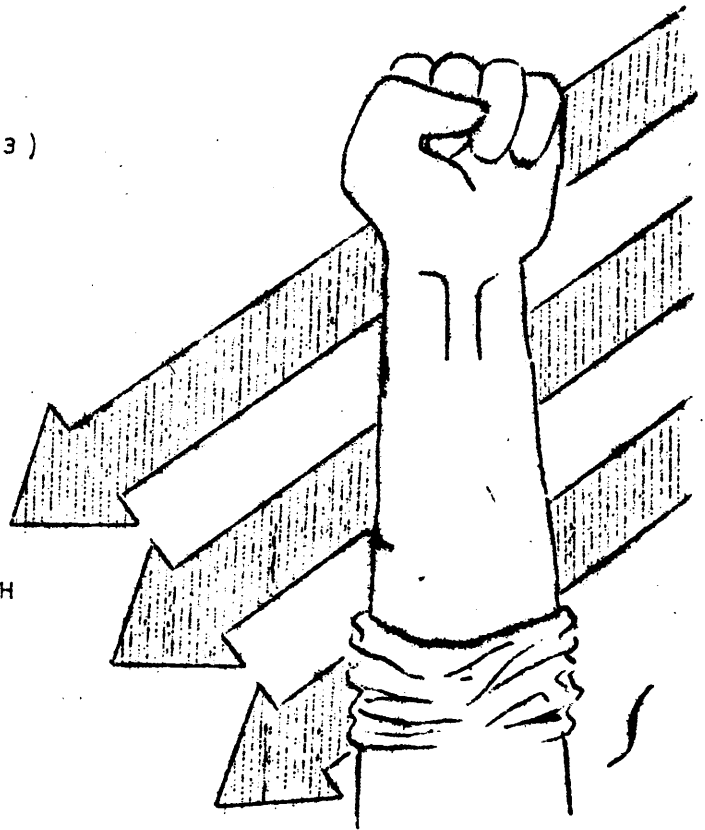


YPSL-SYL JOINT DISCUSSION BULLETIN

unity discussion issue

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

WHEN TWO POLITICAL GROUPS OF DIFFERENT ORIGIN AND TRADITION COME TOGETHER ON A COMMON POLITICAL PROGRAM, THERE OFTEN SUBSISTS A GREAT DEAL OF SUSPICION AND MISTRUST ON BOTH SIDES, AS A HANGOVER FROM PAST RIVALRIES. SUCH HAS, TO AN EXTENT, ALSO BEEN THE CASE IN THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP OF THE YOUNG PEOPLES SOCIALIST LEAGUE AND THE SOCIALIST YOUTH LEAGUE. WE FEEL THAT, IF A VIABLE UNITY IS TO BE ACHIEVED, THESE MISAPPREHENSIONS SHOULD BE REMOVED AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.

THIS SHOULD BE DONE IN TWO WAYS. ONE IS THE ALREADY EXISTING PROGRAM OF VERY CLOSE JOINT ACTIVITIES OF THE TWO GROUPS. THE OTHER IS A FULL, FREE, AND FRANK DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE TWO MEMBERSHIPS ON ALL QUESTIONS OF INTEREST TO THEM. FOR THIS PURPOSE THE YPSL AND SYL PUBLISH THIS JOINT DISCUSSION BULLETIN.

THE BULLETIN IS TO CONSTITUTE A FORUM FOR THE EXPRESSION OF ALL POINTS OF VIEW WITHIN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS. IT IS THEREFORE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS OF EITHER GROUP WHO MAY CARE TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR VIEWS. (IT SHOULD BE CLEAR THAT ARTICLES SIGNED BY INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT OFFICIAL STATEMENTS OF THE ORGANIZATION THEY MAY BELONG TO UNLESS THIS IS STATED.) IN ADDITION, CONTRIBUTIONS OF NON-MEMBERS WILL BE ACCEPTED, IF OF SUFFICIENTLY HIGH INTEREST. THE EDITORS RESERVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE IN THE CASE OF EACH SUCH ARTICLE. THE EDITORIAL BOARD, INCIDENTALLY, IS MADE UP OF ONE YPSL AND ONE SYLER--BOTH OF WHOM ARE RESPONSIBLE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS.

THIS PRESENT ISSUE IS DEVOTED TO A PRESENTATION OF DOCUMENTS AND POINTS OF VIEW IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE CURRENT SYL-YPSL UNITY NEGOTIATIONS, THE QUESTION OF MOST VITAL IMPORT AT THE MOMENT TO OUR MEMBERS. SUBSEQUENT ISSUES, HOWEVER, ARE NOT EXPECTED TO HAVE SUCH A CENTRAL THEME, AND CONTRIBUTIONS ON ALL SUBJECTS ARE INVITED. WE WOULD APPRECIATE IT GREATLY, AND IT WOULD ALLOW THE NEXT ISSUE TO APPEAR A GOOD DEAL SOONER, IF ARTICLES WOULD BE SUBMITTED ALREADY STENCILED.

THE EDITORS, NOVEMBER 25TH, 1953

(ARTICLES MAY BE SUBMITTED BY MAIL EITHER THROUGH YPSL, 24 CHARLES ST. OR SYL, 114 W. 14TH ST. (THIRD FLOOR)--BOTH ADDRESSES ARE IN NEW YORK, NEW YORK.)

SOCIALIST YOUTH LEAGUE
October 23, 1953

National Executive Committee
Young Peoples Socialist League

Dear Comrades:

The National Coordinating Committee of the Socialist Youth League sends its greetings to your National Executive Committee meeting and desires to utilize this occasion to address itself to you on the question of SYL-YPSL unity.

In the view of the SYL the most pressing need facing our two organizations is that of socialist youth unity. This results, in our opinion, from the political nature of our times and from the fact that our organizations are in substantial political agreement.

Our period is one of reaction; the Third Camp socialist movement in America is tiny and isolated. Under such circumstances, only divergent viewpoints on major political questions would justify third-camp socialists indulging themselves in the luxury of maintaining separate organizations, with the wasteful duplication of effort and the weakening of the movement as a whole which results from separate organization.

In the opinion of the SYL, such is fortunately not the case for us. The SYL and YPSL are in agreement on major questions, differing only on historical questions and on current questions of tertiary significance. It is our opinion that the differing opinions that do exist on these questions can live side by side in a unified organization, contending with each other in a comradely and democratic fashion, while we work together for our common aims.

The SYL feels so strongly on this question that it is willing to make what it regards as an enormous sacrifice to achieve socialist youth unity, namely its willingness to agree that the new socialist youth organization not be affiliated to the Independent Socialist League. We are ready to make such an agreement despite our extremely high regard for the ISL and for its membership, press, political ideology, and tradition, and despite our belief that it would be desirable for the new organization to be the youth affiliate of the ISL. We are ready to agree to non-affiliation of the new organization because we recognize that the YPSL would not at this time agree that the new organization be the youth affiliate of the ISL, and we do not wish to let our views on this question stand in the way of unity.

We believe that the new organization should be solely a youth organization, and not an adult or semi-adult organization. In this connection, we wish to express a protest to your negotiations with the Libertarian Socialist Committee, which apparently include provisions for the formation of adult branches after unity between YPSL and LSC. In any event, we believe that those adult branches the YPSL has at the time of unity between itself and the SYL have no organizational connection with the new organization and be independent from it, free to join the ISL, as we would recommend, or join another organization, or remain independent.

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Since we do not believe that there is any need, desirability, or viability for a youth "party", we feel that the new organization should declare at its founding convention that its perspective is to ultimately become the youth affiliate of an adult socialist organization. It is our view that the new organization should decide which adult group to affiliate to at its second convention.

The recent welcome developments in the Peacemakers has led some comrades of the YPSL to speculate that if close collaboration or perhaps even a federation were to result between the Peacemakers, ISL, YPSL, and SYL at the Third Camp Conference which the Peacemakers are calling, then YPSL-SYL unity might not be desirable. Some YPSL comrades seem to think that negotiations for and agreement on YPSL-SYL unity should be delayed until after the third-camp conference.

These views are mistaken, in our opinion, since we feel that the recent developments change nothing about the desirability of YPSL-SYL unity. Even if the closest collaboration between socialists and pacifists were to result from the forthcoming conference, independent socialist organization, education, and activity would be absolutely necessary since socialists and pacifists have different basic political views. All of the factors which make for YPSL-SYL unity would still be operating; the need for unification of our two organizations would remain.

The SYL believes that it is desirable therefore that there be no delay in reaching agreement on unity. We feel that the leading committees of our organizations should adopt a statement on unity and authorize their respective resident committees to proceed with negotiations on concrete details of unity at the unity convention. The National Coordinating Committee of the SYL proposes therefore that you endorse the draft statement we submit to you. It is our intention to submit it to the SYL National Committee for its approval.

It is our hope that we can reach agreement on this statement.

With warmest comradely greetings and wishes for Socialist Youth Unity.

National Coordinating Committee

Socialist Youth League

STATEMENT ON YPSL-SYL UNITY***

The Young Peoples Socialist League and the Socialist Youth League, recognizing that the political situation of these times requires Third Camp socialist unity, and that their organizations are in substantial political agreement, declare:

- 1) That the two organizations are currently allied in the closest possible united front.
- 2) That it is the aim of the YPSL and SYL to organically unite themselves into a new socialist youth organization at a unity convention to be held in the Spring of 1954.
- 3) That they will actively seek to contact and involve all other third-camp socialist individuals and groups who are in substantial political agreement with the YPSL and SYL and who wish to be a part of the new socialist youth organization, and that the call to the convention be sent to other such individuals and groups as the YPSL and SYL may agree upon.
- 4) That the new socialist youth organization be for a time not affiliated to any adult socialist organization and that members of the organization, however, have the right to be also members of any adult socialist organization that they may desire to belong to.
- 5) That the new organization, while temporarily unaffiliated to an adult organization, declare itself at its founding convention to be solely a youth organization whose perspective it is to ultimately affiliate to an adult socialist organization. That, furthermore, it is the view of the YPSL and SYL that such a decision for affiliation be made by the new organization within a maximum period of one year after the founding convention.
- 6) That it is the view of the YPSL and SYL that the new organization should at its founding convention endorse and support LABOR ACTION and declare itself to have a fraternal relationship with the INDEPENDENT Socialist League.
- 7) That it is the view of YPSL and SYL that the new organization be organized on the widest democratic principles with guarantees to all members and groups of their rights to form caucuses and publish discussion bulletins; and furthermore that the new organization itself have a membership-wide discussion bulletin. Furthermore, YPSL and SYL declare that election of convention delegates and members of all committees in the new organization be on the basis of proportional representation.
- 8) That it is the view of YPSL and SYL that the new organization collaborate with other "Third Camp" groups, both socialist and pacifist, in pursuit of common aims.

*** (The above statement is a proposed joint statement, drafted by the SYL NCC, and is the "draft statement" referred to in the preceding letter of the SYL NCC to the YPSL NEC. --the editors.)

[Re-typed]

(The following is the statement of the preceding page with YPSL's proposed alterations--as adopted by the YPSL NEC. -- the editors.)

PROPOSED STATEMENT ON YPSL-SYL UNITY

It is not the intention of the SYL or the YPSL to join the other organization as a group, nor to ask the other organization to join it as a group. It is our intention to form a new socialist youth organization which will differ from both the YPSL and the SYL. As a result of this perspective, we shall make every effort to contact all third camp socialist groups and individuals. It is to be hoped that a significant number of members of the unity convention will be previously unaffiliated third camp socialists. We therefore call for the broadest possible new socialist youth organization, with two minimal criteria: opposition to both war camps and a principled civil liberties position.

The Young People's Socialist League and the Socialist Youth League, recognizing that the political situation of these times requires third camp socialist unity, and that their organizations are in substantial political agreement, declare:

1. That the two organizations are currently allied in the closest possible united front.
2. That it is the aim of the YPSL and the SYL organically to unite into a new socialist youth organization at a unity convention to be held in the spring of 1954.
3. That they will actively seek to contact and involve all other third camp socialist individuals and groups who are in substantial political agreement with them, and who wish to be part of the new youth organization. That the call to the convention be sent to other such individuals and groups as the YPSL and SYL may agree on.
4. That the new socialist youth organization be for a time not affiliated to any adult socialist organization; however, that the members have a right also to be members of any adult socialist organization they wish.
5. That the new organization, while temporarily unaffiliated to an adult organization, declare itself at its founding convention to be solely a youth organization, whose perspective it is to affiliate ultimately to an adult socialist organization. That, furthermore, it is the view of the YPSL and SYL that such a decision on affiliation be made by the new organization within a maximum period of one year after the founding convention.
6. That it is the view of the SYL and YPSL that the new organization may endorse and support publications of other socialist organizations and declare itself to have fraternal relationships with other socialist organizations.
7. That it is the view of the SYL and YPSL that the new organization be organized on the widest democratic principles, guaranteeing to all members and groups the right to form caucuses and publish discussion bulletins; furthermore, that the organization itself have a membership-wide discussion bulletin. YPSL and SYL declare that election of convention delegates and members of all committees in the organization be on the basis of proportional representation.
8. That it is the view of SYL and YPSL that the organization collaborate with other third camp groups, both socialist and pacifist, in pursuit of common aims.

THE Y.P.S.L. POSITION ON SOCIALIST YOUTH UNITY

(This article was prepared by instructions of the YPSL NEC as a amplifying statement on unity.)

While the YPSL NEC has issued out a clear and simple "proposed statement on unity" it appears that, at least, for our comrades of the SYL it is necessary to spell our position out more clearly.

There is a natural confusion of aims, as far as the two organizations are concerned, primarily based on the fact that the SYL is the youth section of the I.S.L. and consequently looks at this unity (no matter how formulated) as in essence involving the YPSL's entry into the ISL-SYL. Convinced of the fact that logic and correct policy will lead us in this direction the SYL is willing to delay the "inevitable" by agreeing that the new youth organization not be officially connected to any adult organization. Nevertheless this view of our comrades of the SYL so influences its thinking that for example they propose in a formal joint statement that we endorse Labor Action - which all legalities aside is the organ (agitational and theoretical) of the ISL. The YPSL could not accept this, it considers this to be one of the questions that a unity convention can best settle, it is willing to see chapters and branches of the new youth organization distributing the paper but endorsement i.e. the acceptance of responsibility for the political and organizational line of the L.A. would be the abdication of the YPSL as an independent political organization. This we are unwilling to do.

The YPSL is politically committed to socialist youth unity. This means that our organizational line is based on the current united front with the SYL and the fact that we expect unity convention to take place this Spring. However when the comrades of the SYL ask that we absolutely commit ourselves to unity they are asking for something else, that we commit ourselves in advance that a) we will accept any decision of the unity convention b) that no matter what happens between now and the Spring we will remain pro-unity. ((Now the NEC does not think that any drastic item will come up making unity impossible - otherwise we would not be discussing unity - but we want to keep a free hand to carry out the trust that the YPSL rank and file has voted in us by electing us to conduct the YPSL business to the best of our ability)).

Several other items influence the YPSL stand on unity. The YPSL regards itself as a political tendency with a line of its own. This line makes it logical that we unite with other third camp socialists. It also makes it necessary for us to see to it that some organization carrier of our ideas exists after unity. The SYL members who are dual members of the SYL-ISL, Labor Action and the New International all will act as strong magnets attracting members of the joint organization to the ISL's political views. If the YPSL makes no effort to have some form of publication it will inevitable vanish as an independent political grouping. In order to prevent this, as well as to assure that adults who are at present unwilling to join the ISL can participate in the YPSL the NEC is setting up the Socialist League. The Socialist League will be composed of older YPSLs and its primary work will be the publication of a magazine which will present our views to the new youth organization and to our joint periphery. It is no more reasonable for the SYL to object to the Socialist League than it would be for us to object to the SYL's continuing relationship with the ISL.

Our underlying conception of unity as a getting together of two independent third camp socialist groups is apparently hard to accept. The difficulty is that every organization conceives of itself as the carrier of the correct ideas and therefore views any and every objection raised by comrades holding similar views, but belonging to a different organization as "invalid". If the SYL is concerned with

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The YPSL position on Socialist Youth Unity (page 2)

certain "incorrect views" expressed by members of our leading committees in a discussion of unity it is well to point out that the YPSL has never had a chance to hear any discussion of unity on the part of the SYL's committees. These committees have always met in closed session and not only refused to admit any observers from the YPSL to their deliberations but have even refused to inform the YPSL of any divisions of opinion among their committees. The YPSL receives the end product of long discussions and for all we (officially) know the SYL is absolutely monolithic on this question. This not only poisons the discussions we have but makes frank discussion almost impossible.

The organizational formalism of the SYL manifested, for example in the above case, is one of the most disturbing items with which the YPSL has to contend. Allied to its formalism is the obvious refusal of the SYL to accept any but SYL-ISL politics as serious politics which cannot be discussed until it has been experienced. The patience of our committees and members has often been tried in such a manner that super-human willingness to compromise and smooth over differences was called for. Unfortunately the YPSL-NEC, which split from the SP, is not the most patient of bodies and the easing up of the present rather tense atmosphere would do wonders to further the cause of unity.

All the ifs and buts aside however the YPSL takes the perspectives of a united socialist youth organization with utmost seriousness. One of the main reasons, if not the main reason why we were forced to leave the Socialist Party was the fact that the Party stood in the way of third camp unity. We consider the unity of the third camp socialist forces in the youth field so important that we have been willing to loose members over this question. The reason is clear - two plus two add up to more than four when organizations are involved. A united organization can by pooling the available resources undertake many projects that are beyond either the YPSL or the SYL, it will probably be able to attract far more members than both of the organizations combined. Most basic of course is the current agreement on war and imperialism - the two questions that determine the nature of any organization in the present day world. Both the YPSL and the SYL are in firm opposition to the policies of both imperialist war camps and work for a Socialist Third Camp.

Our View of the Procedure involved in unity is as follows:

- 1) The current united front is to continue, ever closer actual working relations between our two organizations and continuing discussion should remove the last few barriers to unity.
- 2) Before a joint unity convention the two national committees draft a joint proposed program for the Convention, they also agree on the rules and representation at the Convention.
- 3) The unity Convention is held in the Spring, the program is hammered out and a new NEC and resident committee is elected on the basis of proportional representation. All factions are given the right to publish their own publication.
- 4) The Conventions of the two organizations involved ratify the unity convention and dissolve in favor of the new youth organization. Period.

by Bogdan Denitch as Chairman of the YPSL NEC

(written in his official capacity)

NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE, SOCIALIST YOUTH LEAGUE, NOVEMBER 12, 1953

TO: National Executive Committee
Young Peoples Socialist League

Dear comrades,

We are in receipt of the minutes of your meeting of October 24th and of the version of a "proposed statement on YPSL-SYL unity" which you adopted at that meeting as well as a communication from comrade Danitch, dated October 28th, requesting, in the name of your committee, that the SYL invite a representative of the YPSL to attend those sessions of the meetings of our leading committees at which SYL-YPSL unity is discussed.

We are perplexed by and dissatisfied with these developments and, frankly, find it difficult to know how to reply to them. Comrade Danitch, in his letter, describes the developments at the meeting of your committee as "a further step to organic unity." We desire very much to be able to share this evaluation but the facts compel us to have serious doubts that it is warranted.

In the first place, we note with regret that your committee did not see fit to approve that section of the Unity Statement we submitted to you which declares "that it is the view of the YPSL and SYL that the new organization should at its founding convention endorse and support LABOR ACTION..." We cannot understand your refusal to favor the endorsement by the new third-camp socialist youth organization of the only significant third-camp socialist newspaper. We are also afraid that there is significance in the fact that your negotiating committee declined to recommend this to you after having originally declared itself at a negotiations meeting to be in support of this proposition. The current YPSL viewpoint even appears to be back-tracking on the statement which occurs in the YPSL National Organization Committee statement "On Leaving the Socialist Party" to wit, "...our willingness to support LABOR ACTION as the political organ of Third Camp Socialism".

More important, however, is the fact that the discussion at your meeting which lay behind the adoption of the amendment to our statement--said amendment now standing as a preamble to your "proposed statement"--raises serious doubts about your being in favor of unity with the SYL as a primary perspective at this time. This discussion revealed that many members of your committee are in favor of YPSL-SYL unity only if such unity results in attracting large numbers of new members to the founding convention of the new socialist youth organization. It further revealed that many of your members do not therefore feel committed to unity with the SYL, reserving the right to call unity off at any time up to and including the day of the unity convention. It is possible to interpret this discussion in a fashion that would indicate that many of your members are speculating about doing precisely this.

To confirm these doubts there lies before us a statement of position adopted by the meeting of your committee which reads in part as follows: "...we have made no absolute commitment to it (i.e., unity)" This statement further says that you have yet "to determine whether the unity which now seems desirable is, in fact, desirable."

This position seems to us to contradict and indeed negate the "unity statement" which you adopted.

The SYL, it seems to us, has a much firmer and clearer position on unity. We have determined that the unity which now seems desirable is, in fact, desirable.

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Moreover, although we naturally hope and believe that many new people will be attracted to the unified socialist youth organization, and although we intend to work towards this result, we do not set as a condition for unity that these efforts be successful. Indeed it is our view that even if not one new person is attracted to our unified organization unity is still desirable.

As a matter of fact, it is our point of view that if it should even turn out that there are some people who are socialists not previously affiliated to YPSL or SYL—we don't believe that this will be the case—but if it should turn out that there are such persons who would look with disfavor upon YPSL-SYL unity we would not then decide to call the unification off. Under such circumstances, it is our view, we should proceed firmly towards unity and both of our organizations should endeavor to convince such persons that their views are mistaken; that they belong in the ranks of the new organization.

If the YPSL had similar views then we would indeed be close to unity; all that would remain would be to settle details and to plan for the unity convention. Unfortunately this does not seem to be the case.

The SYL faces a problem therefore. If it assumes that the YPSL shares its views on unity and proceeds to prepare and organize for a unity convention, absorbing itself and expending its energies in this matter, and then if the YPSL decides it does not really desire unity, we will then have wasted nine months in fruitless efforts. Some of our members feel that this is precisely what awaits us. There are those in our ranks who even feel that we are wasting our time needlessly in continuing these negotiations so long as we lack a clearer indication that the YPSL desires unity with the SYL.

For these reasons we are requesting that the National Executive Committee of the YPSL clarify its position on this question. Specifically we propose that you adopt the position of committing yourselves to unity with the SYL.

In regard to the communication from comrade Denitch, permit us to say the following. We frankly object to the tone of this letter. In the first place, such a request has not been made before. Secondly, we reject the implications that our not having invited a representative of the SYL to the meetings of our committees at which unity is discussed, is equivalent to lack of "responsibility" or "above-board-dealing" on our part—especially since this is the first time the question has been raised. Thirdly we would suggest that it is the matters we have referred to and not this question which has made unity sentiment suffer.

In regard to the request itself we have adopted the following position. Were both organizations firmly committed to unity and in agreement on it, then we feel that this request would be in order. We have therefore adopted the position that at the time when both organizations are clearly and firmly committed to unity, representatives of the YPSL will be invited to attend all sessions of our committee meetings devoted to this question.

In the interim we believe that it is desirable to proceed with publication of the joint discussion bulletin. This bulletin may help serve the useful purpose of initiating such clarification. We are instructing our representative on the editorial board to contact your representative for purposes of arranging for the first issue. It is our view that the publication of the documents and communications which have passed between us on this question in the last few weeks is desirable. Needless to say, we are for the continuation of the close united front we are engaged in and for complete collaboration on all levels as well as for continued negotiations.

With comradely greetings and wishes for socialist youth unity, fraternally,

National Coordinating Committee, SYL

PLAIN TALK ON THE UNITY QUESTION

Now that the YPSL has severed all ties to the Socialist Party, and is politically and organizationally autonomous, the formal barriers to unity no longer exist. Official unity negotiations between the YPSL and the SYL have been underway for some months and the prospects for the creation of a new third-camp socialist youth organization in the near future should be very real. At this stage the problems before us should be those relating to the precise conditions of unity and the planning of the unity convention. Unfortunately, however, several new "problems" have been raised and it has become increasingly evident that a climate of unclarity exists in certain very important areas. It is therefore necessary to examine these "problems", their nature, and the nature of those who raise them, in the context of a discussion of the unity question in general.

We of the SYL are firmly and strongly in favor of unity--the conditions of which to be democratically negotiated between the responsible bodies of our two organizations--and regard the question of unity as the major question before us today. We have demonstrated the strength of our desire for unity on numerous occasions. Most obviously in our concession on the extremely important (to us at least) question of affiliation to the ISL, and, more recently, in our willingness to invite YPSL observers to the closed meetings of our leading committees (once YPSL has committed itself to unity) in spite of a strong tradition in our movement against such a policy. The correctness of our beliefs or traditions is not the point in question, the point is, simply stated, that we have concretely demonstrated, by our actions, that we are not "inflexible" or "sectarian", but rather that we are exactly the opposite. We have been willing to make concessions of the most important nature to achieve an end desired by every serious third camp socialist youth in America today. That end is UNITY.

The areas of political agreement between the YPSL and the SYL (as the two significant third camp youth groups) make it desirable, if not mandatory, for us to unite our forces into a single organization. The situation of having two separate organizations, that agree with each other on every key question (as YPSL has defined the key questions*) and function in essentially the same arenas in essentially the same way, cannot be justified. This feeling, I presume, was shared by YPSL when on August 27th it stated: "We are politically committed to building a new youth organization with the Socialist Youth League."

In view of this statement (and others) it is startling to us that certain leading members of the YPSL have suddenly adopted a policy which is, in essence, anti-unity. These anti-unity sentiments have been founded on the shallowest bases imaginable and are, when objectively analyzed, esoteric nonsense--at best.

One "problem" frequently raised when discussing unity is the old bug-a-boo of "Bolshevik discipline". Those who honestly raise this are simply uninformed. The fact is that the practice and theory of "discipline" is almost identical in the YPSL and the SYL--with YPSL being, if anything, more strictly disciplined than the SYL. Semi-skilled metaphysicians may conjure into being some sort of "ideological disciplines", which they claim runs rampant in the SYL, but which, to be factual, exists solely in the realm of The Bolshevik Myth (which is, by the way, the supreme product of this school of invention). A close relative--or at least a near neighbor--of this type of "thinker" is the Ultimate Sectarian, to whom the

* This reference is to the August statement of the YPSL "On Leaving The Socialist Party". Quotations later in the text are from this same source.

main issue of the day is still the Kronstadt rebellion of thirty-odd years ago, and the Single Burning Question of The Hour is "Who stole the Keokuk County mimeo machine in 1992?" Being generous of nature, by virtue of our socialist views, we, whether of the YPSL or SYL, who have a living interest in building the Third Camp are quite willing to let such individuals fill the choice little cubby-holes that history has obligingly set aside for them. We reserve the right, however, to register our resentment when they persistently insist that we become their ideological room-mates.

The most openly anti-unity elements in YPSL are those who have indicated that they are not in favor of unity if at least one fourth or one third of those attending the unity convention are not from non YPSL-SYL sources. Some who hold this point of view make it even clearer by proposing that the YPSL walk out on the very day of the unity convention if this "one fourth or one third" does not present itself. It should be unnecessary to mention that the SYL hopes that unaffiliated individuals will be attracted to the unity convention, will work hard to get them to come, but if (on the very day of the unity convention if you will) not even one "new" person is present, our attitude toward the desirability of unity will not in the slightest degree alter. It should now be clear why the SYL has constantly pointed out that we must work toward unity not on the basis of attracting large numbers of non-affiliated individuals--"large numbers" of such people who would immediately join being for the most part fictional--but, rather, on the sound political basis for unity which does exist. Those who favor unity only if it will mean an organization significantly larger than the combined forces of the present YPSL and SYL are in reality opposed to unity.

The more subtle--and dangerous--threat to unity comes from another quarter. Namely, those who offer "profound" arguments which can really be reduced to one question and one question alone: Does the YPSL have some special role to play that could not be fulfilled by a joint organization? The answer to this question can be easily stated. That is, NO. YPSL is not a bridge between revolutionary pacifists and revolutionary socialists for the simple reason that no such bridge is needed. To the extent that there is a basis for pacifist-socialist collaboration, such collaboration requires no "middle-men"--rather, such "middle-men" obstruct honest collaboration. Through the SYL's cooperation (along with other groups) with the Peacemakers in planning and preparing for the Third Camp Conference, it has become apparent that "revolutionary socialists" and "revolutionary pacifists" need no "bridge" or intermediary to work together on common projects for common ends to the extent that we can do so honestly in view of our very real differences. Those YPSL's, if they do exist, who conceive of their role as the most unflattering one of being a "bridge" have been spared the indignity of being walked over.....which is to say, they have been proven wrong.

If these anti-unity elements in YPSL (and I assume that they are a minority) have some other basis for believing that YPSL can play some important special role that a joint organization could not, let them state their case openly so that members of both our groups will be able to discuss and evaluate them for what they may be worth.

In the meantime, for those of both the YPSL and SYL who are unity oriented, the advantages of a unified organization are so obvious that only those utterly blinded by factional or sectarian considerations can possibly fail to see them. Among other things unity would mean a combination of our forces and an end to senseless duplication in a period when even an ounce of energy is a rarity. It would mean a strengthening of the far too weak position of the third camp in the youth and student field. Instead of competing with each other, in the area of recruitment for example, we could present students and young workers and intellectuals with

one third camp group, combining the best features of the existing two. The prospects of growth (in size, level of education, and extent of influence) are far greater for a unified organization than for either the YPSL or SYL existing separately. This is but a small part of the total case for unity but special considerations (and the nature of this article) make it more appropriate and to the point to call upon those who obstruct unity to defend their position.

Why, for example, are they so hesitant that they vote against YPSL committing itself to unity (therefore reversing the position expressed by YPSL in August and quoted above)? Why do they now oppose the proposal that the unified organization support LABOR ACTION and express itself in fraternal solidarity with the ISL? Again, by the way, in contradiction to the same YPSL statement which stated: "the broad programmatic and political agreement that already exists is sufficient for us to support close cooperation and fraternal ties between the new youth organization and the ISL, and it extends to our willingness to support LABOR ACTION as the political organ of Third Camp socialism."

It is to be hoped that the pro-unity members of YPSL will democratically over-rule those in their leadership who are engaged in erecting false and unprincipled barriers to unity, and repudiate the anti-unity views by committing the YPSL to unity in a positive and unmistakable way. Such a commitment is now necessary. It will demonstrate that those in YPSL who oppose unity (either "objectively" or openly) are a minority, and it will lay a solid foundation for entering into the final stages of unity negotiation.

Some may raise objection to the "tone" of this article, and others (most probably those who find their views under attack) may find it profitable to howl and scream loudly about "polemics". And it is from precisely such elements that many of the anti-unity views are culled and the threat to unity comes. The person who holds his socialist views seriously, whether he be a YPSL or an SYLer, will not let considerations of this sort stand in the way of an objective evaluation of the points I have briefly attempted to make, whatever his stylistic tradition or taste may be. We have reached the stage where we must speak bluntly, either for or against unity, and reject the "maneuvering tact" so alien and harmful to meaningful discussion and negotiation. We who are serious socialists (YPSLs and SYLers alike) must, in my opinion, stand firmly committed to THIRD CAMP SOCIALIST YOUTH UNITY. If others choose to stand elsewhere, let them declare themselves now!

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member, National Coordinating Committee, SYL

(It should be clearly understood that the views expressed above are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the SYL. S.A.)

November 20, 1953

ON SOCIALIST UNITY ET. AL.

"If it were done when it were done
Then it were well it was done quickly....."

Most of the problems that have arisen in the course of discussion about socialist youth unity are artificial and based on a very thinly diluted organizational chauvinism in the two youth organizations. In addition a small wing of the YPSLs is in firm opposition to unity out of ignorance, while a not inconsiderable number of SYLers supports unity, out of ignorance. ((Both ignore the same fact, that neither the YPSL nor the SYL are what they in official documents pretend to be - the SYL is not a "firm disciplined bolshevik cadre" and the YPSL is not in its entirety composed of mush-heads who will give up their "obviously incorrect" ideas the minute the SYL gets a chance to educate them in a joint organization)). Thus while the YPSLs may talk from now to doomsday about their "lack of discipline" the fact is that in all probability in any joint organization they will maintain their political ideas and defend with the same ferocity that the SYL may use it attacking them.

As one of the YPSL members most concerned with maintaining the independent political role of the current YPSL as a tendency within the joint organization I have become more and more convinced that unity should not be delayed any further. In the first place what most YPSLs forget is the fact that new organization will be by avoiding the current organization duplication and pooling the work give more time for political discussion, factional publications etc. They also forget that a joint organization will not and cannot be politically monolithic for the simple reason that if only a faction of our members entered a new tendency would exist in the joint organization. The new organization will provide a broader arena for both of us as well as an antidote to sectarianism. On the other hand as long as we remain as separate organizations the political discussions are beclouded by the organizational loyalties of the two and a sane discussion is difficult. Also time is awasting. While we are engaged in discussions we cannot go out and work as well as we should and much energy is uselessly wasted, not to speak of the fact that at least as far as the YPSL is concerned the "indeterminate status" that we are now in is an impossible one to continue ad infinitum.

What has struck me as both educational and interesting is the fact that most of the opposition to unity in both organizations comes from those least active in them. Members of the SYL and YPSL seems to be pro-unity in direct proportion to the amount of work they do - since much of the work would be joint work in any case. In the case of the YPSL for example, what the anti-unity people are saying, is: we are opposed to unity, we however cannot be active, therefore why don't you - you pro-unity Yipsels who are carrying the organization go on working your (heads) off maintaining an organization for us. As one of the active people who have been carrying the YPSL my position on this particular "oblomovite" tendency is simple - until you show why you are necessary to the organization, until you show that you can carry the organization - we will press for unity. The old maxim - "They who work eat" can thus be changed to: "Let them who work decide".

Again to enumerate the advantages of unity would be beating a dead horse. Only one statement is necessary - neither the YPSL nor the SYL are national organizations in any real sense of the word. Jointly we will compare very favorably to the existing youth political organizations (we will for one thing be the largest radical political organization in the youth field). Unfortunately most anti-unity people are anti-organizational - that is anti-activity.

There are some serious, if not objections, then reservations about unity that should however be discussed.

(more)

To begin with the united organization will immediately be smeared with the trotskyist label by the social-democrats in the youth field. Also a job of character assassination within the pacifist movement against our people has already begun. If we unite it will be intensified. (E.G. Harrington, one of the pacifist-socialists on the YPSL NEC was attacked as a trotskyite while running for a post in a pacifist organization by the SP member there). This will not be helped by the revolutionary romanticism of many of the SYLers who seem constitutionally unable to conceive of working through an open organization. Therefore let me state right now -- the new youth organization will not last a month unless it is agreed to leave most of the current conspiratorial nonsense surrounding the SYL out of it. For example :

- a) The leading committees will meet openly, members will be able to observe and thus exercise a control over their leadership.
- b) Membership meetings will be open to our periphery.
- c) Our members functioning in other organizations will function openly as socialists, etc., etc.

Otherwise there will be trouble from the outset.

A couple of other friendly hints:

- a) Lay-off the bolshevik revolution, a sure sign of sectarianism is the incessant discussion and attention to the Russian question. Needless to say the new organization will not have a position on the Bolsheviks, what I am talking about is the obsessive need some comrades seem to have to discuss Kronstadt (pro-and-con).
- b) In study classes and statements of the organizations let us try to talk American English, and avoid marxist jargon.
- c) Most important -- avoid "as if" discussions i.e. discussions on war where we hear the statement "... we are not opposed to war, why if America were socialist "... this avoids bledshed but most of avoids fantasies. I see no reason why we should split ahead of time on the basis of what attitude we would take if a socialist America were to use a Hydrogen bomb against Russia (The bulk of the YPSLs would split from any organization that would state that it would support a full blown modern war if it were waged by a "socialist state"). The point is that this type of discussion is irrelevant in an America where any radicalism that is likely to take place is a radicalism of the extreme right.

I think that we have a good opportunity to build a solid broad revolutionary socialist youth organization, with particular attention to agreements and great willingness to cooperate and try to work together in fullest spirit of unity we should be able to launch the new organization this Spring. Unity is already overdue.

In the meantime those YPSLs who are serious about their political ideas, who do want to continue advocating them and spreading them after unity should start working on the Socialist League and its publication. And the slogan should be:

"Unity in action -- Freedom of Discussion and Education"

by Begdan Benitch

CONVERSATION PIECE

BY Robert Ilson
member of YPSL

Here are my three assumptions; I shall not defend them in this article, although I may in others:

1. In a society based upon class division a tendency toward bureaucracy is inevitable in any organization, even in an organization trying to overthrow it.

2. The internal structure of an organization tends to be paralleled in the structure of any society (or social group) over which that organization has power.

3. The fundamental problem of our strategy is how to build up from the day-to-day limited struggles of the masses a revolutionary program which the masses will accept in a crisis situation.

Upon these assumptions I have constructed an idea of a revolutionary organization.

I envision an organization without officers, without dues, without membership requirements - without members in the formal sense. Free discussion will replace voting in this organization; it will exert no discipline over persons associated with it.

How will such an organization act? It will rarely act - as an organization. It will have a minimum of distinct organizational life although it is capable of having as much as is necessary. But its "members" - individuals cooperating of their own free will - will act. They will act in and through the organizations of the masses on every level.

Social reformers, realizing the problem stated in my third assumption, have in the past developed two methods of solving it. They became either reformists or sectarians. Either they immerse themselves completely in the struggles and organizations of the masses and refuse even to propagandize the necessity for comprehensive change, or they remove themselves from those struggles entirely, remaining "pure" but losing all chance of reaching the people. In a crisis (or potentially revolutionary) situation the second cannot act, the first does not act or acts in a counter-revolutionary way.

Observing the failures of both approaches - decisive failures - I propose a new alternative. We must participate in the struggles of the masses on every level - and that includes participating in the organizations of the masses - even their political organizations. (It does not, however, include participating in the armed forces or any other part of the war machine.) But we must participate in those struggles and in those organizations as a left opposition.

CONVERSATION PIECE (continued)

We must participate in the struggles and organizations of the masses .

1. to influence individuals and to gain the people's confidence
2. to more effectively criticize the reformist and centrist leadership (bureaucracy) of those organizations and their tactics
3. to gain reforms (Reforms are not bad. They cannot in any way be contrary to or impede the revolution. If they were or did in any way there would be no need for revolution and revolution would be impossible.)
4. to gauge our activities according to the ideological level of the masses.

To elaborate on my Point 4: One of the greatest weaknesses of the sectarians is that they often pitch their program far above the ideological level of the people. They could not remedy this even if they wanted to because, not intimately in contact with the people because they do not participate in their organizations, they are unable to estimate that level.

We can if we learn from their mistakes.

I do not think there is any necessity for me to defend our role of permanent left oppositionism. But I shall make clear exactly what this means. It means that at the same time that we fight for the limited goals of popular day-to-day struggles we criticize the goals and the tactics for achieving them from two points of view: a quantitative and a qualitative. Thus, for example, when we in NAACP engage in a battle to end segregation in one particular area we call for a campaign for full equality of rights (a quantitative criticism) but we remind our fellow-workers in NAACP that these rights cannot be achieved under capitalism but can only be achieved through a revolutionary change in society (a qualitative criticism). And all the while, of course, we continue to fight in the specific battle for the specific achievement.

An intelligent disputant could raise the following questions concerning the new course of action:

1. Weren't the Bolsheviks a small "sect" that became powerful in a crisis situation?
2. Why do you make an exception of the war machine?
3. If the tendency to bureaucracy is inevitable how can this type of organization overcome it?
4. How does the revolutionary organization grow? How much organizational life is a "minimum"? Do we cease to run protest candidates on the ballot? Do we run any individual "issue"

CONVERSATION PIECE (continued)

campaigns? Do we continue to publish a public press? What about an internal discussion bulletin? Do we publicize the organization in any way? How about money? How can you survive without discipline? How do we organize a national and/or international organization of this type?

5. What if a mass organization is internally authoritarian?

6. What will be the role of the revolutionary organization in a revolution?

7. And after?

8. Does all this mean that we should enter - say - the Democratic Party?

In succeeding articles I shall attempt to answer these questions and any others which appear when this article is discussed. But about the last question I shall not leave my readers in suspense. The answer is YES.

END
