

YSA

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 10 No 11
March 1967

CONTENTS

1. Comments on the Discussion of
the Antiwar Movement - by Walter L.
2. Suggestion to Produce a Pamphlet
on the Cause of War - by Roger S.

10 cents

YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

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

YSA

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 10 No 11
March 1967

CONTENTS

1. Comments on the Discussion of
the Antiwar Movement - by Walter L.
2. Suggestion to Produce a Pamphlet
on the Cause of War - by Roger S.

10 cents

YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

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

COMMENTS ON THE DISCUSSION OF THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

By Walter L.

The document submitted on the antiwar movement by the four Boston comrades is very difficult to deal with for a number of reasons. The most striking of these is the fact that their document can hardly be called a serious resolution. It consists of a number of serious charges levelled against the YSA leadership, questions and criticisms of the NEC draft resolution and of our conduct in the antiwar movement over the last year, and a tendency toward a different political orientation for the YSA than the one we have followed in the antiwar movement over the past year. In the discussion in the locals and at the convention, it will be necessary to carefully separate these different elements and deal with them each on their own merits.

In our movement, resolutions are presented to be discussed and voted on, in order to set the political line for the coming period, and on that basis to elect a leadership to carry out that political line. A serious resolution would begin with an analysis of the present world and national political situation, would proceed to an analysis of the present situation in the antiwar movement, and from there would lay out the perspectives and tasks for the coming period. This is the method used by the authors of the NEC draft. This procedure helps raise the theoretical level of the YSA by placing current tasks in the context of historic development. The Boston comrades, who propose a different political orientation ("conscious anti-imperialism") do not place their proposal in such a context. No idea is given why the new line should be chosen as against the one we now hold. It just appears that overnight, since June 1966, we have adapted ourselves politically to the liberals and reformists for the sake of "respectability" and "unity." This is not a difference over tactics, which we may reasonably take up, but a difference in political approach. The charges levelled are too serious to be viewed otherwise. The only logical conclusion we can draw from the document is that a new and different leadership is needed. But in order to select new leaders, we would need an alternate political document, and this is lacking. This procedure, wholly contrary to the traditions we study about and teach from The Struggle for a Proletarian Party and from the Cochran fight, can only miseducate and disorient the rank and file.

In reading the document, I cannot find a fully worked out alternate political line for the YSA. This is because, in my opinion, the authors of the document do not yet fully know where they intend to go. Hesitations, doubts, questions, and even sharp tactical disagreements do not constitute a program. Thus they do not constitute a basis for throwing out the present leadership and selecting a new one. We are given no idea what strategic perspective "conscious anti-imperialism" flows from, and what tactical changes are required, except that we shouldn't tailend or adapt to the reformists. On that level, we all agree.

But clearly something more substantial is involved, and the Boston comrades have a responsibility to the YSA to clarify their political program.

What is really bothering these comrades? I cannot say for certain, but I would speculate that they are suffering from exhaustion due to the two years we have spent building the antiwar movement on a campaign basis. This movement, as long as it has been based among students for the most part, has exhibited a pattern of alternating periods of euphoria and despair, reflecting the students awareness of their social powerlessness. Since the November Mobilization despair and hopelessness has been the general rule in many areas which have had established antiwar organizations. This has certainly been the case here in Madison. Since the March 1966 Days of Protest, none of the national actions have been as big or have made such an impact, for reasons we are all well aware of. At this time, we still cannot say with certainty that the April 15 demonstrations will be the qualitative leap they have been projected as. The reports, especially on West Coast developments, are very encouraging, but the uncertainty about them feeds the pessimism which the document appears to be based upon.

In Madison, until this past week, it appeared that the student movement had reached an impass on antiwar activity. The rise in interest in student power and the ill-prepared and ill-motivated demonstration against Dow Chemical were reflections of this. It was hard to tell how much or how long these would cut across antiwar activity. But Bevel spoke to 175 people in the middle of exam week, and together with a number of other important local developments, there has been a revival of interest in antiwar activity, and a good deal of interest in the Mobilization. Whether this had come about or not, however, we did not lose sight of the strategic perspective we had set out for the antiwar movement: in order for it to provide the catalytic force to pressure the ruling class into ending the war, the movement would have to get substantial support from the working class. Toward this potential, all our work in the antiwar movement is directed. Therefore, tendencies toward reformism (Scheer campaign, student power) on the one side, and ultra-left sectarianism, both of which express the desires or feelings to get out from under the pressures of building a militant movement against imperialism must be opposed by the YSA.

Working in the student movement has serious limitations which we must be aware of, and which we must combat through our education programs. One of the worst aspects of the student movement is the tendency of participants to say whatever they feel whenever the spirit moves them. This is tolerated because most of what is said isn't taken seriously by themselves or their peers, or if it is taken seriously, another, totally different proposal may be taken just a seriously five minutes later. Revolutionary socialists, however, take their

words far more seriously. We don't just shoot off our mouths whenever we have some question or other about the tactics that may be used in a given situation.

The most important work of our movement, above and beyond any other activity we may engage in (although these are a necessary part of it) is the education of our cadre in the traditions, principles and practices of the revolutionary movement. The document of the four Boston comrades is no help to this process. Hesitations and doubts are not a political program, not in the revolutionary movement (although they are for the student movement). Tactical differences and criticisms, on the basis of agreement on principles, are well and good and have a proper place, but not in the context of a call for "a clean break from the policies of the leadership in the past year." You can only make a clean break from their policies by substituting other individuals. We elect leaders on the basis of program. The Boston comrades have a serious responsibility to clarify their differences with the NEC draft resolution, and to raise their differences from the level of gossip and gripes to the level of politics.

* * * * *

I checked up on one of the quotations used in the minority resolution, from the Confidential Memo on the Fort Hood Three case. The formulation was used that the turn to work with the troops would be "the solution to all the frustrations." The work we did on the FH3 case, while it had a number of positive effects, which have been enumerated elsewhere, was not the solution to all the frustrations. In fairness to the memo, however, it was placed in the context of potentialities at the beginning of the document, so that it was not a promise, but a projection of a possibility. Surely the Boston comrades would agree that taking the facts of the war to the troops has the potential for being one of the most important activities of the antiwar movement. Just because it hasn't happened in less than one year is no reason to raise the kind of hue and cry that has been raised. There is nothing constructive in that approach.

Madison, Wisconsin
March 17, 1967

SUGGESTION TO PRODUCE A PAMPHLET
ON THE CAUSE OF WAR By Roger Sheppard

The founding convention of the YSA produced a document on the Fight Against War which was used in that period to explain the YSA position on war. The second convention decided to publish a new anti-war pamphlet that was going to deal with Third Campism to help our intervention in the SPU. The third national convention set a priority on producing a pamphlet on the war question, dealing with the question of imperialism and the colonial revolution. The fourth convention decided to carry out the resolutions of the previous conventions and produce this pamphlet. Now that we are in the midst of the largest and most radical antiwar movement this country has ever seen we still have no YSA pamphlet stating our position on war in general and its basic cause--Imperialism.

It is crucial to our intervention in this new antiwar movement that we produce a pamphlet on Imperialism and the Permanent Revolution, and that this convention mandate its publication. There is a whole new layer of radicals who are questioning the role of the United States in the world today towards the colonial revolution. They will not understand it unless they understand the nature of imperialism.

The YSA certainly has the talent and resources to produce a pamphlet stating our basic position on the cause of war. This is the most concrete way we can carry out our task of taking "advantage of the unprecedented opportunities for socialist propoganda work and increase the activities that we carry out in our own name in order to more clearly establish ourselves as the socialist wing of the antiwar movement." There is no excuse for letting another year go by without producing this pamphlet.

A small brochure on Imperialism should be included in the list of the other throw aways that have been produced. This would be very helpful in recruiting to the YSA.

Received at National Office March 22, 1967