

YSA

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 10 No. 4
February, 1967

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20 Cents

YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

YSA, BOX 471, COOPER STATION, N.Y., N.Y. 10003

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NEC STATEMENT

The letters and supplementary statements included in this bulletin are documents pertaining to the charges brought against Lou Davis by the Philadelphia local, his trial and expulsion, his appeal, and correspondence with the National Office.

In his letter of August 24, 1966, Davis opened the case by requesting that the National Executive Committee review what he considered to be undemocratic restrictions placed on him by the Philadelphia local. Before reviewing Davis' complaint the National Office asked the Executive Committee of the Philadelphia local to explain their side of the case.

Before the Philadelphia Executive Committee could prepare this report, Davis clearly violated YSA discipline. The Philadelphia minutes of September 25, 1966 report that charges had been brought against Davis, a trial held, and that he was expelled. Davis subsequently appealed this decision to the NEC, which upheld the expulsion. He is now appealing the decision to the National Committee and the National Convention.

In his October 9, 1966 letter appealing the decision of the Philadelphia local to the NEC, Davis admits that, "The only valid charge is the accusation that I put up the June issue of Spartacist in a bookstore. This is a charge of indiscipline." This admission, in addition to the testimony of the Philadelphia YSA as to his indiscipline places Davis in clear violation of the 1965 convention resolution which states that "Membership in, support to, or collaboration with the Spartacist group or the American Committee for the Fourth International group is incompatible with membership in the YSA."

Since his expulsion Davis has demonstrated the insincerity of his appeal to the NEC and the National Convention by continuing to promote the Spartacist organization publicly. The letter received from John Benson, organizer of the Philadelphia local, on October 24 indicates that Davis distributed a Spartacist leaflet to a Communist Party meeting on September 30.

In addition on January 23, 1967 copies of Davis' appeal, Davis' letter of August 24, and John Benson's letter informing Davis of the trial and the charges were distributed outside the New York Militant Labor Forum by members of the Spartacist organization.

Davis is absolutely wrong when he states that his expulsion was a result of his political views. Davis would have had the complete right and responsibility to present his views during the pre-convention discussion and at the convention. They would have been discussed and voted upon by the entire membership.

But Davis did not do this. Rather, acting as an agent for an opponent organization, the Spartacist group, Davis publicly distributed Spartacist material, and collaborated with Spartacist leaders. He is charged with doing opponents' wrecking work in-

side the YSA not with holding positions contrary to the rest of the YSA.

Davis does not dispute the fact of his indiscipline but merely informs us that his concept of "democratic centralism" gives Davis, the individual, the right to stand above the norms and regulations of the YSA. That opinion he is entitled to hold and act upon--but not as a YSA member.

The NEC will ask the pre-convention National Committee plenum of the YSA to present a motion to uphold and commend the action of the Philadelphia YSA local in expelling Lou Davis.

February 22, 1967

Philadelphia, Pa.
August 24, 1966 .

TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE:

Dear Comrades,

I joined the YSA about one year ago after being appalled by the reformism of the social democratic and Stalinist movements. In the Trotskyist movement I found the only continuation of Bolshevism.

In the course of my work in the YSA I have developed a number of political differences with the comrades of the majority. My disagreements over the positions of the YSA arose under the pressure of world events when these events failed to be explained satisfactorily with the outlook of the YSA.

I will briefly summarize here my disagreements.

I reject the YSA's formulation that Cuba is a workers' state without any serious deformations. The social upheavals in Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, and Vietnam have been marked by revolts of the peasantry, which, if victorious, destroy the existing property relations and nationalize industry. In all these social revolutions we cannot fail to note the absence of the working class which demands and fights for state power, and the lack of the proletarian vanguard party.

Our characterization of the black . . . people as a national minority instead of an oppressed race-color caste and overwhelmingly a super-exploited layer of the working class (and therefore at the present stage the most conscious section of that class) adds the name of Trotskyists to the growing list of deceivers of the black workers. Instead of approaching the black workers on a class basis and therefore fusing working class demands with anti-racist ones, we give support to those segments of the freedom now movement which preach a color, not class, perspective. Our position on the freedom struggle--and our nonparticipation in that struggle--render the YSA totally defenseless in face of the charge that we have abandoned Marxism and the class struggle road to Negro equality.

My differences over the YSA's perspective for the anti-war movement stem from the fact that a class war can be ended only by a class movement and that a class movement cannot be built on a single issue and a single slogan. There are now serious openings in the ranks of the working class which would enable us to reach the workers. This is a necessity which the YSA refuses to see.

Comrades, the questions I raise are not new in the Trotskyist movement, but they cannot be disposed of by primitive name calling; neither can they be eliminated by anti-Bolshevik

organizational maneuvers. And this brings me to the purpose of my letter to the national leadership of the YSA.

On July 31 I was informed by Comrades John Benson, local organizer, and Robin Maisel, National Committee member, that I am forbidden to discuss my disagreements over our positions privately with other individual comrades of the YSA. I protested this infringement on the right of private discussion between YSAers. On August 3 I was told that at its meeting the Executive Committee of the Philadelphia YSA has decided to uphold the decisions made earlier by Robin and John.

As a Bolshevik I recognize the necessity of keeping the YSA from becoming a discussion club. A Bolshevik organization is a revolutionary action organization! It discusses in order to decide, and once decided, acts in a united body according to the decisions reached.

This is the Leninist conception of democratic centralism by which I abide. I certainly do not want to take up valuable meeting time to raise issues which have already been decided upon and thus to stall the work of the YSA.

But the prohibition imposed upon me is of an entirely different kind and purpose. One must reserve the right to privately discuss matters of mutual interest with other comrades of the YSA. This right is inherent in the conception of democratic centralism. To argue otherwise is to argue for Stalinism, the negation of democratic centralism.

Comrades of the NEC, I ask that you review this matter and in accordance with Leninist principles act to reverse the decision of the Philadelphia local executive committee.

Fraternally,
s/ Lou Davis

cc: Phila. E.C. of the Y.S.A.

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PO Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10003

August 29, 1966

Lou Davis
Philadelphia, Penna.

Dear Lou,

We have received your letter. In response I have asked John Benson, organizer of the Philadelphia local, to write a report giving the executive committee's side of the story.

Comradely,

s/ Lew Jones
National Chairman

Phila. Young Socialist
Alliance

Sept. 19, 1966

Lou Davis
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Lou,

The Executive Committee of the Philadelphia local of the Young Socialist Alliance this evening voted to place formal charges against you, detailed below, and has scheduled trial proceedings before a committee of the whole local for this Sunday, September 25, at 11:30 at 3518 Powelton Avenue.

The constitution of the YSA sets forth the following as the policy and procedure in cases such as this.

Article IX Discipline

1. All decisions of the governing bodies of the YSA are binding upon the members and subordinate bodies of the YSA.
2. Any member or body of the YSA may bring charges against any member for violation of the Constitution, program, or policies of the YSA.
3. Written charges shall be presented to the accused in advance of the trial. Charges shall be filed in the local unit where the accused is a member and shall be heard by a committee it sets up for this purpose.
6. Any member subjected to disciplinary action has the right to submit a written appeal to the next higher body, up to and including the National Convention. This appeal must be filed with the NEC within fifteen days after the action being appealed. Pending action on the appeal, the decision of the disciplinary body remains in force.

Article X Miscellaneous Provisions

1. All decisions of the YSA shall be made by a majority vote.
- The charges filed against you are:
1. Adherence to the program and policies of the Spartacist grouping.
 2. Distribution of Spartacist.
 3. Publicly attacking the policies and program of the YSA.
 4. Miscellaneous acts of indiscipline detailed below;
 - a. Attempting to form a faction outside the pre-convention discussion period.

b. Attempting double recruiting to the position of Spartacist.

c. Collaboration with leaders of Spartacist for the purpose of wrecking the YSA.

The above charges are in reference to the following:

1. Acknowledging to members of the YSA adherence to the program and policies of Spartacist.

2. Stating that the YSA should be destroyed to candidates of the YSA.

3. Attacking the program of the YSA in the presence of non-YSAers, specifically members of SDS.

4. Distributing, and acting as agent for Spartacist.

At the New Year's Convention of the YSA held in Chicago 1964-65 a resolution was passed stating that "Collaboration with and support of the American Committee for the Fourth International and Spartacist is incompatible with YSA membership."

You will be given equal time at the trial proceedings. The time allotted will be approximately one half hour.

Comradely,

s/John Benson
for the Executive Committee

Excerpts from the minutes of the Philadelphia local YSA
September 25, 1966.

4. Trial

E.C. Recommended procedure: ½ E.C. presentation, ½ hour
Lou, discussion, ten minutes summary E.C. and Lou, vote.

Amendment: Lou be given time to ask direct questions
of those he sees fit.

Carried

½ hour E.C.- Charges of disloyalty against Lou brought forth.

½ Hour - Lou

Discussion

Motion to Extend Discussion - Carried

Lou's question period.

Lou's summary

E.C. Summary

E.C. Motion: that Lou be expelled.

Motion for Closed ballots - 2 for 13 against

defeated

Motion for Open ballots - 12 for, 0 against, 3 abstentions

Carried

Vote on Motion for Lou's expulsion. Carried

Philadelphia, Pa.
October 9, 1967

National Executive Committee of the
Young Socialist Alliance
New York, New York

Dear Comrades,

On September 25 I was expelled from the Young Socialist Alliance after charges were placed against me by the Executive Committee of the Philadelphia YSA local. I am appealing my expulsion on the grounds that it is in violation of the Bolshevik conception of democratic centralism.

Because of the gravity of the charges against me and because the Executive Committee's motion called for my expulsion "in view of the charges," I feel that I must answer the charges against me.

The first charge against me is "adherence to the program and policies of the Spartacist grouping." But this is not a charge! It merely states that I disagree with the YSA and agree with the Spartacist League. John Benson, spokesman for the Executive Committee at the trial said that each charge all by itself merits expulsion. Does this "charge"--political differences-- merit expulsion? I am informed that I acknowledged to members of the YSA my "adherence to the program and policies of Spartacist." I have kept it no secret from the YSA that I am in basic political agreement with the Spartacist League, but can I (or rather, should I) be expelled from the YSA for this crime of different political ideas?

I am also accused of "publicly attacking the policies and program of the YSA," "specifically" in front of some members of SDS. Evidence for this charge was offered on two points: 1) At a recent YSA class at which non-YSAers were also present, I disagreed with Harry Ring's presentation on the expulsion of the Robertson tendency from the Socialist Workers Party. Does this mean "attacking the policies and program of the YSA?" Is it the program of the YSA to undemocratically expel comrades for the opinions they hold? 2) I was arguing with some YSAers against the SWP's support for Aptheker in the presence of several SDSers. The YSAers I was arguing with did not warn me that I was breaking discipline as was their duty to do. At the trial I said that the YSA did not issue a statement of support to Aptheker and therefore I am not obligated to defend a decision made by the leaders of the SWP. It was then that I was informed by Benson that indeed the YSA's NEC voted to support Aptheker. If this is true, then why were the rank and file members not notified of this decision by their leaders?

I am then charged with "miscellaneous acts of indiscipline," such as "attempting to form a faction outside of the pre-convention discussion period." I have done nothing more than discuss my

differences with YSAers. Is this "attempting to form a faction?" Is discussion an act of indiscipline? But according to the wording of the charge itself, I have not formed a faction but merely attempted to. Following the line of this logic, I am accused of attempting to break discipline!

Another charge is that of "attempting double recruiting to the position of Spartacist." Since at the trial Benson himself realized the phoniness of this charge, he changed the wording (though not on paper) from "attempting" to "advocating." Thus this time I am not even charged with attempting, but with expressing the opinion that I should attempt to commit an act of indiscipline.

I am then also charged with:

1) "stating that the YSA should be destroyed to candidates of the YSA," and 2) "collaborating with leaders of Spartacist for the purpose of wrecking the YSA." When I questioned the YSAer to whom I allegedly told the YSA should be destroyed, he replied: "Well, I don't remember if that's the exact wording, but you did say you are in basic political agreement with the Spartacist." What kind of proof is that? What sort of logic? This is something I would expect of Hoadly in Indiana.

Concerning the charge of "collaboration...for the purpose of wrecking the YSA," I was told a story that I offered to take two YSAers to Robertson and pay the way, and that several months ago I had a conversation with Robertson. I asked the YSAers if they can deny the fact that it was they who wanted to "see some Spartacists" and said that the only problem is money, and that it was then that I told them that if they need money I will lend it to them. I was here accused of trying to implicate them in an act which I committed.

Of all the charges placed against me only one remains a real charge. All others are phony charges which can in no way be substantiated. The only valid charge is the accusation that I put up the June issue of the SPARTACIST in a bookstore. This is a charge of indiscipline. The proper procedure in such a case would have been to warn me. Had I been told to stop, I would have done so.

But the YSA would have none of this democratic procedure. They were only too glad to get rid of me. On Monday night I was notified that charges were brought against me for being a "supporter of the Robertson grouping." On Wednesday I received the statement of charges against me; on Sunday I was expelled. Pretty fast work! But then, the YSA has had a lot of experience in this sort of activity.

And you, members of the National Executive Committee of the YSA, did not even bother acting upon the letter which I have recently sent you, in which I protested the fact that the leaders of the Philadelphia YSA prohibited me from discussing my

differences privately with comrades of the YSA. You either do not consider this matter of any importance, or you decided to add my name to the list of those to be expelled. How else can this be explained?

All this is only too reminiscent of 1938 Moscow.

Now comes the question: Why was I expelled?

At a time when the YSA pursues the classless single issue-single slogan approach in the anti-war movement; at a time when the YSA flirts with the extreme right-wing of the movement; at a time when the YSA supports the candidacy of Aptheker, a Stalinist whose platform is class collaboration and whose program is class peace; at such a time you expel the member who says "NO!" to all this revisionism!

This is clearly to set an example for other comrades who are opposed to the anti-Marxist course being followed by the YSA. And there is opposition!--Because the growing contradiction between what the YSA claims to be what it is in reality is too obvious to all those who think for themselves.

I hereby appeal my undemocratic and unwarranted expulsion from the YSA and request immediate reinstatement with full membership rights.

Fraternally,

s/ Lou Davis

To the NEC

Dear Comrades:

On Sunday September 25 the Philadelphia local of the YSA voted to expel Lou D. from membership. The charges were brought against him when two members he had attempted to recruit to his position reported his activities to the local. According to their reports he had been acting for some months as an agent of the Spartacist grouping. Without informing the YSA he had been in contact with Robertson and had made personal visits to see him. At one point he offered to pay the transportation of one comrade to New York in order to talk to Robertson. Lou had told these two comrades that he was in basic political agreement with the Spartacists and he was attempting to build a faction within the YSA, a faction which at some time would resign. He stated that there was no chance at all to convince the majority of members of his position. Finally, in an open and clear display of basic loyalties, he had supplied a bookstore with the Spartacist.

One of the listed charges is incorrect--attempting double recruiting. He advocated such a policy, but had not recruited anyone. Therefore such a charge cannot in anyway be substantiated, although it is clear that people he was working with were not being drawn closer to the YSA.

At the trial Lou admitted supplying the bookstore with the Spartacist, that he was attempting to recruit with the YSA to his position and that he had no chance of winning majority support. Such a position can only be interpreted as an attempt to win as many supporters as possible before leaving. He admitted, in his words, offering to lend money for the trip to New York and that he himself had made at least one such trip to see Robertson. He also said that although he had not known nor agreed with the Spartacists prior to joining the YSA, had he agreed with them he was sure that Robertson would have advised him to join.

All the other charges he denied. He did not adhere to the program and policies of the Spartacists. He was "in basic political agreement" with them. He did not publically attack the YSA program. To the best of his knowledge he only attacked positions and practices of the SWP, specifically support for the Aptheker campaign and the Robertson and Wohlforth expulsions. He denied that he advocated wrecking or destroying the YSA, and he had not collaborated with the Spartacists for this purpose. Rather he had discussions with Robertson which he refused to explain, he agreed with them on most issues including the need for their existence, he tried to recruit to their position, and he saw no hope of ever becoming a majority in the YSA.

By his own admissions, even accepting his semantical objections, Lou's position is clear. He has admitted that his basic loyalties lies with the Spartacist grouping rather than

than with the YSA.

Comradely,
s/ John Benson

Received October 24, 1966

To the NEC

Dear Comrades,

After the trial and expulsion of Lou D., the case against him became even more clear. We learned that he had been discussing the charges against him while he was still a member and telling non-YSAers that he would be expelled. One comrade had to attend another meeting during part of the trial. Several members of SDS that we were working with on anti-war work at Temple were also present. As the comrade was leaving they told him to tell Lou where they were and to meet them after his expulsion.

On Friday, September 30 the Communist Party held a meeting and Lou was distributing the enclosed leaflet. It speaks for itself.

Comradely,
John Benson

Received October 24, 1966

BLACK POWER AND THE C.P.
With Such Friends, Who Needs Enemies?

Tonight we have the pleasure of listening to Henry Winston, Chairman of the Communist Party, speak on the subject of Black Power. We cannot let this momentous occasion pass by without asking a few questions and offering some comments.

A great dilemma facing the freedom struggle today is the fact that the movement remains tied down to the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party, like its twin, the Republican Party, is controlled by the wealthy slumlords, plantation owners, and sweat shop bosses. It is no friend of the Black people, but rather, the instrument of the capitalist class used to brainwash the people into submission. To move forward, the civil rights movement must break with the Democratic Party.

How does the Communist Party feel about working within the Democratic Party? Why does the CP support phony "peace" candidates who run on the Democratic Party's ticket? What is your Party's stand, Mr. Winston, on Robert Kennedy, the former assistant to McCarthy, the man, who, as head of the Department of "Justice," refused to offer protection to the Black people when they were attacked by racist killers? Will he be your next "peoples' candidate?"

In Lowndes County, Alabama, the people have succeeded in forming the Black Panther Party, a party run by and for the Black people. This is a start, but it is not enough. The Black people must see themselves as a part of a large working class that encompasses persons of all complexions. Armed with the knowledge that Black and White workers face a common enemy, we must organize to take political power! A primary task for this purpose is the formation of a Freedom Labor Party as opposed to the two parties of racism, war, and exploitation. Inextricably tied up with the struggle for political power is the right to self defense. We must defend the Ghetto against the Klan, Nazis, rioting cops, and other racist thugs. To do this we must FORM A 'DEACONS FOR DEFENSE' IN EVERY NORTHERN GHETTO!

What is the Communist Party's stand on the Black Panther Party, the right to organized armed self defense? What is your position on the necessity of building a party of the working class? Is it with the Black workers, or is it with the white middle class liberals?

WHAT IS THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE?

We are a group of militant socialists who are dedicated to fighting for a better life for the majority of the people, the working class. This can only be achieved ultimately when the people have the power to control their own lives, socially, economically, and politically. We want to work with other people

with common aims in building a movement which can create this ultimate goal.

Read SPARTACIST, journal of revolutionary Marxism
Subscribe: six issues, 50¢ Box 1377, GPO, N.Y., N.Y. 10001

NEC STATEMENT ON THE LOU DAVIS EXPULSION

November 4, 1966

The Young Socialist Alliance does not allow agents of hostile opponent tendencies to operate within itself. In the case of the Spartacist League the 1965 convention passed a motion excluding them from the YSA, having found after several years experience that their political outlook and organizational maneuverings were totally incompatible with loyal membership in the YSA. That motion reads, "Membership in, support to, or collaboration with the Spartacist group or the American Committee for the Fourth International group is incompatible with membership in the YSA." Lou Davis tells us in very clear terms in his appeal, "I am in basic political agreement with the Spartacist League," and does not even bother to deny the related charges of collaboration with them. In light of this the NEC upholds and commends the Philadelphia local in expelling Lou Davis.

November 7, 1966

Lou Davis
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Lou,

In its meeting of November 4 the National Executive Committee of the YSA considered your appeal of October 9, 1966. The NEC has decided to uphold the decision of the Philadelphia local to expel you from the YSA.

If you wish to appeal this decision, your written desire to do so must be in our hands by November 23, 1966.

Sincerely,

s/ Lew Jones
National Chairman

Philadelphia, Pa.
November 20, 1966.

National Executive Committee,
Young Socialist Alliance
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrades,

This is in reply to your letter of Nov. 7 stating that you have considered my appeal and decided to uphold the decision of the Philadelphia YSA to expel me. This strikes me as very unusual.

I recognize in your actions an attempt to prevent my appeal from reaching higher bodies of the YSA--namely, the National Committee and the National Convention--and ask that you do not hold up my appeal.

Fraternally,
s/ Lou Davis

Received Nov. 22, 1966

December 14, 1966

Lou Davis
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Lou,

This confirms the receipt of your appeal of the decision of the YSA National Executive Committee to uphold your expulsion from the YSA by the Philadelphia local. We received your letter of November 20, 1966 on November 22, 1966.

Your appeal will be considered by the National Committee and the National Convention when they next meet, which will be in late March, 1967.

Sincerely,
s/ Lew Jones
National Chairman

Philadelphia, Pa.
December 24, 1966

Young Socialist Alliance
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your letter of Dec. 14 informing me that my appeal will be considered by the coming National Convention of the YSA.

Because of the seriousness and significance of my Sept. 25 expulsion from the YSA, I am requesting permission to appear in person before the National Convention. Only in this way is it possible to present to the Convention a fairer picture of my expulsion.

Please notify me of the date and place at which I am to appear before the National Convention and present my side of the story.

Fraternally,
s/ Lou Davis

February 1, 1967

Lou Davis
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Lou,

Regarding your appeal to the National Committee and the Convention of the YSA: Whether or not oral arguments in support of your appeal will be heard by the Convention is a decision the Convention itself must make. The entire written record of your expulsion and appeal will be presented to the membership. The convention delegates will decide to uphold or reject your appeal, as well as your request for oral presentation.

The Convention will be held in Detroit, Michigan, March 24, 25, and 26. The specific site is still being arranged.

Sincerely,
s/ Lew Jones
National Chairman