

August 22, 1958

Tim Wohlforth, Editorial Board
Young Socialist
144 2nd Ave, New York 3

Dear Comrade Wohlforth:

We have received your letter with regard to your proposal of discussions between the supporters of the Young Socialist, the Young Socialist League, and the Young People's Socialist League. The YPSL and YSL are answering this letter jointly in view of our common position on the question and our impending merger into a single organization.

We must first state that we regard your procedures as unusual, since you are, of course, quite aware of our attitude on the subject. The YSL policy was determined by the YSL Convention of 1957 in which you were a participant. The suggestion you now make is a repetition of the one which was overwhelmingly rejected by the YSL membership after a prolonged, democratic discussion. For these reasons, it appears to us that your letter, at least as far as you are personally concerned, is in the nature of a propagandistic maneuver rather than a serious proposal. However, we will re-state one of our main considerations on this subject since we are quite sure that others among you, who had not previously been in the YSL are sincere in their desire to direct such a letter to us.

For the general statement of the YSL position, we are enclosing a copy of the YSL 1957 convention resolution on socialist regroupment. The YPSL, in its 1957 Convention, adopted a resolution on socialist unification, a copy of which is enclosed. We trust that you will circulate these among your members and friends who wish to know our full policy. Needless to say, we stand by these documents, and currently look forward to our imminent merger.

On one point, however, we would like to restate our attitude in this letter. It concerns your conception of an "independent" youth organization. In recent times we have become more convinced than ever of the rightness of linking the perspectives for youth unity with those for adult regroupment. Thus, we are preparing to hold a convention for the purpose of forming the largest organization of democratic socialist youth seen in this country for a decade, one which will be affiliated to the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation.

First of all, we believe that our relation with adult regroupment is crucial to the fate of the socialist movement as a whole. We see the SP-SDF as the focus for a revival of American socialism in general, we feel that it can reach out to trade unionists, Negro militants, intellectuals and youth, and unite them in a single party of democratic socialism. We have been more and more convinced during the past year that the response to this development among unaffiliated socialists and among those now coming to socialism for the first time will mean a major breakthrough for the movement.

Consequently, we are going to build a youth organization which will be a loyal, affiliated section of the SP-SDF.

Secondly, we believe that there are political and practical problems which make youth "independence" unworkable. Politically, we're committed to an organization which is broad within the context of dedication to the principles of democratic socialism. We feel that your venture has demonstrated the non-viability of a group which attempts to temporize with basic political questions. As we have watched your development, we have noted that various concessions, designed to smooth over fundamental antagonisms, have not been satisfactory to anyone - not to those who make the concessions, not to those for whom they are made.

On practical grounds, too, we reject the notion of youth independence. We know full well how difficult it is to maintain a youth organization. The YSL has said before and repeats now, that the YSL's very existence has been made possible only because of the fraternal aid of the ISL; the YPSL is, of course, affiliated to the SP-SDF. We believe that your experience demonstrates that an attempt at youth "independence" means actual domination of the group by an adult tendency, or else continuous and paralyzing internal squabbles.

Our common perspective, we feel, is now being vindicated. We will soon go forward as an integral part of a nationwide growth of democratic socialism under the banner of the SP-SDF. So far, every indication which you have given is in opposition to these basic notions. For this reason, we see no possibility of fruitful discussions at this time.

In closing, let us say that if your group is sincerely and honestly concerned with the problems raised in the letter, then you must take blame for frustrating their wishes. You, certainly, were aware of our attitude when you drafted the communication. We therefore must say that we feel that these old-fashioned maneuvers hardly serve the cause of socialist unity - and that they are an affront to those of your members who were not as well informed as you. If we are to remain in separate organizations, and that certainly appears to be the case, the cooperation which you profess to seek will not be furthered by such tactics.

Fraternally,

/s/ Eldon Clingan
National Secretary,
Young People's Socialist League

/s/ Michael Harrington
National Chairman,
Young Socialist League