformism and Stalinism (two forms of left-wing party machine degeneration) have been driven back, vast opportunities will be opened. I think that narrow, Trotskyite parties are incapable of this task. What is needed is a wide pooling of anti-Yellow Socialist, anti-Stalinist experience and tendencies, a collective bringing together into one great fist the battering ram of democratic revolutionary socialism. This should be the aim of the regroupment discussions.

ON THE MATTER OF A STATEMENT TO THE LEFT WING BULLETIN

By Richard Kenny

I've devoted some thought to making a statement to the LWB and did some reading in the two YSRs I have and the three LWBs.

You see, the Berkeley unit is, in all honesty, unusual among units of the YSL and, not having been around, I can not trust that all is the same elsewhere. In effect I find that I am in accord with the Left Wing Caucus. There's no quibble about how Things Are Going To Be Done, despite the espousal of the Cause of the Third/Labor Party by numerous comrades; of course I would glee if all of you went out and did form a really red hot labor party. Why, I'd even vote for it. After all, with a labor party in, even though it would sell the workers out to the bosses as always, the radical climate would be a bit easier to take. Besides, if a labor party capitulates to the bourgeoisie, the workers will no doubt be a bit more revolutionary; at least they'll be bound to be more revolutionary than right now.

However, to the YSL. I joined the YSL, not because I sensed in it the realization of what I wanted in the way of a revolutionary party, but rather because it was easier to take than any other one around. The SWPers have a heavy-handed attitude, and are getting an SLP tendency; the SLP is still living in the days before World War I; and so on. The anarchists here are just the talktalktalk kind and while entertainingly sociable on occasion, certainly aren't fellow barricade builders. The Wobblies, though I'm nearer to them than anyone else around here politically, or non-politically, are living in the past, fighting over the 1905 convention, etc., over and over again. I realize that I am, by virtue of my isolation, very much in the Know-Nothing category re radical politics. So since I like to do a little more than read books, and am the sort who likes to get myself used to the water before really swimming around in it, I joined the YSL.

In Berkeley (what it is elsewhere I don't know) I found myself almost immediately oriented to the LWC. One thing which might have cinched this later on was the lack of YSRs around here and the generous number of LWBs available, the reason being, rather than a possible suppression of the mags, the fact that whoever sent them out sent a short supply to this unit. If there ever were any doubts in my mind about the left or the right, however, the impression gathered from the rightists personally, and Bogdan Denitch in particular, made up my mind for me. Ah, Bogdan and the Muste forum: someone who just wandered in and didn't know B.D. and missed the introductory remarks might've thought that someone was sending him around on tour, using a reverse tactic to drive everyone stampeding into the LWC. I arrived late to one meeting, but that didn't matter, since as soon as I got off the bus, I heard Mr. Denitch and felt faintly through the soles of my shoes subsonic vibrations of his voice. Perhaps he had had his after-dinner shot of diacetylmorphinehydrochloride or another, since the logic he utilized in answering Wohlforth's commentary on reactions from various quarters on the Muste forum was from nowhere. The AFSE is such a wringing red front that ol' Wm. Z. himself is trying to pull Blumberg off since I guess Foster doesn't want his boy to get a bad name; I mean with actually being on the same platform with those renegade 2nd Internationalists, who, brave souls, in 1911 (or so) were all against W A R but who, three or so years later, forgot about all that and proved no better than

any other capitalist simulator when it came to resisting the desires of the entrenched bourgeoisie. This may well be true -- at least I note that the SP-SDF wasn't too far behind the N.Y. Times, Daily News, Chicago Tribune, and other Lords of the Press in denouncing the Muste forum and in instructing their members to get out of it. In fact I think that they even beat the reformist trade union big wheels to it.

And, of course, to Prove Their Loyalty (unlike the unfortunate Arthur Miller) all sorts of professional liberals had to chorus vile denunciations of the Forum, including Diana Trilling in the New Leader and, locally, Victor Ferkiss, professor of Political Science at St. Mary's College (maybe the Pope asked him to put in the Good Word). Ferkiss' remarks are especially nauseating. Mrs. Trilling hints, in part of her article, that the "break" with Stalinism might be a Plot to form another Popular Front and for the CP to once again ensnarl the Left once more. Ferkiss starts out with about the same proposition, that the Muste forum is a CP front, with no attempt to prove this other than naming some persons who he termed CPers, which they might've been, and then continued on to otherwise making a shrill cry vilifying it, feeling that he had made his point. With the same logic, I suspect that the United Nations is a CP front, what with all of the known CPers in it; of course, there are others in it (just as there are others in the Muste forum) but that makes no difference, they should've known better; there're CPers in it and that makes it a CP Front, which naturally Must Be Stopped At All Costs.

And there is Theodore Enright, whom I heard speak and gesticulate one night over in San Francisco. He was the first speaker and commenced things rather well by going stark raving mad in the course of 15 minutes. I thought for a moment that he might bite the microphone. However he didn't; instead he suggested that everyone join the SP-SDF, which was just as bad. I do believe, that had he continued and started all over again, putting in a Good Word for (watch out! here it comes) A Broad Debsian Party, the forum would've been rudely interrupted by a lynching. Enough is enough, comrades.

I mustn't leave the subject of right wingers I've met and who naturally have oriented me into my present position, before saying a few words about a Local Boy who's on the NEC, the one and only Charlie Walker. First off, However, I should squash the Vile Rumor going around that the right wingers locally are in debt now because of having stuffed Mr. Walker full of tranquilizers before the meeting at which we voted on delegates to the convention. Now, that's an unfair accusation. I mean, after all, Charlie has on only one (1.000) occasion attempted a physical assault on a comrade of the LWC, yelling all sorts of crude and vile invective at the same time. And even then, a few comrades were able to restrain him before any damage was done (to the LWC comrade, that is). Though, at the delegate voting meeting, a few comrades were tensing, ready for action. Here this new member was introduced to the club and Charlie started off questioning him by saying: "Tell us why and when the SWP sent you nere." This of course confused the new member since he had never had anything to do with Grandpa Jim and his Chillin. Charlie then continued by asking for any and all political affiliations he had ever had in the last five years. Judging from the tone of his voice, we almost felt it was necessary to restrain him before he went out and brought in the bright lights and rubber hose. However, this might all be Beyond me. There are moments, at the meetings, when I look at Mr. Walker and notice a Cosmic Gaze on his face,

as he stares into sub-space. Unbeknownst to us all, Charlie might be evolving theorems that might be of such an advance nature that, at the mere thought of it, the ink of the numerous works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin pale and dribble right off of the paper on which they're printed. An example of his Super Logic should be given, a logic which is Beyond the Ken of the rest of us. Jim Robertson gave a report on the YPSL convention and said that the local YESL organizer, Fritjof Thyesson, was elected to the high post of National Chairman, and, in almost the same breath, mentioned that the same person was on the National Committee of the Muste American Forum for Socialist Education (the word Socialist in that title I should mention, is being used without the permission of Norman Thomas) and was a supporter of it. A member of the right wing, Don Thomas, also heard reports of the convention and other SP-SDF affairs and he added some. I asked him about the varacity of the account that Jim gave and he said that it coincided with what he had heard. Odd--I mean in view of the fact that just a few minutes earlier Charlie said that he preferred an organization that would have democratic control (ie the SP-SDF) rather than one with a Stalinist type of control, which, upon questioning, he said meant the forum. It is all beyond me, and is something that no doubt means that some Transcendental Intelligence has taken over inside of Charlie which is capable of claiming to desire to be with an organization which has democratic controls contrasted with the forum and yet be able to reconcile that the National Chairman of one of the democratically controlled organizations he wants to affiliate with is on the National Committee of the forum.

I know, I know, in all of the above, I have devoted myself to personalities; however, I feel that my observations do have some import on the political arena since my only contact with the persons have been inside this arena. I feel that my observations are germane. Theories are theories and one needs people to put them into practice; ergo, one might, besides scrutinizing the theories, also spend some time examining the persons who espouse them. Now, take Mr. Denitch: I once heard him speak of what he was after. What he was saying was nothing new to me. I have over 15 inches of pamphlets (to say nothing of hard bound volumes) from Freedom Press and the I.W.W. that say about the same thing: Workers' control of the administrative apparatus of production, etc. And, being an anarcho-syndicalist type, I like that sort of thing. But, somehow or other, it doesn't seem to go well with Bogdan. He seemed to be very very fuzzy about exactly how one was going to achieve such a workers' control. I recall some nice-sounding slogan, something about "Democratic Revolution," and then he was talking about going in with the SP-SDF and (here it is again) A Broad Debsian Party, and Democratic Socialism (with a definite emphasis on Democratic). After hearing the YSL Field Rep. for a while more, one gathers that this Democratic Revolution that Shachtman hasthought up which B.D. is parroting, will be an Insurrection By The Ballot Box. Ol' Bogdan sure is a 20th Century de Quincey, isn't he? Lenin, to cite a past example, is another form of this type that you Have To Watch. Once upon a time he was all for All Power To The Soviets and he even wrote a pamphlet, before he got into power, that some Leninists tell me, an anarchist, that some people said was anarchistic. However, we note a Change suddenly take place after Trotsky's 34th birthday and a few following days that shock the world. Now that V.I. was in a position to possibly give all power to the soviets, one notes that they got less and less. And, merciful heavens, what happened to the Constituent Assembly? And so it goes. Of course, the right wingers are definitely not Leninists, in that they solid- arize with Norman Thomas and the SP-SDF who puff up with righteous pride when they announce pontifically that they will not be on the same platform with such

slime. Though that would hardly mean that they also renounce saying one thing and doing something else.

On the other hand, I am scarcely blood brothers with the LWC. Why get so het up with this faction crap? Let the rightists go bellying up to Norman Thomas and lick the dust from between his toes with their tongues in an attempt to get into the SP-SDF (it's respectable, it's respectable); they are entitled to their own pet delusions. Let ol' Slapsie Maxie count the hundreds of thousands that'll rush into the SP-SDF after his boys go into it, it shouldn't be too hard since he'll probably be able to do it on the fingers of one hand and not even bother taking his shoes off. Let them pine for a press of their own and a monthly magazine; sure, they'll have it, they have some mimeos here and there, don't they? Oh, I'm not against this faction struggle, in fact I avidly view it like watching a lion and a tiger slashing each other to bloody ribbons....interesting to observe but not much fun to participate in. In short I feel that all of this furthers the day of the advent of a Free Society not one bit and thus can't consider it more than an amusing pasttime when there isn't anything else to do.

Though, my real differences with the LWC are political. I dig the Dictatorship of the Proletariat the Least, which is germane here since a couple of prominent LWCers locally have told me in a quite straight forward way that they are for it. Just substituting one Oppressive State for another, is the way I look at it.

However, locally, these comrades have not made any concerted attempt to enforce their idiocyncrecies on me and impress me in fact as being under self-enforced restraint. Fraternal and personal relations with them are fairly amiable and they have gone out of their way to make sure that I'm able to make the gatherings (I live around 20 or so miles away from Berkeley, in an area so isolated that there's no freeway around for 8 or 10 miles, without a car, which handicaps me somewhat).

Now, what can I say to those with an anarcho-syndicalist turn of mind about the YSL LWC? Judging from the local comrades, they won't try to politically rape you; in fact they haven't even made a below-the-belt-grab yet. They don't seem to be possessed with a fanatical urge to swing you over to their view point, though I wouldn't suggest letting one of them drive you to work five days a week for several months on end -- look what happened to Comrade Roger. You might find discussion with them interesting and possibly instructive and if you are anywhere in the vicinity of Dave Carleton, you will be, I assure you, in for a helping of spritely wit. With their concept of a broad youth group, you find yourself being able to meet with persons of all sorts of tendencies and persuasions.

Of course, for an anarchist, the YSL is not first and foremost, but rather is a supplement to one's Libertarian League activity or as a fill-in until a Lib. League group is formed, and naturally an anarchist group takes first priority; but if the YSL-LWCers impress you as fairly likable types and you have the free time, there's nothing wrong in working with them.

In fact, you might even learn something from fraternizing with the Other Half.

-- June 16, 1957

LETTER FROM AN SP MEMBER

Bayport, New York
June 15, 1957

Tim Wohlforth
New York City

Dear Comrade Wohlforth:

For nine years I have been a member of the Socialist Party, have served as Treasurer of Local Nassau-Suffolk for eight of them and Secretary-Treasurer for five. In addition, I am a member of the National Advisory Committee of the Committee For a Socialist Program, was an Alternate to the 1954 S.P. Convention and a Delegate to the 1956 S.P. Convention in Chicago. On May 27th I accepted membership on the National Committee of the American Forum for Socialist Education.

It has been a source of inspiration to me, and, I am sure, to numerous other members of the Socialist Party who are working to forward the principles of Revolutionary International Socialism, to note the development of the Left-Wing Caucus in the Young Socialist League. I am convinced that the courage, programmatic clarity, and devotion to principle that you are displaying will do much to forward the Regroupment of the American Left.

There are enemies of socialism within the YSL who in common with the Eastland Socialists in the SP-SDF have no desire in life but to act as the willing stooges of capitalist reaction. There is nothing that these class traitors will not resort to in an effort to prove how "respectable" they are. So we are to be purged -- your good comrades from the YSL and we from the SP-SDF. Our crime, Tim, is that we have dared to remain socialists in fact and not merely in name. Yes, they may throw us out, but they cannot stop the move all over this country among radicals of all tendencies to discuss with each other and seek out the road to a programmatic Regroupment of the American Left. The day of the swivel chair bureaucrat is at an end. We are going forward and we are doing so not as "policemen of the Left", but as convinced Marxists, as Revolutionary Socialists!

Fraternally yours,

George R. Stryker

SECTARIANISM AND REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

By Danny Freeman

One of the most frequent charges or "political characterizations" made of the Left Wing Caucus and its particular members is the charge of "sectarianism." It is also true that this label of "sectarian" has been used repeatedly throughout the radical movement, not as a legitimate political characterization, but as a cheap slander designed to discredit critics without offering a serious Marxist analysis of their errors or mistakes. This has been especially true in and around the Stalinist movement. An editorial in the March-April 1957 Labour Review (a fine British publication) gives an excellent answer to charges of some of its readers of "sectarianism" and the attribution of this "sectarianism" to the "Trotskyism" of the magazine. It is evident that these charges come from those who have not fully freed themselves from the stultifying habits of Stalinist thought and jargonized "swear words". The editors note a tendency of some ex-Communists "to label as sectarian the essentials of Leninist thought." The editors continue that if Lenin's views are sectarian or out of date, the charges should be substantiated by concrete evidence, "not by phrase mongering and counter phrase mongering." The editors offer to print any article, however critical, which seriously attempts this. "We do not believe, however," continue the editors, "that some of those who call Labour Review sectarian are, in fact, only rationalizing their own inclinations to make an easy transition from Marx and Lenin to G.D.H. Cole and John Strachey. Would it be sectarian to call this a reformist trend?"

Sectarianism as a Serious and Dangerous Tendency

To say that the charge of sectarianism is often misused and thrown about wildly is not to say that sectarianism does not exist as a serious malady, harmful to the interests of the working class. The editors of Labour Review acknowledge this fact, and see such tendencies in the British labor movement. "Left-sectarianism," they say, "is largely an emotional reaction to the corruption of right-wing reformist labor leaders. It substitutes impressions of developments as we would like them to be for a Marxist estimation of things as they really are. Perceiving right wing corruption, the left-sectarian declares in effect, his own incorruptibility and his own 'purity.' This induces him to suggest that he alone knows the answers to the problems of the labor movement which is as good a way as any to arrive at the conclusion that he alone has nothing to learn. Naturally, from this point of view he is driven to declaring, in his high sounding 'manifestos', that only those who believe as he does are 'saved' -- and promptly cuts himself off from the real movement of the working people."

The left sectarians are obsessed with maintaining their "revolutionary purity." Lenin, in his Left Wing Communism, characterized "ultra-leftism" as "petit-bourgeois revolutionism" which in Russia often took the form of anarchism and terrorism. The fault of the "left" Communists, as Lenin noted in 1920, and which we still see today, e.g. in the SLP, is not their failure to make the correct compromises at the correct times, but "to reject compromises 'on principle', to reject every admissibility of compromises generally, no matter of what kind." This sort of revolutionism is no revolutionism at

all, but isolation from the everyday demands and struggles of the working class. It serves interests alien to those of the workers, those of the bourgeoisie. Lenin counterposes the orientation of the Left Communists to that of the Bolsheviks. At the risk of being called a "sectarian", a "phrase monger", etc., by the "anti-dogmatists" of the YSL Right Wing, I would like to quote Lenin's characterization in Left Wing Communism which clearly distinguishes between ultra-leftists and revolutionists: "He who wishes to be useful to the revolutionary proletariat must be able to sift the concrete cases of such compromises which are inadmissible, which stand for opportunism and treachery, and to direct all the force of his criticism against these concrete compromises, mercilessly exposing them, and not allowing 'experienced Socialists' and parliamentary Jesuits to dodge and shirk responsibility by resorting to discussion of compromises generally."

The Right Wings Charge of 'Sectarianism'

The question of sectarianism has already been discussed in YSR during the present controversy. In YSR, Vol.3, no. 4, Comrade Harrington described the LWC as "an organized sectarian tendency". In the following issue of YSR, (Vol.4, no.1) Shane quoted Mike's definition of sectarianism as the "rote repetition of 'revolutionary' and 'marxistical' phrases and the attempt to impose them on reality". Shane counterposed another definition, reportedly given by Trotsky as "...a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means to the sectarians convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism". With Harrington's superficial definition, you don't have to be precise and you don't have to prove anything. All you have to do is to call everyone who argues in terms of revolutionary socialism a sectarian since he 'obviously' is repeating by rote 'revolutionary' and 'Marxistical' phrases and attempting "to impose them on reality". In the all out attempt to escape the curse of 'sectarianism', few of the right wing's theoreticians have ever argued for unity with the SP in terms of revolutionary socialism. Oh, never! Only those 'sectarians' who are back in revolutionary Russia of 1917 can be concerned with this. Shachtman (who we all know is no Oehlerite)* refuses to argue for his 'tactic' from the point of view of any kind of revolutionary socialism. In New York at a public debate we heard Murray Weiss try all evening without success to get Shachtman to do this.

Revolutionaries---Yesterday, But Not Today

During the past few months I have gotten the feeling that many of the comrades believe that although there was once a need for revolutionary socialists (to agitate amongst and educate the workers in their day to day struggle against the capitalists and their executor and protector, the bourgeois state, and against the fakers and bureaucrats within the labor movement; to build a cadre which can educate the workers and guide them in their destruction of

* In Comrade Shachtman's New York debate with Comrade Weiss, referring to Weiss's analysis of Social Democracy, Shachtman remarked that he had heard all that stuff from Oehler. He did not offer any analysis of his own which used to be, both in the SWP and WP, essentially the same as Weiss's (and Trotsky's).

The capitalist state and its replacement with a workers state as a precondition for socialism)---that these comrades see no relevance for this, under the 'concrete reality' of today. If I am mistaken I wish some comrade of the right-wing would write an article saying that there is a need to build a revolutionary cadre to lead the working class in its struggle against capitalism; and, if there is this need, that SP entry is the best method for the strengthening of revolutionary forces in America. I expect that no right-winger will do this. The right-wing sees two opposing tendencies in the radical movement today that are all important; 'democratic socialism' and stalinism. It seems that all you have to do to qualify as a democratic socialist is split at the stalinist butchers and support those socialists who are really unequivocal on the question of stalinism, i.e., the american social democrats who identify and affiliate with 'democratic' butchers like Mollet. Now, isn't there a place for revolutionary socialists? Let's not be sectarian, our right-wingers will probably say--- Revolutionaries are hard to find nowadays, but there are plenty of socialists and near socialists who despite illusions about western imperialism are clearly in the camp of democratic socialism. So what if they believe that "the free world and its democratically military agencies must be constantly on guard against the military drive of communist dictators". (SP-SDF memorandum of understanding) Bravo!! Three cheers for the 'democratic' socialists of the SP-SDF! A whole article could be written on the demagogic use of 'democratic socialism' by the right-wing and of its clearly ant-leninist, pro-imperialist meaning as used by the SP, so let us return to the subject of sectarianism.

Sectarianism and "Orthodox" Trotskyism

In a recent article called "Social Democrats and 'Stalinoids'" by Debbie Meier (YSR Vol. 5, no. 2) makes a few remarks regarding sectarianism. At one point she mentions the "sectarianism and 'orthodox' Trotskyism" of Tim. It appears that Debbie identifies sectarianism with 'orthodox' Trotskyism and disapproves of both. One wonders whether Trotsky was both sectarian and an 'orthodox' Trotskyist. I also wonder if Debbie thinks that Lenin's intransigent opposition to both the Kauskians and out right reformists as well as to the left communists was sectarian and/or 'orthodox'. I can already hear the right-wing crying out in chorus ----- that this is 1957, not 1917 or 1921. But let us see how Comrade Shachtman answered similar charges back in 1937 in his introduction to Trotsky's Stalinism and Bolshevism: "the revolutionary Marxists stand on the granite foundations of principle laid by the great masters of the scientific socialist movement. Even in moments of greatest difficulty, of reaction, they remain inspired by their principles and unlike the middlebreds and dilletantes, do not abandon them in the pursuit of those will-o'-the-wisp 'relations of New Truths which, upon examination prove to be warmed over ashes from the cozy firesides of reformism, class-collaboration, and social patriotism" Schachtman knew then that the mark of a revolutionary socialist in the present just as in the

present just as in the times of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky is that he, unlike others, never gives up his principles and always seeks to strengthen the opposition to the ruling class and to all exploiters and oppressors, and to the 'socialists' and labor 'statesmen' who along with the stalinists preach peace and class collaboration with the bourecisie---to encourage this opposition at all times, in periods of reaction as well as when the revolution is upon us. The centrists* of the YSL right wing are way ahead of Kautsky. They are scunding the retreat before a revclutionary situation is even in sight. Some of them tell me that a revolutionary party is only necessary when the revolution is on the order of the day and does not have to be built now. Meanwhile some of them seem to feel that our task is to build the social-democracy, to "move Reuther a little to the left", etc. Where do you think these 'democratic socialists' will be when the revolution is on the order of the day?

Finally, I wonder if the present and formerly avowed Maexists repudiate Trotskyism or only 'orthodox' and 'sectarian' Trotskyism? It seems that less and less the right wing says jbes with much that Trotsky ever said or stood for after his break with Menshevism. What does the right wing think of what Trotsky said in the opening paragraph of his Stalinism and Bolshevism? "Reactionary epochs like ours not only weaken and disintegrate the working class and its vanguard but also lower the ideological level of the movement and throw political thinking back to stages long since passed through. In these conditions the task of the vanguard is above all not to let itself be carried along by the backward flow: it must swim against the current. If an unfavorable relation of forces prevents it holding the positions it has won, it must at least retain its ideological positions because in them is expressed the dearly paid experience of the past. Fools will call this policy 'sectarian! (Italics mine--D.F.) Actually it is the only means of preparing for a new tremendous surge forward with the coming historical tide."

* I refer to the 'Martinites' as opposed to the 'Draperites'

THE POLITICS OF "UNITY"

By Shane Mage

Under this title, I meant to present a final summation of the political nature of the YSL Right Wing's proposal to liquidate the YSL and enter the SP-SDF "as it stands today". However, in view of the ISL draft resolution on socialist electoral action which I have just seen, this is scarcely necessary.

In fact, even before this latest manifestation of the political degeneration of the "Independent Socialist Tendency", further argument on the political nature of their "unity" proposal would constitute belaboring the obvious. We have already, at great length, established the capitulatory nature of their orientation to the SP-SDF. More significant, the leading theoretician and writer for the "Independent Socialist Tendency" itself has fully confirmed our political evaluation. More than three months ago, Comrade Draper gave a scientifically precise definition of the Right Wing's politics: "systematic political adaptation to social democracy." By all rules of rational debate, this definition must be admitted by all to be valid. Since Draper's article appeared, not a single word has been written by anyone, in either the YSL or ISL, to dispute the accuracy of his definition. More -- except for mutterings about Draper having opposed the "labor party" slogan in 1938, the Right Wingers are struck dumb when it comes to answering Draper even orally! As an example of this, at the recent debate in N.Y.C. between Shachtman and Weiss, the SWP spokesman quoted at great length from Draper's indictment of Shachtman's policy. Not only was Shachtman unable to present any answer to this, he wasn't even able to toss it off with a witty comment -- he was forced to ignore it altogether!

Our differences with Comrade Draper are, of course, substantial and well known. But the Right Wingers cannot hope to escape from his analysis by pointing to those differences. In fact, it is precisely because Draper disagrees with us on basic political questions that the charge of "systematic political adaptation to social democracy" has such crushing weight.

In the context of the "systematic political adaptation to social democracy" of the ISL-YSL Right Wing, the ISL draft resolution on electoral action fits in as the latest and most extreme swing toward social-democratic politics. The ISL resolution states, in essence, that socialists should, as a matter of principle, not run candidates against labor-backed capitalist politicians, and that socialists should not urge workers to vote against these capitalist politicians. Thus the ISL lines up with the extreme Right Wing of the SP-SDF and against the SP left wing (just as it did, incidentally, on the issue of the Muste forum). The meaning of the ISL position is "neutrality" in favor of the Democrats (the ISL opposes any socialist campaign, it opposes the non-labor-backed Republican candidates, it carefully does not oppose the labor-backed Democrat). This is a position identical to that of the CP which very carefully neither supported nor opposed Stevenson formally in the last election, but was openly opposed to Eisenhower. It is now fairly evident why the ISL and the YSL Right Wing had no criticisms of the CP's policy on American politics (see the Benson pamphlet) -- they were preparing to accept the essentials of that policy! The ISL's position is but a short step away from the position of Norman Thomas and the SP-SDF Right Wing -- open support to the Democratic Party candidates, and that step can be easily taken. If the ISL recognizes no socialist principle compelling it to oppose capitalist candidates it can find no principled reason preventing it from

supporting such candidates.

For our part, a principled class opposition to the capitalist political machines is an inseparable part of the class struggle. There is no more fundamental principle of Marxism. The difference between class-collaboration and class struggle, above all in politics, is the difference between social democracy and all shades of authentic socialism. The ISL resolution would place it firmly on the social-democratic side of that line. That is the political nature of the proposal to liquidate the YSL -- it can no longer be hidden by demagogy about an "all-inclusive party" with "10,000 to 50,000 members". The choice between the Right and Left wings is simply this: for or against "systematic political adaptation to social democracy"!

IN DEFENSE OF THE AMERICAN FORUM

The Left-Wing Bulletin presents a special section on the American Forum -- for Socialist Education. First is an article by Tim Wohlforth, "The Strange Case of the American Forum." Following this is a series of documents and letters in support of the Forum.

The Strange Case of the American Forum

By Tim Wohlforth

Prologue

The modest attempt by A. J. Muste to establish a forum to further the regroupment discussion has led to the most fantastic chronology of events. All the forces latent in the regroupment situation have been brought out into the open by the catalytic action of the ever-present witchhunt.

As A. J. Muste and his Forum symbolizes in concrete terms the entire regroupment discussion, both in the eyes of the radical public and in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, a close examination of the "case history" of the Forum can yield a wealth of information about the contending forces on the left and the fundamental question of unity itself.

What is the American Forum?

Way back in March, after playing a leading role in the regroupment discussions for a couple of months previously, A. J. Muste organized a meeting of representatives of all the tendencies on the left to organize some sort of permanent Forum for the purpose of furthering the regroupment discussion. It was his desire to see the present regroupment discussion flourish. He hoped to do this by setting up a permanent forum which would foster the spreading of the discussions horizontally into areas where it has yet to occur and to put forward the basic principle of the all-inclusiveness of the discussion. It was not Muste's idea to foster any type of united action among the tendencies as he did not feel there was a political basis for such action today. He certainly had no intentions of establishing the Forum on any political basis whatsoever.

Norman Thomas, who had previously been interested in the project, withdrew his support after consultation with the SP-SDF and in that way indicated that the SP-SDF would not participate officially in the Forum. Following suit,

Max Schachtman, who was listed on the call for the conference, wrote a letter to Muste on March 19 asking his name to be removed.

Prior to the conference a special meeting was held in order to urge the ISL to change its mind on the question of support to the Forum. This attempt was unsuccessful, but the ISL did send a representative to the conference in order to argue for its position. The ISL held that the Forum must come out for democracy everywhere before it could be considered respectable "in the eyes of the working class." Also present at the conference were representatives of a number of other tendencies including the left wing of the SP-SDF (which was represented by Dave McReynolds). The CP was there despite the objections of the Foster faction and was represented by one of the leading Gatesites, Albert Blumberg.

The only one who supported the ISL's line on the "democracy" question was McReynolds who went along with the Forum anyway. The feeling of the others was that this was not a political organization but rather "a broad loose place where everyone can get together for discussion purposes." It would be ridiculous, they argued, for such a Forum to take a position on a basic political question when it was the purpose of the Forum to discuss just such questions on an all-inclusive basis. The ISL on the other hand felt that without such a position the Forum would have "a Stalinoid complexion." The ISL did not attempt to explain how it could participate in the Independent Socialist Forum in San Francisco and still refuse to participate in the Muste Forum. The ISF, like the Muste Forum, naturally has a "Stalinoid complexion" since it merely reflects the present composition of the radical movement as a whole. It is as much of an "organization" as the Muste Forum, having a chairman, an executive committee, etc.

The real reason for this contradiction is the significance of the Muste Forum itself. What the Forum did was to concretize and symbolize on a national scale the entire regroupment discussion in such a way as would (and certainly later did) put the spotlight on the whole process. Furthermore it did so on the basis of one fundamental position: the all-inclusiveness of the discussion. It seems clear that both the SP-SDF right wing and the ISL were attempting to find a formula for the exclusion of the CP from the discussion to start with. One cannot be sure in this case whether the ISL simply thinks along the same lines as the SP-SDF right wing, expressing the same infallible instinct as to what is or isn't "kosher" with the powers that be, or whether the ISL was reacting to the SP-SDF leadership in such a way as to appear respectable to it. Whatever the "inner motives" of Schachtman, the net effect was the same.

Thus at the very beginning of the Muste affair a polarization had set in -- a polarization and political alignment which

is of extreme significance. It symbolizes a correlation of forces which has played an important role in the past two months and which we will be seeing a good deal of in the months to come. On the one side stands the entire radical public -- the CP, SWP, Cochranites, Pacifists, Left Wing SP-SDF, etc., and on the other side stands the "respectable force" -- the SP-SDF with its own unsolicited worshipper, the ISL.

In a communication on April 5 to the YSL on the ISL's position on the Forum I stated: "This report is of special significance to the YSL as it reflects a new line adopted by the ISL on the whole regroupment perspective. There is no doubt that the effect of this line will be felt in the YSL . . ." Needless to say, shortly after this the NAC adopted the ISL's position in toto without changing so much as a comma. I was the only NAC member to vote against this line and to support the Muste Forum. So far the only other individual in the YSL who is not in the Left Wing to come out in favor of participation in the Forum is Bob Bone. The others by their own silence must be classified as supporters of the Stalinophobic position on the Forum of the Social Democracy.

And so the matter stood until May 13.

Enter the Witchhunt

On May 13 the New York Times reported the formation of the American Forum -- for Socialist Education. The announcement was followed by a series of events which momentarily blew up the entire regroupment discussion and tore the last shreds of decent socialist covering from the naked body of the Social Democracy. On May 14, the SP-SDF, according to the New York Post, characterized the Forum as a "cover for totalitarianism" and in this way put in a somewhat cruder form the line of the ISL and YSL right wing toward the American Forum. It also was announced that a Sleeping Car Porter's official resigned from the National Committee of the Forum after, it is understood, pressure from very high up in the trade union bureaucracy was exerted upon him.

On May 15 the Times condescended to discuss the matter in an editorial. Since the Times hardly ever bothers to discuss the left on its precious editorial page, this gesture emphasized the importance of the American Forum in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. In this way it focused the attention of the entire bourgeoisie and its witchhunting representatives upon this new "threat" from the left. Using language much more sedate than the ISL, not to mention the SP-SDF, it stated: "We note that this new organization provides a formal means of cooperation, even if only for purposes of discussion, of prominent Communists and non-Communists who do have claims to stand in the main traditions of genuinely American radicalism." It was touching indeed to note the Times' concern for the fruitful and progressive outcome of the discussion among radicals, as well as its interest in preserving "genuinely American radicalism."

At about the same time the not-so-subtle and sedate representative of the capitalist class, the New York Daily News, stated in an editorial entitled "Look into this Mob": "We suggest that the Senate Internal Security Committee look into this mob without delay; also that the Attorney General make inquiries as to whether he oughtn't to add it swiftly to his list of subversive organizations."

Immediately following this the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee under acting chairman Senator Butler subpoenaed four members of the American Forum national committee and Senator Eastland wrote a letter to A. J. Muste requesting information, a letter which Muste answered with a flat statement of non-cooperation. Butler, according to the Chicago Tribune, also asked for the Attorney General to inquire into the possible listing of the Forum. The Tribune states: "If a Justice Department inquiry establishes that the new organization is a camouflaged adjunct of the Communist Party, Butler said, it should be added to the list of subversive organizations in the United States as a warning to supporters unaware of its hidden control."*

Thus we see that the bourgeoisie has put the full weight of the witchhunt upon this small committee in an attempt to smash the regroupment discussion. Those who doubt that the entire regroupment discussion is at issue and not simply the American Forum had better think twice, as right now other "committees" are begging to bear down on the regroupment discussion in other quarters. For instance I learned in Berkeley that George Hitchcock chairman of the Independent Socialist Forum, has been subpoenaed to appear before one of these committees.

The Finger Men for the FBI

Now let us see what the reaction to this witchhunting attack upon the American Forum has been among the various forces on the left. To begin with on May 15 Herman Singer, National Secretary of the SP-SDF, wrote a letter to the Times in answer to its editorial of the same date. In this letter Singer complains that the Forum, by using the name "socialist," has violated his copyright. For obviously it can not be a socialist Forum since it isn't affiliated with the Second International. He goes on to say: "The American Forum includes members of the Communist Party and representatives of two Trotskyite organizations. As such, the American Forum misuses the name Socialist." You see, even Trotskyists are not "socialists" in the eyes of the State Department "socialists." **

* It seems that the Attorney General has taken the advice of his senatorial friends, for the June 13 N. Y. Times reports that the Justice Dept. "is very much interested in the possible Communist control" of the American Forum -- for Socialist Education. It goes on to report that the matter has been referred to the Justice Dept.'s Internal Security Division. We can all heave a sigh of relief for our security is now in safe hands!

** This theme is amplified in an editorial in the June issue of

On May 16 the National Action Committee of the SP-SDF met on the question in an atmosphere of hysteria with Singer "calling for our expulsion," according to Dave McReynolds. At this meeting a motion was passed recommending to the NEC that it declare membership in the Forum to be incompatible with membership in the SP-SDF because of the inclusion on the national committee of the Forum a representative of the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party. Another motion was passed requesting all SP-SDF members listed on the national committee to withdraw in 10 days. Finally a motion was passed endorsing the press release and letter to the Times issued by Herman Singer.

Thus the SP-SDF officially responds to the witchhunt by extending it to its own ranks and adding its own pressure to that of the witchhunters in an attempt to smash the Forum. In that way it clearly showed its character as a capitulator to the witchhunt and its inability to really struggle against the witchhunt.

This ought to cause those who are in such a fever to enter the SP-SDF to stop and reflect before they leap. Here we see clearly the political nature of the SP-SDF as a State Department socialist group utterly incapable of resisting our ruling class on any important matter. When the chips are down it lines up inevitably with the bourgeoisie against the interests of the working class.

We learn something also about the organizational nature of the SP-SDF. The SP-SDF, far from being a broad all-inclusive organization, will not permit its members the right to join as individuals the American Forum. In fact whenever the left wing in a crucial issue publicly declares a position which differs

** (cont.) the Socialist Call. The editorial in reality attacks the Times from the right. It seems the Times devoted too much space to the formation of the Forum, thus making it more difficult for the SP-SDF to wreck it. The Call states: "It is possible that the Forum would have made a modest entrance, been duly flushed out by the Socialist Call, appropriately branded as a fraud for its use of the name socialism and then have disappeared." The Times is then attacked for giving "the impression that, despite the presence of Communist Party members and Trotskyites, the American Forum was a legitimate medium for discussion of socialism." The Call editorial goes on to point out that the whole thing is a result of the recent CP line of infiltration, a line which, among others, those dirty "Trotskyites" now follow. We are informed that "with the Kruschew revelations the barrier between Communists and Trotskyites has evaporated." This in spite of the fact that as recently as the first AF-SE rally, June 12, Blumberg made a special point of mentioning that the differences that separate the CP and SWP are of the "gravest character" and Farrell Dobbs likewise spelled out the most important differences. But to the demented mind of the SP-SDF they are all the same thing. It should be noted that while all the SP-SDF declarations to the capitalist press constituted nothing but a red-baiting attack on the Forum, their protest against Eastland's witchhunt attack on the free speech rights of the AF-SE was confined to a small squib in their house organ, the Socialist Call.

from the SP-SDF and therefore from the State Department, expulsion is in the air. Let all those who wish to enter the SP-SDF ponder over whether they intend to keep their mouths shut in public and if not, whether they are willing to risk expulsion, if it comes to that, in order to defend socialist principles.

The New Leader, which is the most well-known, though "unofficial," spokesman for the Social Democracy in this country, printed an article by Diana Trilling in its May 27 issue which expresses the views of this branch of the Social Democracy on the Forum. After her usual attack on the liberals for being too hard on McCarthy because of their guilt complex for not realizing the dangers of the "Communist Menace" soon enough, she had the following to say about the regroupment discussion:

"The appeal for discussion of their 'problems' is the best possible appeal which Communists can make to non-Communist leftists nothing is more attractive to the leftist intellect than the illusion (my emphasis, TW) that there is a rift within the Communist Party of which he can now take a reasonable advantage. If the shift in the Soviet line had not actually precipitated defections from the ranks, such defections might very well have been invented for the high dividends they pay in non-Communist sympathy and accessibility -- and, in fact, there are those of us who are crude enough to doubt whether there have in truth been as many alienations as are now advertised. It is just possible, of course, that some of these withdrawals were conveniently arranged, or even pre-arranged before Khrushchev's speech, in order to distribute Communist agents in places where they would otherwise not be welcomed and ensnare a new generation of fellow-travelers."

There we have it -- the whole thing is simply a Communist plot. So works the demented police-state mind of the right wing Social Democrats through their organ, which Sam Taylor of the YSL NAC remarked so recently was "moving to the left." God save us from those who call themselves socialists. I prefer a liberal any day to "socialists" of the New Leader's ilk! (Murray Kempton, New York Post columnist, had this to say about the Forum: "I wrestled, I might say, a long time with myself before I decided not to apply for membership in Muste's committee. It wasn't the two communists that threw me; it was those ex-fellow travelers. I have known quite a number of Communists I liked, but fellow travelers depress me. They're so self-righteous.")

The other forces on the left rallied to the defense of the American Forum. The SWP, which has been attacked in some quarters for not really being interested in regroupment, defended the Forum wholeheartedly in action and on the front pages of the Militant. Zaslow and McAvoy, both of whom were subpoenaed by the Senate Committee, resisted this witchhunting pressure, showing the dedication of the Committee for Socialist Unity both to its self-proclaimed goal of socialist unity and to the defense of free speech against the witchhunting attacks of the Eastlands. Dave Dellinger, representing the anarcho-pacifists, defended the Forum in the current issue of Liberation, pointing to the number

of pacifists and other anti-Stalinists on the national committee. He defended the fundamental principle of free discussion among all radicals.

David McReynolds and the Fine Art of Capitulationism

What was the reaction within the SP-SDF to this ultimatum of the NAC to resign from the AF-SE national committee within 10 days? In the first place, the star performer, Dave McReynolds, acted out his by now well-known routine. There is quite a history to Dave McReynolds and capitulationism. As far back as 1954, when the merger of the YPSL and SYL came up, he found himself in the position of turning his back on those he felt closest to politically by refusing to join in the formation of the YSL. He would stick to the SP come hell or high water, and eventually his program would win out in the ranks, was his approach. In this way he weakened the development of the united third camp youth movement in this country.

More recently he conducted a principled fight against the merger with the SDF. He stated that this merger was based on the "worst, most shameful policies of the State Department and John Foster Dulles" and that it was not a socialist unity at all. However, after talking with Shachtman he capitulated, called the unity actually progressive and attempted to rally the left wing to support the unity. In doing so he promised to fight for one thing at least at the convention: the name Socialist Party must remain. But once you start on the road to capitulation there is no turning back: he gave in on that also. As a reward for his "noble" capitulation, in which he so unselfishly put the politics of the State Department before his own, he was kicked off the NAC. This is the way the SP-SDF pays for capitulation to it -- Shachtman take note!

The current capitulation is even more sickening. After talking to Harrington, I understand, he resigned from the American Forum he had helped to set up with his friend and co-thinker A. J. Muste. Turning his back on the Forum, he urged the rest of the left wingers in a letter to do likewise.

He wrote: "To say that I personally have been sick at heart this past week is to put the matter mildly indeed. The Party acted without giving us a hearing, in hysteria, and in a totally undemocratic way. Herman Singer's telegram to the N.Y. Times on the A.F. was a classic job of playing fingerman for the Justice Dept. and the F.B.I." He goes on to note that "Bayard Rustin, one of the Vice Chairmen, had made it clear that he will have to withdraw or else give up all his work on the Southern Negro Question -- as a result he is withdrawing." Another SP member is resigning because it may endanger his position as business agent of a small union, he also remarks. And thus he points out how his own leadership, whom he describes in the letter as "the two-bit second rate party hacks running the N.O.," is part and parcel of this whole witchhunting affair; and how the bureaucrats running the Negro organizations and trade unions have simultaneously exerted their pressure upon their members on the committee.

How does McReynolds himself react to this pressure? "However after very careful thought and conferences all this week I find myself in the inglorious position of sounding the retreat once again." And so goes David McReynolds, sounding one inglorious retreat after another as he slowly marches backwards through history.

This is a classic case of capitulation and its end result is predictable -- political suicide. Just as in 1928 when Zinoviev and friends capitulated to Stalin on the basis that they would save up their forces for a future struggle at a time of their own choosing, so McReynolds promises to fight, not now, but later. Just as Zinoviev was forced into one capitulation after another until he was politically bankrupt with no following whatsoever, so McReynolds has begun on this course with two major capitulations in the last few months which have seriously weakened his authority within the Party left wing, not to mention the radical public as a whole. Just as Zinoviev's capitulation ended in his extinction at the time of the Moscow trial, so McReynolds' capitulation will end, not, we hope, in his physical extinction, but certainly in his political extinction.

This classic course deserves careful study in the YSL, for it is the projected course of Shachtman in the SP-SDF and for Draper in relation to Shachtman, and even for all those who we are told "disagree" with Martin but who bloc with him against the left wing.

How did the rest of the SP-SDF left wing react? Considering the immensity of the pressure brought to bear against them, one is forced to conclude that these individuals, regardless of one's political differences with them, stand as giants compared to Singer, McReynolds, or even Shachtman. They stood up in their own party against this witchhunting attack and withstood the pressure of public opinion in general. They deserve (and have yet to receive) the official support of the YSL. McReynolds resigned as did two others. However Charbneau, Braden, Sibley, and Thygeson (national secretary of the YPSL) stuck to their guns and Stryker and Anne Braden joined the Forum's national committee in protest.* Thus there remains today, despite the threats of the SP-SDF NAC and despite the support to these threats by the SP-SDF NEC recently, six SP-SDF members on the National Committee of the AF-SE.

Enter Shachtman

At this point in the drama it might be well to return to one of the minor characters involved in whom we have a special interest-- to Shachtman. When we last left him he had written a letter to Muste announcing that he declined to support his venture. This letter, which was reprinted in part in the May 27 Labor Action in the context of another letter to the AF-SE National Committee, places Shachtman in the position of being truly a Cassandra.

* It has just come to my attention that Tad Tekla of the SP-SDF in Cleveland has applied for membership on the AF-SE national committee.

He seems to have foreseen the avalanche of the witchhunt that would hit the American Forum for he states: "If they cannot agree on such an elementary notion (defense of democracy everywhere) -- if they equivocate or evade it altogether -- the new organization will lay itself open from the start to charges and suspicions from which I fear nobody -- not you or I or others-- could convincingly defend it. It would start under a cloud that I would not want over my head." Shachtman -- luckily for him-- has not had to stand under this "cloud" during the last few heated weeks. And so life is a little easier for him and unity with the SP-SDF a little closer.

I do not wish to class Shachtman's attitude on the same level as that of the SP-SDF, nor certainly on the same level with Eastland. There are important differences as well as similarities. In the first place the SP-SDF itself did not go as far as Eastland and call for putting the group on the Attorney General's list. It even uttered a feeble protest against the abridgement of free speech involved in Eastland's campaign. Shachtman, however, sincerely wants to defend the Forum. He states: "I have nothing but contempt for the intentions behind the advice which the reactionary press offers to socialists, and in particular I regard the clamor for governmental and police intervention and persecution with loathing."

Shachtman is not completely clean in this matter, I am sorry to say, for good intentions are not enough -- they are important, but not enough. Shachtman's defense of the American Forum is limited by two factors: his agreement with the estimation of the SP-SDF, the New York Times and others, that the Forum serves as a cover for the CP; and his entry move into the SP-SDF.

On the first point, Shachtman just happens to agree with the Times and others, that cooperation of all radical tendencies in order to discuss is not permissible, at least not in this form. He agrees with the SP-SDF that the Forum is a cover for "totalitarianism," though he would use somewhat different phraseology. Thus in this respect he has given in to the witchhunt. He fears he would lose his purity in the eyes of the SP-SDF if he had to bear the burden for the "cloud" (or Stalinoid complexion" as it is sometimes called) over the American Forum. He claims of course that this is because he wants to remain "respectable" in the minds of the workers, but it seems evident from his actions that he is simply bowing to the prejudices fostered by the witchhunt atmosphere.

In fact one might say that it is thinking along these lines that is in reality the real appeal of the SP-SDF entry line within the ranks of the ISL and the YSL right wing. In this context it is interesting to note the remarks of the YSL spokesman in Cleveland who said the SP-SDF "is clean and has a good reputation and has never been in trouble with the government." Such thinking is the antithesis of a militant socialist struggle against the witchhunt.

Another example of this type of thinking is found in Shachtman's May 27 letter to the AF-SE, printed in Labor Action. He states that this Forum "places an unwarranted burden upon those who have acquired serious and responsible positions in the broad labor, Negro and other movements. The isolation of such individuals can only further the isolation of socialists from these broad movements, and certainly will not alleviate it." Thus, instead of defending the right of Rustin and the various labor officials to function in the Forum even though he himself does not wish to do so, Shachtman seems to be blaming the Forum for enlisting their support in the first place. Instead of attacking the bureaucracies of the trade union and Negro movements for capitulating to the witchhunting pressures and clamping down on the democratic rights of their members, he attacks the Forum for "embarrassing" them. Such a twisted and distorted approach (especially since it was published after the opening of the witch-hunt attack, whose scope Shachtman was intimately aware of) amounts purely and simply to a capitulation to the witchhunt. Part and parcel of this approach is the attempt of Bogdan Denitch, while on tour for the YSL, to use the resignation of Rustin not as a sign of the witchhunting attack on the Forum, but to prove that "responsible" Negroes agree with his analysis of the Muste Forum. If Denitch claims that individuals who are forced into submission by the pressure of the witchhunt agree with him, then I am forced to admit that I have been too lenient in describing his position. For in this case Denitch's position would be simply opposition to the Forum in order to save one's skin from the witchhunting onslaught. Along these lines Charlie Walker, the only YSL NEC member on the Coast, stated that if the Muste Forum had come out for "democratic socialism" it wouldn't have had all this trouble with the government. Enough said about this sickening aspect of the business.

Another factor which limits Shachtman's ability to play a progressive role in the defense of the American Forum is his unity move with the SP-SDF. As noted above, one of the most important aspects of the entire struggle against the witchhunt was the heroic resistance of the SP-SDF left wingers to the joint attack perpetrated by the combined forces of the witchhunters and the SP-SDF right wing. It is clear that anyone really interested in the defense of the AF-SE would come to the defense of these fine comrades. A civil libertarian would understand that what was at stake was not one's attitude towards the Forum, but the defense of the right of the SP-SDFers who favor the Forum to continue as members of its national committee. This would accomplish both the militant defense of the Forum and also the protection of democratic rights within the SP-SDF.

Shachtman, however, instead of defending these comrades or even keeping silent while the right wing moved against them, actually attacks Muste for inviting them in the first place. (See his May 27 letter in LA.) Here again appears that distorted approach of Shachtman: The witchhunt is not to blame; the SP-SDF leadership is not to blame; only Muste is to blame for the whole thing.

Such an approach is but another example of capitulation to the witchhunt. Also it is further confirmation of the characterization of Shachtman as the future "policeman of the left wing" once in the SP-SDF.

It can be assumed that Harrington in his conversations with McReynolds played a similar role and urged, not that McReynolds put up a fight for his right to stay on the Committee, but that he capitulate and talk the entire left wing into capitulating.

The YSL Gets Into the Act

During the course of my tour I became incensed at the attack being leveled at the American Forum and concluded that it was my socialist duty to rally to its support. I wrote a letter to A. J. Muste offering my support and announcing my willingness to join the National Committee of the Forum. I did so making it clear that I would function as an individual and would not represent the YSL as a whole. Thus I would be in a position similar to that of the Left Wingers in the SP-SDF. I realized at the time that there were certain dangers involved and that the YSL right wing might take action against me. However, I knew that I had solid foundations for such a move in the basic principles of the YSL as a broad organization and that as long as I acted as an individual and did not present myself as representing the YSL, then I was acting perfectly within the bounds of discipline of the YSL. Furthermore I felt I could not stand aside when the fine comrades of the SP-SDF left wing were taking a similar risk for the sake of basic socialist principle.

In reaction to this step the YSL right wing with unprecedented speed moved against me with threats of expulsion. The only reason they did not expel me on the spot was the nearness of the Convention which they felt would be a better time to expel me. Such an action by the right wing is in keeping with their solidarity with the SP-SDF right wing and their fever to split their organization if necessary in order to get into the SP-SDF. Just how the right wing expects to explain its actions against its left wing for supporting the Muste Forum to the left wingers in the SP-SDF is difficult for me to see. It will still be harder for it to explain this to the radical public, 90 per cent of whom are represented on the American Forum National Committee.

I for one do not intend to give in on this matter. I feel it is my right as a YSL member to participate on the American Forum National Committee, and the right wing is making a travesty of our traditions of broadness in its hurry to expel the left. The YSL has a tradition of permitting its members to hold dual membership in rival and hostile political organizations. The AF-SE certainly in no way rivals the YSL and has yet to be declared "hostile" by the right wing. In fact the statement to A. J. Muste refusing to support the Forum was written in a very cordial manner. Muste himself has always been regarded favorably by the YSL. There is a tradition of friendship and political collaboration between Muste and the YSL symbolized by the fact that A. J. Muste spoke at the founding convention of the YSL. So certainly there is no ground for preventing me from holding membership in an organization which is neither rival nor hostile and which has no politics.

I urge every member of the YSL to rally to the support of the American Forum and to reject the attempt of the right wing to expel the left wing. To refuse to do so would be a tremendous blow to the YSL. It would mean the expulsion of a quarter of the membership of the organization, and furthermore would cause the complete discrediting of the YSL in the eyes of the radical public. It would further isolate the YSL from all but the SP-SDF right wing. Such a policy would lead, not to a progressive regroupment of radical youth forces, but rather to the building of an isolated social-democratic sect.

Exit Shachtman

There are a number of people in the YSL who explain away their flight from revolutionary politics by stating that the fundamental difference between reformism, centrism and revolutionary socialism will become important only in a revolutionary period. However the classic roles of these tendencies have been acted out today in relation to the American Forum.

One can spend years debating the unity question, pointing out the social-democratic formulations of the right wing, speculating on the possibilities of building a "broad Debsian party," and it will all be for naught if the discussion does not uncover the basic tendencies in action and reaction when they come in contact with the ruling class and its interests. The one progressive function of the intrusion of the witchhunt into the regroupment discussion is that it lays bare the real nature of the contending forces and the ability of each to struggle against the ruling class.

Let us first take a look at the self-appointed personification of social democracy, the SP-SDF. Having accommodated itself to the ruling class over a long period of time, it tends to view politics in much the same way as that class, and thus is able to react to the impending pressure and furor of the ruling class before that pressure is released. Thus at the very beginning of the discussion on the formation of the Forum it bowed out unceremoniously. Once it heard the master's voice through the editorial pages of the N. Y. Times it reacted in minutes with a telegraphed letter to provide ammunition to the witchhunting attack on the Forum. The following day it gathered together its national committee and with vengeance extended the witch-hunt into the ranks of its own party.

We see today in this one minor incident that the Social Democracy plays the same perfidious role as lackey to the ruling class as it does in a period of revolution when it openly supports counter-revolution. The only difference is in the degree of importance of what is at stake.

Now let us look briefly at a more complicated phenomenon -- the role of the centrists in reaction to the witchhunting attack on the Forum. Here we find a greater concern with fighting the witchhunt.

The centrist wishes both to fight the witchhunt in an intransigent manner and at the same time adapt himself to the pressures of the petty bourgeois circles he functions in.

The ISL's role in the event is the best example of centrism today. It starts out, as does the SP-SDF, with a certain accommodation to the ideology of the ruling class. This takes the form of the desire for respectability. It claims to want to remain palatable in the eyes of the working class. But in reality it is bowing to the bourgeois influences and ideology which inevitably dominate the working class in a reactionary period. Instead of fighting this alien influence within the ranks of the working class, it hopes in some way to accommodate itself to it. It hopes to appeal to the right; it wants "an opening to the right," as Shachtman has put it. Instead of meeting bourgeois politics and ideology head on, however, it hopes somehow to sidetrack this confrontation and to move the liberals leftward step by step. The net effect is that, instead of budging the liberals, the centrist himself moves to the right step by step.

The ISL expresses this general tendency to straddle two camps-- to keep a foot on each side of the class line -- in a most conscious way in its "unity" proposal. It concretizes its general search for respectability in the circles in which it functions with the proposal of entry into the SP-SDF: It attempts to get into the SP-SDF by its politics "bent, fitted, filed, rubbed, carved, trimmed or cold-storaged so as to ingratiate us as good dogs with the SP right wing," according to Hal Draper.

Thus when it comes to the question of the direct pressure of the ruling class bearing down on the regroupment discussion, Shachtman and the ISL find themselves already in a certain amount of agreement with this ruling class. They have already adapted to the point where they cringe with fear at being involved in the Forum and thus being tainted. In whose eyes are they really afraid of being tainted, I ask?

On top of this the ISL finds itself in a position where it either excuses or actually encourages capitulation to the witchhunt. How else can one explain its attitude towards the left wingers in the SP-SDF who fought against the witchhunt attack emanating directly from Eastland and indirectly through Singer? How else explain its blaming Muste for involving Negro leaders and trade unionists, instead of venting its wrath on the bureaucracies of these movements who willingly sacrifice these leaders at the beck and call of the witchhunters?

Thus the ISL, by its conscious adaptation to the Social Democracy and through this means to the ruling class itself, is unable to play a principled and militant role. Despite its intentions it is unable to fight the witchhunt in a principled manner. The political bankruptcy of the unity move is thus expressed even before the unity is consummated. Where will it end? There can be only one answer to that question: it will end in the political suicide and eradication from the scene of an entire tendency -- of Shachtmanism.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE BAY AREA YSL
ON THE AMERICAN FORUM FOR SOCIALIST EDUCATION

In the NAC minutes of April 16, 1957, the following position was taken by passing a motion offered by ST.

"... The YSL does not wish to support the AFSE or to participate in it by asking for representation on its national committee because we do not wish to have political responsibility for the group."

In view of the fact that AFSE is an attempt to regularize the discussion groups and forums, and is an "organization" only in the sense that any cooperative means of getting a job done is an organization; it is not an organization in the sense of having as its purpose the defense of some political line; and in view of the fact that the group has taken no position on either the question of the class struggle in America or on the class struggle in the Soviet Union and satellites;

and in view of the fact that no such positions are proposed by the group; and in view of the fact that the existence of the forums which would have their effectiveness increased by such a housekeeping organization are extremely valuable to the YSL and to any future regroupment of the socialist movement, whether under the leadership of the SP-SDF or other tendencies;

Therefore the Bay Area Young Socialist Clubs strongly urge a reconsideration of this decision by the NAC, and a decision to participate in the group; and further that it use its position on the national committee of this forum group to prevent the taking of political positions by the forum, since taking a political position might exclude not only communists, but also radical liberals, pacifist non-socialists, anarchists. This would destroy the forum organization as far as its purposes in the regroupment discussion is concerned.

Adopted in meeting on 5/12/57 by the Bay Area Young Socialist Clubs; with a vote of 9 for, 1 against, 1 abstaining, 1 not voting.

The Bay Area Young Socialist Clubs, YSL, note the bourgeois furor and hostility directed against the American Forum for Socialist Education (Muste Committee) and culminating in the press and congressional suggestion that the AFSE be placed on the government's "subversive list".

For this reason the YS Clubs urge the National Action Committee to undertake a vigorous public opposition to the witch-hunting attack upon the AFSE, despite and stating where relevant the YSL-NAC's own decision not to participate in the AFSE.

In particular, the Bay Area YS Clubs urge the NAC to protest to the Internal Security Committee, its attempt to smash the AFSE through the now familiar McCarthyite technique of subpoenas and hearings.

Motion carried: 13 for; none against; Consultative vote - TW, BD for.
Adopted 5/26/57.

LETTER FROM TIM WOHLFORTH TO A.J. MUSTE

May 22, 1957
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Reverend Muste:

While on tour for the Left Wing Caucus of the Young Socialist League I learned of the attack directed against the American Forum for Socialist Education from many quarters -- from the ranks of the socialist movement, the press, and the Senate Internal Security Committee.

As you may know, I have been urging the YSL, with the full support of the Left Wing Caucus, to come out in support of the Forum and to offer to further its activities in any possible way.

I consider it regrettable that the YSL National Action Committee has decided against this course of action. I also regret that the Socialist Party has seen fit to issue slanderous statements against the Forum to the press.

It is my view that the regroupment discussion projected by the Forum can do much in the present situation to further regroupment and give life to the radical movement. I have been especially impressed at the response on campus to this sort of approach. As an anti-Stalinist I personally feel it important for non-Stalinist as well as Stalinist elements to participate in the Forum, and in that way to express their criticisms of Stalinism as well as of capitalism.

I therefore offer my full public support to the American Forum for Socialist Education as an individual. I understand of course, that it is not a membership organization, but I would be willing to serve on its board if that would help. I am especially interested in seeing the present discussion expanded to include in a more active sense America's radical youth.

At the present time I am a member of the National Action Committee of the YSL, and am also on the editorial board of Anvil magazine. Previously, I was chairman of the Eugene V. Debs Club at Oberlin College, and Editor of Co-ops in Action of the North American Student Cooperative League.

In the meantime I will do my best to work within the YSL to reverse the present attitude toward the Forum, and intend to bring it up at our national convention.

Fraternally,

Tim Wohlforth
Secretary, Left-Wing
Caucus, YSL

cc. YSL NAC
All Units YSL

STATEMENT OF THE LEFT WING CAUCUS

CONCERNING POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION BY COMRADE WOHLFORTH IN THE MUSTE FORUM

1. The Left-Wing Caucus reaffirms its endorsement of the American Forum for Socialist Education. We consider the attacks upon the AFSE by all sectors of the capitalist class -- by the responsible liberals (N.Y. Times) as well as by the outright witchhunters -- to be a confirmation of the value of the Forum as a step toward the revitalization of the socialist movement in the U.S. We condemn the participation of Herman Singer in the capitalist class-attack upon the AFSE. This action by the National Secretary of the SP-SDF as an authorized spokesman for his organization typifies the anti-socialist political nature of social democracy and its American representatives, the leaders of the SP-SDF.
2. We condemn the action of the YSL NAC in opposing the Muste forum. The stand taken by the YSL right wing is a further indication of this tendency's systematic political adaptation to social democracy as well as of a long-standing stalinophobic sectarianism, which tends to cut the YSL off from the real possibilities for socialist regroupment.
3. We reaffirm the right of every member and tendency in the YSL to participate in broad and non-programmatic socialist organizations, as well as in specific "adult" socialist political organizations. This right is a necessary concomitant of the YSL's very nature as a broad youth organization, uniting socialist youth of differing tendencies. We therefore approve the action of Comrade Wohlforth, and of any other member of the YSL who wishes to participate in the AFSE as an individual. We reject the contention that this matter is a subject for any disciplinary action whatsoever in an organization like the YSL.
4. The NAC majority has charged that Comrade Wohlforth "violated the discipline demanded of leading members of the organization." We emphatically reject the notion that there are two standards of discipline, one for "leading members", another for the rank and file. All members of the YSL have equal rights and responsibilities.
5. The NAC majority claims that it has the right to take disciplinary action against Comrade Wohlforth, but that it refuses to do so in order not to respond to a "deliberate provocation" by the YSL Left Wing.
6. The charge of "provocation" is a complete slander. Comrade Wohlforth was merely using his democratic right as a member of the YSL to participate in an outside organization. We have absolutely no desire for any "scandal" stemming from disciplinary action by the NAC majority against any member of the LWC. On the contrary, we retain our oft-repeated intention to remain as members of the YSL.
7. If the NAC majority believes that Comrade Wohlforth has violated discipline it is its responsibility to prefer charges against him. It is to the credit of the NAC majority that it realizes that disciplinary action against Comrade Wohlforth would be a "scandal." However, if it is not prepared to act in this scandalous fashion, it has no right to claim that Comrade Wohlforth has violated discipline and is therefore subject to charges. It is the obligation of the NAC majority either to bring charges against Comrade Wohlforth for "violation of discipline" and "provocation", or else to admit that, although it disapproves of Comrade Wohlforth's action, it concedes that he has not acted in an impermissible or disloyal fashion. The NAC majority must either back up its charges or drop them.

— May 31, 1957

LETTER FROM TIM WOHLFORTH TO A.J. MUSTE

New York, N.Y.
June 3, 1957

The Rev. A. J. Muste
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrade,

I was very pleased to receive your letter informing me that the Working Committee of the American Forum has accepted my application to serve on the National Committee of the American Forum for Socialist Education. Shane Mage of Yellow Springs, Ohio, will serve as alternate, as you suggested.

In the course of my recent tour I talked with young people of virtually all political tendencies and found a tremendous interest in the Forum as well as a resentment of the witchhunting attack leveled against it. I was especially impressed with the virtual unanimity among the younger members of the SP-SDF in their support of the Forum.

I also found a great interest in the Forum's program of spreading the regroupment discussion "horizontally" to areas where at present it either does not exist at all or is being held on a partial basis. This sentiment was especially strong in Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Denver.

I wish to reiterate that the entire membership of the left wing of the Young Socialist League offers its full support to the American Forum for Socialist Education and that we will all do our utmost in our local areas to further its work and to defend it against the onslaught of the witchhunt. I understand that the Berkeley and San Francisco units of the YSL have also come out in support of the Forum.

Fraternally yours,

Tim Wohlforth
Member NAC YSL
Secretary, Left-Wing Caucus,
YSL

cc NAC YSL
All Units

LETTER FROM JAMES ROBERTSON TO A.J. MUSTE

Berkeley, Calif.
June 5, 1957

The Rev. A. J. Muste
New York, N.Y.

Dear Reverend Muste,

I would like to offer full and public support to the American Forum for Socialist Education on behalf of myself and of all the other comrades of the left wing of the Young Socialist League who are active in the regroupment forums in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The hostile reaction from many quarters to the public announcement of the formation of the American Forum has induced me to write you taking a clear position of solidarity with the AFSE as against those tendencies within the radical movement who have withheld their support either through sectarian considerations or in response to the witch-hunting press and Congressional attacks on the Forum.

I have never had occasion to write you before although our paths have crossed several times -- not only when you have been through the Bay Area speaking, but in particular I recall how impressed by you I was when you addressed the 1954 Young Socialist League founding convention at which I was a delegate. In recent months I have followed your outstanding contribution to facilitating the regroupment discussions in this country. This has been particularly a source of satisfaction to me because of my own involvement in helping inaugurate forum type groupings in the Bay Area, in particular the Independent Socialist Forum of San Francisco and the Berkeley Socialist Forum.

For several months we in this area had been hearing that a national forum formation largely initiated by you was impending and now that it is formally launched we are looking forward to collaborating in this venture in the hope of systematizing and extending across the country as inclusive a discussion as possible. In this connection I was glad to find that two of our local forum members, Fritjof Thygeson and Paul Baran, have accepted positions on your national committee.

I must make it clear that I am writing to you entirely in an unofficial capacity rather than as Bay Area chairman of the Young Socialist League since the national YSL has unfortunately seen fit to disassociate itself from the American Forum.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

cc. National Action Committee, YSL;
Tim Wohlforth, national committee member of
AFSE and secretary of YSL Left Wing Caucus;
LWC Steering Committee.

RESOLUTION OF THE DAYTON AREA UNIT, YSL,
ON THE AMERICAN FORUM FOR SOCIALIST EDUCATION

Submitted by Herschel Kaminsky

The Dayton Area Unit of the Young Socialist League welcomes the formation of the American Forum -- for Socialist Education as an important means of promoting the discussion on the American Left.

We hold no hard-bound formal theories regarding the pace, direction, or form of the regroupment process. Free and serious discussion of all political questions among all tendencies is on the order of the day. On certain issues we also consider united front action possible and desirable. No matter what path any future regroupment follows, we believe that, at the present time, the AFSE is a valuable means of channelizing discussion. While it is true that local discussions will take place without such a forum, it is obvious that discussion will be more adequately organized and extended throughout the country by the AFSE. The AFSE can also be expected to play a very useful role in focusing discussion on the central political questions of our time.

Immediately following the public announcement of its formation, the AFSE came under fire from the witch-hunting Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and from the entire capitalist press. We believe that the AFSE is honored by these attacks from enemies of socialism and civil liberties as well. Attacks on the forum have also come from so-called socialists. We denounce the statement of Herman Singer, speaking officially for the SP-SDF in the pages of the New York Times, as an act of active political collaboration with the witch-hunters. We further condemn the action of the SP-SDF NEC in threatening several members of the SP-SDF with expulsion if they do not withdraw from the AFSE. We consider this action to be a "subversive-list" technique which has no place in a supposedly socialist organization.

We affirm the right of any individual member of the YSL to participate in the AFSE, while making clear that his action does not, unfortunately, represent official YSL policy.

Passed unanimously, June 9, 1957