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- Marty April 2014

HOW TO SELECT A LEADERSHIP

By James P. Cannon, National Chairman Emeritus, Socialist Workers Party

(The following article on the election of the National Committee is reprinted from Letters From Prison.)

In our opinion the most important reason for stretching the convention out for another day is to give adequate time for a *free* and *well-deliberated* selection by the delegates of the new National Committee. This is one of the strongest guarantees of the democracy of the party. Our party has always been more democratic, ten times more democratic, in this respect than any other party. But there is room for improvement, and we should consciously seek out the necessary methods.

We never went in for any of the rigging, wangling, vote-trading and leadership-pressure devices by which, in practically all other parties (strike out the word "practically") the convention delegates are usually defrauded of a large part of their democratic freedom of choice. If one has a self-sufficient revolutionary party in mind, all such methods are self-defeating. A revolutionary party needs a leadership that really represents the party, that is really one with the party.

Without this democratic corrective, freely brought into play at every convention, centralization and discipline inevitably become caricatures and forms of abuse which injure the organization every time they are exercised. A revolutionary leadership must feel free at all times to act boldly and confidently in the name of the party. For that, it needs to be sure that there is no flaw in its mandate.

No rules exist to guide us in the technical execution of this difficult and delicate task to the best advantage of the party. The democratic selection of the primary and secondary leaders is a sufficiently important question—nobody knows how much damage can be done by bungling it—but, as far as I know, nobody has ever written anything about it. Nobody has taught us anything. We are obliged to think and experiment for ourselves.

The democratic impulses of the rank and file incline them to react unfavorably to "slates," as they feel, not without reason, that they narrow down for all practical purposes the freedom of choice. The Social-Democratic politicians, who are as undemocratic a collection of rascals as one can ever expect to meet, have always exploited this sentiment by announcing their firm, democratic opposition to slates. Of course, there was a little catch to their virtuous slogan of "no slates." They meant no openly avowed slates which would possibly be open to discussion and amendment. Instead of that, the noble Social-Democrats rig up secret slates by means of horse trades and petty bribes to

ensure their control. A good 50 percent of Social-Democratic convention "politics" is always devoted to this kind of business.

From the first days of American communism, which also coincided with the first appearance on the scene of a new type of leader with a new conception of "politics," we tried to break through the "no-slate" fraud and devise a more honest system by which the leaders would take open responsibility for their proposals and give reasons for their preferences in the makeup of the leading committee. It became rather common practice for the leading committees, in national as well as local conventions in the communist movement, to propose a slate of candidates for the new committee to be elected. We carried the practice with us in the independent movement of Trotskyism. (During factional struggles the slate-making arrangements were carried on in the separate caucuses of the factions.)

This method was, without doubt, far superior to the "no-slate" tricks of our socialist predecessors, being more honest, and in the essence of the matter, even more democratic.

But this system also was not free from negative aspects, and even dangers. I perceived some of them long ago, have thought much about the matter, and from time to time have tried to devise corrective experiments. What impressed me most of all was the quite obvious fact that while the presentation of a slate of candidates by the leadership is the most "efficient" way to get through the business of the election of the NC—usually the last point on the agenda, carried through in a great hurry—it concentrates too much power in the leadership just at that very point—the convention—where the democratic corrective of rank-and-file control should be asserted most strongly.

It is not the election of the central, most prominent and influential leaders themselves. That problem solves itself almost automatically in the interplay of party work and internal strife. The problem arises over the selection of the secondary leaders, the new committee members, the potential leaders of the future. As a rule, this part of the slate if presented by the most authoritative central leaders, is accepted, whether enthusiastically or not, by the convention; many delegates are reluctant to oppose them.

It is senseless, of course, to speak of a revolutionary combat party without recognizing the necessity of a centralized, fully empowered leadership. But this states only one half of the prob-

lem. Leninist centralism is *democratic* centralism, a profoundly dialectical concept. The other half of the Leninist formula recognizes no less the necessity of subordinating the leadership, really as well as formally, to the party; keeping it under the control of the party. The party constitution does everything that can be done in a formal sense to provide for the interaction of centralism and democracy.

The structure of the party is strictly hierarchical. Higher committees command the lower. Full authority over all is vested in the National Committee. But the NC, like all other committees, is required to render accounts and surrender its mandate at stated intervals to the party convention to which it is subordinated. This is the formal, constitutional guarantee both for centralization and the ultimate control of the leadership.

But it is also necessary to think about the spirit as well as the letter of the party constitution. A farsighted leadership should concern itself with the elusive, intangible factors which can play such a great role in determining the actual relationship between the NC and the ranks.

Some of these factors arise from the composition of the NC and the division of functions within it. Nominally, this body consists of twenty-five members, and they all have equal rights. In addition there are fifteen alternates. But the majority come to the center only for meetings of the plenum which are not held very often. Between plenums the power is delegated to the Political Committee. From this it is quite clear that one section of the National Committee is in a position to exert far more influence on the day-to-day work and interpretation of party policy than the other.

Again, some are older, more experienced and more prominent than others, and consequently wield greater authority in the committee as well as in the party as a whole. On the other side, the committee members from the districts and the younger members of the committee generally, who are active in local work, are closer to the rank and file than the central leaders of the party are, and represent them more directly and intimately. This gives them a special function in the NC of extraordinary importance.

Their presence represents a form of continuing rank-and-file control and supervision over the central leaders. They can fulfill this function, however, only insofar as they are people of independent influence and popularity in their own localities; only insofar as they are freely elected on their own merits, not handpicked.

To be sure, the central leaders cannot be indifferent to the selection of the secondary leadership. In this, as in everything else, leaders must lead. In a certain sense, the central party leaders "select" their collaborators and eventual successors. The question is, how to go about

it? It is often easy for politically experienced leaders to convince themselves that they are better judges of the qualifications and potentialities of certain candidates than the rank-and-file delegates. And, as a rule, it is not too difficult to force their selections through by means of the "slate." This may appear to be the most "efficient" way. But in my opinion, there is a better way.

Wisdom lies in "selecting" people who have popularity and influence in their own right, and whose promotion coincides with the wishes of the party members who know them best. That means to select people who are advancing under their own power.

I came to this conclusion a long time ago, and as far as I have been able to influence the course of things it has been the party method of selecting the NC. Extensive and varied experience, with every imaginable kind of experiment, has convinced me that this method, even at the cost of incidental mistakes, works out best in the long run.

The central leaders of the party who work from day to day without close contact with the internal life of the branches, need such a constitution of the NC if they are to lead the party confidently; lead it with the assurance that they know the moods and sentiments of the ranks and are in step with them. When doubt arises, or when some new important step is under consideration, it is only necessary to consult the out-of-town members of the NC by mail, or to call a plenum, in order to get a reliable sounding of the party. Approval of a given course by the plenum is a pretty certain forecast of similar action by the party.

Conversely, when the plenum finds it necessary to overrule the Political Committee—and this has happened more than once, notably in 1938-1939—it is a sign that the Political Committee is out of line with the party and requires a change in its composition. The 1938-39 National Committee rebuked the PC several times and finally reorganized it, and later tests showed that the full plenum most accurately reflected the sentiment of the party.

A serious and conscientious party leadership should deliberately aim at a National Committee so composed as to be, in effect, a microcosm of the party. When the full plenum of such a National Committee meets between conventions, to all intents and purposes *the party is there in the room*. That is far more useful to responsible political leaders than a roomful of handpicked supporters without independent influence and authority. Bureaucrats who have special interests of their own to defend against the rank and file need to surround themselves with dependent henchmen; but revolutionary political leaders need support of an entirely different kind, the support of people who really represent the rank and file of the party.

There is another, and even more important, reason the rank-and-file convention delegates should take over the election of the National Committee and be free from undue pressure and influence on the part of the national political leadership in exercising this function. The free selection of the full membership of the National Committee is perhaps the most decisive way to strengthen and reinforce genuine party democracy. It puts the political leaders under the direct supervision and control of a second line of leaders who are in intimate daily contact with the local and district organizations and, in fact, represent them in the plenum.

This control doesn't have to be exercised every day to be effective. The fact that it is there, and can be demonstrated when necessary, is what counts. Strange to relate, the professional democrats have never once in the history of our party bothered their heads about the method of selecting the National Committee from the standpoint of reinforcing party democracy. This, in my opinion, is because they tend to think of democracy almost exclusively in terms of unlimited and unrestricted self-expression and forget that control of the central leadership, which in day-to-day practices is limited to a very small group, by a larger group standing closer to the rank and file, is the most important mechanism to assure the democratic half of the Leninist formula: democratic-centralism.

Throwing the floor open for nominations on the last day of the convention is not the only alternative to a slate presented by the outgoing NC. That only throws the delegate body into disorganized confusion and facilitates the manipulation of the election by means of secret slates and horse trades, the favorite method of Social-Democrats.

There is no infallible formula, but the results of our experiments over a period of many years argue most convincingly in favor of a slate prepared by a *nominating commission*. Of course, there are nominating commissions and nominating commissions. But the best, that is, the most democratic, is not the nominating commission appointed by the outgoing NC, nor the one elected at random from the floor of the convention. The most efficient, for the purposes set forth above, is the nominating commission selected by the branch or district delegations on a roughly proportional basis — each delegation selecting its own representative — and then ratified by the convention. The nominating commission, thus conceived, is a body actually representing the rank-and-file delegations from the districts.

It would be grossly improper for individual central leaders to intrude themselves upon the commission and seek to dominate its proceedings. That would amount to a circumvention of the democratic process aimed at in the pro-

posal. It is the part of wisdom for the central leaders to leave the nominating commission to its own devices, respecting the essence of party democracy as well as the form.

The nominating commission should be selected on the first day of the convention; it should begin its sessions at once and meet at least once a day thereafter to consider the various nominations until a slate is decided upon for presentation to the convention when the election of the NC comes up on the agenda.

In my opinion, the first step of the commission at the 1944 convention should be to discard formally the ruling which paralyzed the work of the nominating commission at the 1942 convention — the utterly stupid and reactionary principle that every member of the outgoing NC was, as a matter of course, to be reelected unless good cause was shown to *remove* him. That turns things upside down. Nobody can be "frozen" in any position in a revolutionary party. He must stand for election at each convention, and the election must be free and open.

Room must be left for competition and rivalry and differences of opinion to operate without artificial restraints. Members of the outgoing NC should be placed in exactly the same status as new aspirants — as *candidates* for election. The nominating commission should adopt a rule to this effect at its first session.

The most practical next step is to take a preliminary poll to ascertain how many candidates are generally favored for election as national leaders who are not counted as representatives of any special district of the party. This will clear the road for the apportionment of the remaining places on the slate for local and district representatives. Here, again, there should be no "freezing" of old representation and no automatic closing of the door to new candidates from districts previously not represented.

The object should be to provide the fairest possible representation of the districts in the new NC; but the principle of proportional representation should be modified by other considerations: the relative importance of the district; the quality of the candidates; the special role played by certain candidates, etc.

The commission should announce the time and place of its daily sessions, and invite any delegate who wishes to argue for or against any candidate to appear and take the floor. The slate finally decided upon, either by agreement or majority vote, should be presented to the convention as the *nominations* of the nominating commission. That leaves the floor open for other nominations and free discussion before the ballot is taken.

Naturally, one would have to have some good arguments for another candidate to hope to amend the slate of the nominating commission. But if he thinks he has a strong case, there is

no reason why he shouldn't make the attempt. Adequate time and patience must be accorded for the presentation of any such proposed amendments. The heavens will not fall if a slate is amended once in a while.

One word more. The convention should not shunt the election of the new NC off till the last hurried half-hour of the convention, when impatience of departing delegations would tend to discourage full discussion and ample consideration of the various nominations. The best procedure would be to fix a definite hour and day to take up the election of the NC whether the rest of the agenda is finished or not at that time. This decision should be made demonstratively in order to call sharp attention to the vital importance of full and careful deliberation in selec-

ting the party leadership. And even more important, the convention will thus give itself time to do the job right.

All of these measures will not guarantee the election of an ideal National Committee. But they should help to provide us with the best committee that a free party can select from the material at hand by the method of party democracy. If the returning delegates go home with the feeling that this has been accomplished, the new NC will be able to begin its work with a strong authority. On the other hand, the leadership, precisely because of the care and deliberation taken in the selection of the personnel of the NC, will feel itself to be more than ever under the watchful supervision and control of the party.

CHILE: THE ISSUE IS CLASS-COLLABORATION

By Tom Bias, Upper West Side Local

On page 10 of the draft political resolution of the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency it says:

"The Chilean revolution appeared at the vanguard of the Latin American revolution after the defeat of the Bolivian revolution in August 1971. Of course, the Allende regime possesses several features of a Popular Front government, of collaboration with bourgeois parties. But, from the start, it differed from the classical Popular Front regime by the fact that it openly proclaimed its resolve to enter on the road of socialism, and that it openly based itself on the organized workers movement...."

"What was revealed in Chile is...more a new demonstration of the bankruptcy of reformism, i.e., of the attempt to arrive at socialism by the 'legal' and 'peaceful' road, within the framework of the institutions of parliamentary bourgeois democracy, without destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus, than an experience of coalition government with the bourgeoisie."

I don't wish to enter into a sterile semantic debate over "classical popular front" or "features of popular front," or anything of that kind. I will leave that to the IEC MT's legal staff. What is at issue is class collaboration. Whatever you wish to call it, the Chilean Unidad Popular was a coalition of workers and other parties which administered a bourgeois government: that is, a government which maintained capitalist property relations within Chile -- and not always by peaceful parliamentary means, I might add. Whether the Christian Democrats or any other bourgeois party collaborated with the UP or not, the UP maintained the army, police, bureaucracy and congress of the bourgeois state, whose function is and always has been to defend Chilean capitalism. That is class collaborationism, no matter how you slice it, and it led the Chilean workers and peasants to disaster.

It is incorrect to contend, as the IT has done, that the problem in Chile was that the UP and its primary component, the Stalinists, had a wrong strategy for the transition to socialism, namely the "peaceful road." The fact of the matter is that the Chilean CP was not -- and is not -- interested in any road to socialism -- peaceful or otherwise. The slogan of the "peaceful road" was not an error but a deliberate deception, as it always has been. The CP put forward a lie in order to draw the workers and oppressed masses behind its class-collaborationist scheme. I'm quite honestly surprised that they also deceived some members of the Trotskyist movement. The Stalinists pursued a consciously counterrevolutionary policy in Chile, as they do all over the world. If that weren't true there would be no reason for the Fourth International.

It is important to make that clear in order to explain the September coup in Chile.

The UP came to governmental power in response to an upsurge of the working class. We all agree on this. For the facts as to what led to the UP's electoral victory in 1970 comrades should refer to the pamphlet Allende's Chile: Is It Going Socialist? by Peter Camejo (Pathfinder, 1971). This upsurge could have developed into a revolutionary struggle; the Stalinists from the beginning wanted to prevent that. Their strategy--a very effective strategy from a counterrevolutionary point of view--was to put together a governmental coalition which would issue a lot of rhetoric about a "peoples government" or "peaceful road to socialism" and make some real concessions to the workers (primarily at the expense of imperialism) in order to gain the loyalty of the workers. It would then go about the business of defending capitalism--from the workers. The idea is to prevent the working class from fighting to form its own government by assuring them that they have it already.

The coming to power of the UP did not solve the basic contradictions of Chilean society; it could not, in the long run, keep the workers in check. What it did was give the bourgeoisie time--to regroup its forces, tire out the workers, and win the bulk of the middle classes to its side. (For a description of how this process works, see Marx's account of the defeat of the Paris Commune in The Civil War in France.)

However, the UP was not capable of keeping the workers under control indefinitely. During the "bosses' strike" rank-and-file price-watch committees and incipient workers councils began to appear. These could have become the foundation for a workers government. It became necessary that the workers movement be crushed if the capitalist system was to survive. That was a task that the UP government could not fulfill, so poor Dr. Allende had to go.

It is true that by the end of 1972 the entire Chilean bourgeoisie was united with US imperialism against the Allende government. This did not change the character of the UP. The key element in the UP, the Stalinists, made sure that the Chilean government continued to maintain capitalism. Unlike a workers and farmers government, which is unsure about which way it will go, the Chilean UP government, under the leadership of the CP, consciously maintained a procapitalist, class-collaborationist policy. They were sure where they wanted to go, and it wasn't toward socialism.

In a different set of circumstances the Stalinists might have chosen to defend themselves and expropriate the bourgeoisie as they did in Eastern Europe, China, North Korea in the late 1940s and 50s. But this is not a period of Cold

War, in which the military security of the Soviet Union is in question. It is a period of open detente--not only between Washington and Moscow but between Washington and Peking as well. It seems clear that Moscow has no intention of questioning US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.

The Trotskyist movement has to nail the Stalinists to the

wall on this question of Chile--not for any "errors" but for a conscious policy of betrayal. Acceptance of the draft political resolution of the IEC Majority Tendency will cut across that task.

December 6, 1973

IS THE INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY GOING IN CIRCLES?

By Alan Einhorn, North Boston Local

During the course of the present pre-convention discussion in the YSA a wide range of political questions have been raised. The Internationalist Tendency is challenging practically every point which has been basic to the program of the YSA since our formation. From the debate over political issues, the organizational question has naturally also arisen. In the course of the discussion in the North Boston local the question of in what manner the YSA should exist has been raised. Should we go about the task of recruiting people to Trotskyism as an independent revolutionary socialist youth organization (as we are presently structured) or in the form of sympathizer circles (as the practice has been for the European sections)? This is of course not an academic question nor one of little importance.

What is the position of the IT on this question? Unfortunately, as of the writing of this, the IT political resolution has not yet been printed. Therefore what I will have to base my remarks on are statements made by the two IT comrades during the North Boston local's oral discussion.

When the question was posed to Comrade John M., a member of the IT, he proceeded to answer it as follows: He explained that what was involved was a "tactical" question and that a "balance sheet" had to be drawn. Therefore he said that the IT, as a tendency, did not have a position on what organizational form the YSA should adopt. Fortunately, however, he did proceed to inform us what his personal opinion was. In John M.'s "personal opinion" what was called for was the creation of sympathizer circles. Why? Because, he explained, the opportunities and possible activities we are faced with at present do not warrant such a highly organized YSA. What we need is a "looser" form of organization. Comrade John then coupled this with a few additional allegations which were:

1) The YSA is not really an independent organization.

2) We are too "bloated" and have too many people on full-time staff. In fact, Comrade Mike H., the other ITCer in Boston, stated that having full-timers "necessarily leads to bureaucratism."

3) The YSA has a "routinist, office mentality."

I want to take up each of these "personal opinions."

Is the "Tactic" Correct or Not?

The IT is correct that what is involved here is not a question of principles. Obviously it's not a principle that we must be organized at all times as an independent youth organization. But that does not mean that the question is unimportant. The question is, do you approve of the "tactic?" If not, why not? The comrades of the IT, as a ten-

ency, refuse to answer. At least half a dozen times in the course of our oral discussion, they have been asked this question point blank. And we are met with silence.

It seems a bit ironic. After all, the IEC Majority Tendency to which the IT claims solidarity, has never been lost for words when it comes to their opinion of "tactics." Wasn't it the IMT which prescribed the tactic of rural guerrilla warfare on a continental scale for a protracted period of time in Latin America? Isn't it the IMT which has told us the "tactic" of party building for all of Europe? Perhaps the IT has learned from the methodological mistakes of the IMT. No, I don't think that's the answer. The fact is that when it comes to making broad, general--that is, abstract--"tactical" prescriptions the IMT and IT comrades are wizards. But when it comes to plotting the correct course of action based on the real, concrete situation, the IT is unable to make a statement. Why do they refuse to come out with a tendency position on the question of sympathizer circles versus independent organization? Because they refuse to openly state before the entire membership of the YSA that they are for dissolving the YSA into a federation of loosely-knit, unorganized sympathizer circles. They refuse to tell us that the organization we have worked long and hard to build and are damn proud of, should no longer exist.

And I must admit, I can certainly see why they are so reluctant.

Independent Organizations Versus Sympathizer Circles

As already stated, in the "personal opinion" of at least the Boston ITCers, what the YSA should become is sympathizer circles. This is a substantive, political question which deserves consideration.

At the Ninth World Congress of the Fourth International, the document The Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International was passed as the basis for further discussion. At the December, 1969 convention of the YSA, we also approved the general line of this resolution. The document clearly explains the reasons for building independent revolutionary socialist youth groups. It states:

"The independent youth organization can attract radicalizing young people who have not yet made up their minds about joining any political party of the left and who are not yet committed to the Bolshevik perspective of becoming lifetime revolutionists, but who are willing and ready to participate in a broad range of political actions together with the revolutionary party and its members. It can lead actions and take initiatives in the student movement in its own name. It can serve as a valuable training and testing ground for candidates for party cadre status, and make it easier for them to acquire the

the political and organizational experience and education required for serious revolutionary activity. Membership in the revolutionary-socialist youth organization enables young radicals to decide their own policies, organize their own actions, make their own mistakes and learn their own lessons."

The sympathizer circles which the IMT and Boston ITers hold up as a model are no real substitute for youth organizations. They are incapable of intervening in struggles in the same organized, disciplined, coordinated way that a youth organization can. The youth in the sympathizer circles have no say over the political line of their "circle." They really are an appendage to the party. The sympathizer circles can not possibly provide the same kind of training and education for young revolutionaries that an independent youth group affords. It doesn't allow members to have the responsibility of building their own organization, building and selecting their own leadership, and making their own decisions.

Practical experience and actual participation have always been the best teacher and best training ground. And this practical experience is just not realizable to the same degree in the sympathizer circle as it is in an independent youth organization like the YSA.

Is the Problem Not Enough Activity?

Comrade John M. 's contention that we need a looser organization because the openings we are faced with, and the activities we are engaged in are minimal, is totally unfounded. Despite the current lull in student activism and the lack of a national focus in the mass movements, the YSA still has plenty to do. Just a cursory list of the activities we have engaged in this fall would have to include the following: building PRDF, support to SWP local campaigns, UFWU support work, numerous speaking tours, the sales drives for the YS and The Militant, the sub drives, the fund drive, regional expansion, actions against Zionist aggression and US complicity in the Mideast, actions against the repression in Chile, actions in solidarity with the Greek students, etc., etc. Do these facts indicate that the YSA is now less active, that we no longer need an efficiently organized YSA? No, I don't think so. If anything, it indicates that we need to be constantly stepping up our organization so that we can take maximum advantage of the opportunities we do have open to us. Comrade John's remark reflects two things on the part of the IT. First, it reflects the fact that in the opinion of the IT the many activities which we do carry out are unimportant and unnecessary. And secondly, what it reveals is that at the root of the IT politics is a deep-set pessimism about our prospects for building the YSA. One final point about this supposed need for a "looser" organization. The IT should get together with the IMT on this point. In the IMT's "Draft Political Resolution" they forecast that in this country what is on the agenda in the immediate period is massive workers upsurges which will be provoked by the recession which they see occurring in the next

two years. It will be extremely interesting to see how the IT will make these two contentions jibe.

Is the Problem that the YSA Isn't Independent?

The Boston ITers have stated that the YSA is not really an independent organization. During the SWP pre-convention discussion, an IT member even called the YSA the "playpen" of the SWP. When we say that the YSA is an independent organization, we mean it. No matter what anybody says to the contrary, the SWP does not control the YSA. It's undeniable that the YSA is in basic political agreement with the Socialist Workers Party. However, unlike the IT, we think that's good. It enables the revolutionary party and revolutionary youth organization to effectively collaborate and coordinate their activities. We are 100% in favor of that. That still does not mean that the SWP controls the YSA. We have our own meetings, our own leadership, our own finances, our own newspaper, our own national office, our own convention, our own discussions and we make our own decisions. And no amount of argumentative sophistry can alter that fact.

Is the Problem Too Many Full-Timers?

Comrade Mike H. 's statement that having a full-time staff "necessarily leads to bureaucratism" is an extremely serious charge. What it amounts to is a version of the old SDS New Left concept of not having any leadership at all because leaders automatically become bureaucrats. We totally reject that notion. Marxists have always defined bureaucratic formations as being tied to social forces, class forces. Perhaps the IT will soon develop the theory that the roots of Stalinism are to be found mainly in having a "bloated" full-time staff. If the IT believes that the YSA is bureaucratized then they should come right out and say so.

What the IT comrades are really objecting to is the concept of a professional revolutionary which Lenin first wrote about in What is to be Done. Every comrade is important, valuable cadre to the YSA, whether they are on full-time or not. We don't belittle the fact that we are able to have comrades on full-time. Being on full-time staff, regardless of the capacity, must be viewed in two ways. In one sense it is a privilege in that serious revolutionaries certainly welcome the opportunity to be able to devote their full-time services to the revolutionary movement and be able to develop politically because of that responsibility. And secondly, it is our duty to maintain a full-time staff so that we can be as organized as possible so that we will be able to help lead the coming American revolution.

If the IT comrades had any idea at all what kind of role comrades on full-time really do play, perhaps they wouldn't make such far-flung statements.

Is the Problem Our "Office Mentality?"

There can only be one conclusion drawn from Comrade

John M. 's charge that we are "routinist and have an office mentality." That is, he believes that the basic party building tasks which the YSA engages in, like those outlined in the NEC political resolution, are petty and unimportant. Selling our press and meeting our financial responsibilities are petty trifles to the IT. Building a professional organization in all aspects is a laughing matter. We don't think so. Unfortunately, the brass tacks day-to-day tasks of building the YSA aren't all fun and games. Maybe they aren't as stimulating as engaging in minority violence. But they're a helluva lot more important. When Lenin wrote page after page about the need for a tightly organized party, a newspaper, and other such "organizational" matters, was he reflecting an office mentality? When Cannon wrote extensively and in a detailed fashion in Letters from Prison about "organizational details," was he being routinist? No, they were merely demonstrating what being a serious revolutionary politician is all about.

Who Really Has the Problem?

The IT disagrees with nearly every single facet of the

program of the YSA--from Black nationalism to feminism to the way we intervened in the antiwar movement to our analysis of Stalinism and on and on and on. To the IT, things like intervening on campus, selling our press and meeting our financial needs are unimportant details not worthy of mention.

They would rather see us set up as a loose coalition of sympathizer circles than a "bloated, routinist" independent socialist youth organization.

Just as they are wrong on the key political questions, they are equally as wrong on the organizational question. The best way to win radicalizing youth to the banner of Trotskyism is not by dissolving the YSA into sympathizer groups--rather it is maintaining our revolutionary program and building a strong independent revolutionary socialist youth organization.

December 7, 1978

THE STRATEGY OF THE GUN BEFORE POLITICS IN CHILE

By Derek Jeffers, Austin Local

For the International Executive Committee (IEC) Majority Tendency, the problem of how to make the revolution in Latin America is primarily reduced to a "technical" level. If you can only get the vanguard to successfully "undertake initial pilot-projects" in armed action, then everything else should fall into place ("On the Question of Armed Struggle in Latin America," International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 20, pp. 30-31). The problem of winning over the masses is not very real to these comrades. The Austin local was told by one of the two members of the Internationalist Tendency sent for a debate on Latin America that it has become "impossible to channel the masses into the traditional reformist path." The masses are already won over, it seems.

But in every one of the most advanced political situations in Latin America during the last few years the masses have supported generals and reform politicians promising to solve their problems. That is, the masses have been repeatedly channeled into the "traditional reformist path." In Bolivia the masses trusted Generals Ovando and Torres. In Uruguay the masses put their faith in the Broad Front, a reform coalition of capitalist and working class parties, a popular front. In Chile the masses trusted Salvador Allende and his popular front, the Unidad Popular. In Argentina today the masses trust General Juan Peron.

How to tear the masses away from their illusions in these reformist leaders--that is the key problem for Latin American revolutionaries today.

What Happened in Chile

Three months ago the government of Salvador Allende was overthrown in Chile. Allende had headed the Unidad Popular, or Popular Unity, which was a popular front--a coalition of capitalist and workers parties, whose joint program maintained the capitalist state and economy, while it included a number of reforms.

The Unidad Popular won the allegiance of the masses, won the elections in 1970, and ran the government of Chile for three years. By not mobilizing the masses to overthrow capitalism, the Unidad Popular paved the way for its own overthrow by a ruthless military dictatorship in September. Of course, we defended the Allende government against the military dictatorship. The Chilean working class had to fight against the coup to try to protect the gains and reforms it had made under Allende. The YSA helped organize teach-ins and rallies opposing the coup.

But we also recognized that the key to a successful revolutionary strategy in Chile during the three years of Allende's rule was to teach the workers that they could not rely on Allende's pro-capitalist government, to get rid of Allende's

government, to build their own struggles and seek to put into power a government of their own.

Will the Real IEC Majority Position Please Stand...

This is the YSA's analysis. What has been the analysis of the IEC Majority Tendency? A good question, indeed. Here are four positions on the Unidad Popular I have seen presented by leaders or representatives of this Tendency. I hesitate to say these are the only four. My experience is limited. I have only seen it presented four times.

A) Danny Laird, the reporter on Latin America sent to the Austin local in a debate a few weeks ago, explained that the Unidad Popular (UP) had been a popular front until the summer of 1973, when the bourgeoisie pulled out of it (you could tell this happened because Allende was overthrown). Then the UP was no longer a popular front, but it also wasn't a united front, and Laird said he didn't really know what it was, but since the IEC majority was a "tendency" and not a faction, it didn't have to take positions on questions like that. This is the-closer-to-defeat, the-more-revolutionary theory.

B) The world "Draft Political Resolution" of the IEC Majority Tendency states:

"Of course, the Allende regime possesses several features of a Popular Front government, of collaboration with bourgeois parties. But from the start, it differed from a classical Popular Front regime by the fact that it openly proclaimed its resolve to enter on the road of socialism, and that it openly based itself on the organized workers movement." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 20, p. 10)

C) The Red Weekly, newspaper of the British section of the Fourth International, whose leaders are members of the IEC majority, had a big analysis on Chile in its September 21 issue. It wrote that Allende's government was a "workers government," a "working class movement [in the] seat of the government."

D) Comrade Charles, touring the YSA as a representative of the IEC majority, stated in the Austin debate that the Allende government was a capitalist government, all right, but that the Unidad Popular was not a "popular front" because the capitalist parties in it weren't strong enough.

A), B), C), or D)? It is presumably just left to us and to revolutionaries in Chile to make a choice. The correct choice is none of the above. For a good analysis of the Unidad Popular and the Chilean situation you can look up the statement adopted unanimously by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International before the leaders of the IEC majority changed their position--into four different positions (Intercontinental Press, Feb. 21, 1972).

What all four of these have in common are their attempts to slither away from coming down too hard on the Unidad Popular. None of them say clearly that the very idea of the Unidad Popular was 100% wrong; that by being convinced to support the UP the workers were being convinced they had a program for society in common with at least some parts of the Chilean ruling class, instead of against all of it; that this led the masses into a deathtrap. These four positions don't say a prerequisite for a successful struggle in Chile is a break with the Unidad Popular, with the concept of the popular front.

The Gun is What's Really Most Important

Why these wishy-washy positions? The IEC majority has become so infatuated with the worth of guerrilla warfare under all circumstances in Latin America that it subordinates everything to the priority of organizing guerrilla war. To begin the "armed struggle," that's the key for them. There are many who also cry for armed struggle while supporting or being ambiguous toward the Unidad Popular. So, if the IEC majority can win a few more allies by neglecting to say exactly what you should struggle for, then that's fine.

What can it mean when the IEC Majority Tendency has four different positions on the Unidad Popular? Certainly it shows how highly they value working out a clear political analysis. You can be sure they have only one position on the need for immediate guerrilla war.

Look closely at what lessons they have drawn from the coup in Chile. The world "Draft Political Resolution" of the IEC majority explains:

"What was revealed in Chile, is, therefore, more a new demonstration of the bankruptcy of reformism, i. e., of the attempt to arrive at socialism by the 'legal' and 'peaceful' road... than an experience of coalition government with the bourgeoisie." (Ibid., emphasis in original)

So what they're saying is that what Chile taught us is the need to take up arms to make the revolution, and that it did not teach us very much about popular frontism; about supporting formations like the Unidad Popular.

It is certainly correct to write that one of the lessons of the Chilean coup is that the masses must be armed--if that is what the resolution is saying. But is this enough?

One of the most classic popular fronts existed in Spain in the 1930s. This popular front waged a military campaign that ran for several years and included large supplies of military equipment and brigades of allied fighters from different countries. But the military campaign was still being waged by a popular front, which still sought to maintain capitalism, and so condemned any independent mobilization of the workers. As a result this gigantic armed struggle

was too weak to win.

In Chile itself there existed many groups that called for armed struggle--groups that were also sincere, like the Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR--Movement of the Revolutionary Left). All accounts report, too, that the parties of the Unidad Popular had big stockpiles of weapons. Why, then, were the masses never armed? Because they put their faith in the Unidad Popular, whose entire reformist political perspective of maintaining capitalism wouldn't have had a chance if it had ever allowed the workers to be armed.

The MIR never understood this. Their position on the Unidad Popular remained unclear, and their armed struggle never took place.

The IEC Majority Tendency misses the whole point of what was necessary to wage successful armed struggle in Chile. They had to first have an unambiguous position in opposition to the Unidad Popular. Then they had to bring this position to the struggles of the masses and convince them. Only then could the armed struggle be real, and be won.

This entire position of theirs is a mystification of armed struggle. Just add a pinch of it under almost any circumstances in Latin America and, poof!, the revolution is made.

Guerrilla War Now?

In "On the Question of Armed Struggle in Latin America," the IEC majority writes:

"... it is perfectly legitimate to prolong the resistance against the threat posed by the dictatorship through armed resistance in the form of guerrilla struggle... This is what is happening again today in Chile." (Ibid., p. 31)

The Red Weekly of October 5, 1973, writes even more clearly on what the IEC majority deems necessary in Chile now. "A strategy of prolonged guerrilla war against the military junta is the only one possible."

The Chilean working class has just suffered a towering defeat. The mass struggle there is at the lowest point in many years. To call for "prolonged guerrilla war" now is pure adventurism. It has nothing to do with the real task of revolutionaries in Chile today--to build up anew the confidence and struggles of the masses. These are the struggles that will once again challenge imperialism.

To simply call for guerrilla war against the regime is far easier. Since it doesn't matter what your politics are, as long as you oppose the dictatorship, many forces may be willing to call for guerrilla war. After all, the political

situation guarantees that such a struggle could not possibly have anything to do with a struggle of the masses of workers, which might go beyond the bounds of capitalism and threaten the bourgeois forces who worked with the Unidad Popular. So, even the creaky old Communist Party of Chile is making noises about guerrilla war. (See the Dec. 7, 1973 Militant, "World Outlook" section.)

Where Are You Leading the Armed Struggle?

The Leninist-Trotskyist Faction proposes a strategy of building revolutionary parties to win the leadership of the masses. In the Austin local discussion on Latin America, one of the Internationalist Tendency representatives said, in response, "It's a question of where you're leading the masses." But wouldn't a more apt comment be directed at the IEC majority? "It's a question of where you're leading the armed struggle."

The IEC Majority Tendency was capable of telling the

workers under the Allende regime that they should begin clandestine actions of guerrilla war. But they weren't capable of telling these same workers whether or not they should seek to overthrow the government!

Think of where the Bolsheviks would have ended up in 1917 if they hadn't realized the necessity of overthrowing the Kerensky government, which was fundamentally similar to the Allende government. What if the Bolsheviks had thought Kerensky was heading a "workers government?" What if they believed the key was not to come down on Kerensky so much for "coalition government with the bourgeoisie," but to begin "armed struggle?"

Armed struggle for what? Against whom? That's the question. In their rush to pick up the gun, the IEC majority has forgotten to tell the vanguard where to aim it.

December 7, 1973

FOR AN INTERVENTION INTO THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

By Gilbert Ramirez, Lower Manhattan Local

Preface

The YSA has no perspective for the Gay Liberation movement or our intervention into it. This document is intended to provide the YSA with a perspective for intervention into the Gay Liberation movement. Without such a perspective the YSA will be relegated to mere bystanding on the sidelines of the Gay Liberation movement.

As a supporter of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, I urge support and a vote for the delegates representing the views of the L.T.F.

Although this resolution is counter to the perspectives of the YSA for the Gay movement, I urge all comrades to vote and defend the Draft Political Resolution of the N.E.C., whether or not the document "For an Intervention..." is accepted or defeated in the local elections. I urge all comrades who support the general line of this document to call for discussion and a vote on it in their locals. I call upon the YSA NEC to include discussion and a vote of this counter resolution under the convention agenda point covering the Draft Political Resolution.

Introduction

The Gay liberation movement represents a movement against the oppression of gay people whose centuries of suppression is exploding as never before seen. Gays have placed the blame for their oppression squarely on the shoulders of society and its archaic moral values.

The current phase of the Gay Liberation movement represents a change from the old "Homophile" groups, whose perspectives were to be tolerated and integrated into a heterosexual society. Today, gays want an end to the exclusive heterosexual norms and are demanding their full acceptance and the acceptance of their sexual orientation by the rest of society.

Ever since the Stonewall riots the Gay Liberation movement has become an international movement. For the first time the gay movement has been able to gain massive support and break through the clouds of silence imposed by capitalism.

The fact that tens of thousands of gays are prepared to act openly for their rights and that millions more are raising their heads is a testimony to the depth of the current radicalization. Gay people are beginning to think their lot can be improved.

The struggle for gay liberation is a struggle against an oppression that is rooted in capitalism. It is a struggle for full human, civil and democratic rights. Gay oppression is rooted

in the need of the capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior both as part of its general repression of sexuality and because homosexual behavior conflicts with society's exclusive heterosexual norms. This norm is reinforced by all the institutions of capitalist society beginning with the family, through the schools, in the religions and the state. Dissenters are subject to imprisonment, mutilation, psychological tampering and physical extermination. Gays are driven into underground subcultures of the big cities where they are subject to exploitation by the police and the syndicates. Mere legal concessions granted by capitalist society will prove unable to end gay oppression as long as society seeks to maintain its heterosexual orientation and suppresses homosexual behavior. Nowhere in the world where reform legislation has been enacted are gays really free.

Nothing short of a socialist revolution will end the oppression of gays. This is because of the deeply rooted needs of capitalist society to maintain its morality, prejudices and roles.

Rise of the Gay Liberation Movement

On June 28, 1969 the current wave of the Gay Liberation movement began with the attack by police on the Stonewall bar in New York City. The following year a commemorative march of 6,000 people heralded the rise of the Gay movement around the world.

The current militant spirit of the gay movement was a result of the radicalization of the '60s. With the rise of the Anti-war, Women's and Black Liberation movements, Gays began to gain confidence in their ability to achieve liberation. The women's movement raised the question of sexual oppression and the supremacy of the heterosexual male. The Women's movement also inspired lesbians who fought as feminists to bring their experiences into the Gay Liberation movement. The Black Liberation movement, of the civil rights days and today, fights against racism, its myths, and the police apparatus of the state to gain the rights of Blacks. Gay militants have hailed the victories of both these movements and have learned from them.

Gays have reacted to society's claim that they are sick. Spurred by the freer atmosphere of the developing radicalization, Gays have begun to appear openly demanding their rights be granted immediately. Gays have been more willing to react despite the possibilities of heterosexual or police intimidation.

Gays have tended to look into themselves for the roots of their oppression, keeping themselves in a state of demobilization and self-hatred. With the rise of the Gay Liberation movement this attitude is being fought and Gays are reacting

to labels pinned on them. Gays are rejecting any genetic, psychological, biological or sociological myths used to justify their oppression.

The new mood of the Gay Liberation movement is reflected in the slogan "Gay is Good". This slogan serves a two-fold purpose. First, it appeals to closeted gays to reject their feelings of despair and self-hatred and to struggle openly for gay rights. Secondly, it rejects such myths as the unnaturalness of homosexuality, the Stalinist myth that homosexuality is a carry over of bourgeois decadence or the psychological view that gays are mentally ill. The Gay movement from its inception has had to challenge such myths and prejudices because they function as the main theoretical underpinnings for society's anti-Gay edifice.

The rise of the Gay movement has had its effects on the Trotskyist movement. We have eliminated our anti-Gay exclusion policy, and we reaffirmed our unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights, including full civil and human rights, and against all forms of discrimination and oppression Gays suffer under capitalism.

In June of 1970, the first gay march was held in NYC to commemorate the Stonewall riots. More than 6,000 people, representing all layers of the gay community, turned out for this affirmation of gay pride. The following year more than 25,000 demonstrated in cities throughout the United States, with the largest number in New York City.

The 1972 marches saw the introduction of new features in Gay Pride demonstrations. In Philadelphia, where some 6,000 marched a large number of sympathizing heterosexuals marched. Half of the demonstrators were Black. And in Los Angeles, the march went beyond the usual gay pride focus to include four demands: (1) repeal all statutes regulating sexual behavior between consenting individuals; (2) no "crimes" without victims; release all persons convicted of so-called sex crimes; (3) end discrimination against gays in all areas of life; (4) end police harassment of Gays.

This year demonstrations occurred in approximately 10 major cities. The largest in San Francisco (40,000), then N.Y. (15,000), Chicago (3,000), Philadelphia (2,000), Boston, Pittsburgh, Dallas and Minneapolis. Information about these demonstrations is hard to come by and I cannot offer an objective analysis of the demonstrations. But I must assume that they were centered around "Gay Pride".

Such demonstrations of thousands of homosexuals openly and proudly proclaiming their sexual orientation have a powerful political and social impact that revolutionists welcome and support. But the gay movement must develop a program and organizations that can involve large numbers of gays and supporters in political struggles to fight for gay rights and wrest concessions from the ruling class. Gay pride marches can in no way be a substitute for such a perspective.

State of the Gay Movement

There are more than 600 Gay organizations in America, and a large portion of them are campus groups. These groups have different orientations ranging from political activism to providing social settings. Some of the more politically active groups are involved in legislative lobbying, confrontation and other ultraleft tactics, mass demonstrations against police harassment and for Gay law repeal. Many provide social atmospheres where gays can meet, have dances, cabarets and lounges. Campus organizations by their very existence lead to struggles for recognition and funding.

Some of the issues of the Gay Liberation movement over the past few years have been the following:

1. Anti-Gay Laws

Sodomy laws, which are usually entitled "crimes against nature" or "unnatural copulation" laws, still allow gays to be punished for sexual acts between consenting adults in 42 states. Penalties range from three months in jail to life imprisonment. Some of these laws prevent certain heterosexual sex acts yet they are exclusively used against homosexuals. Since 1961 eight states have dropped such laws; revision of the laws are under consideration in many other states because of the impact of the movement. These laws provide justification for the oppression of homosexuals and are the basis for the legal discrimination.

In addition to these laws other laws such as cross-dressing, solicitation, lewd behavior, and loitering statutes are used to harass gays.

In a number of states there have been demonstrations against such laws. Gay groups from N. Y., N. J., and Conn. sponsored marches on Albany in '71 and '72 for the repeal of the sodomy, solicitation and cross-dressing laws.

While the sodomy laws are universally opposed by gays and while their repeal would mean an important victory for the movement, the demand for repeal has not been a central focus of the gay movement. There are a number of reasons for this: first, few gays come in contact with these laws as long as their sexual activity is limited to the private quarters of the bedroom; secondly, the reformist leadership of the gay movement tends to carry out the struggle against these laws through individual acts and legislative lobbying; thirdly, there is an ultraleft and counterculturalist tendency within the movement that orients inwardly and rejects the repeal campaign as reformist.

Where the sentiment exists for a campaign against anti-Gay laws, the reformist leadership or the general crisis of leadership prevents a campaign from developing. Victories of law repeal would help to spur the movement and increase its size and development.

2. Equal Rights Legislation

Such legislation is devised to end discrimination in housing and employment facing Gays. Such laws as Intro 475 in New York City have been the main focus of action for the reformist gay groups such as the Gay Activists Alliance. This bill has been defeated repeatedly when brought up for a vote. The reaction of the gay community has varied from legislative action to mass demonstrations and picket lines. At the writing of this document a city-wide conference of gay and heterosexual supporters is being called to sponsor a mass demonstration for passage of Intro 475. The results of this campaign will have repercussions for the gay movement around the country.

Equal rights legislation has been passed in East Lansing, Ann Arbor, Seattle and San Francisco. While there have been no efforts to push for a national gay equal rights amendment type campaign such a possibility cannot be ruled out.

3. Police Harassment

This type of harassment is endemic to the life of a gay person. Gays have often protested the arbitrary arrests of gays for lewd behavior, loitering or solicitation. Other forms of harassment include beatings and entrapments. Police and the state prosecutors tend to cover up and pass over the legal rights of gay people who are victims of heterosexual attacks. Such was the case with the explosive attack by Michael Maye on a gay leafletter. The prosecution aided the defense in making the gay victim into the criminal and Maye was dismissed of the charges.

4. Campus Recognition

As gay groups begin to spread from campus to campus, they will be confronted with the struggle for recognition and funding. Such battles have taken place from coast to coast. In Kansas and Missouri, for example, and at New York's Fordham University where the struggle for campus recognition was the central student struggle last year.

5. Job Discrimination

Open homosexuals are not guaranteed employment and few jobs are open for them. This forces the overwhelming majority of gays to live double lives, keeping their sexual identity a secret on the job. Military discharges for suspected homosexuals or real homosexuals indicating their sexuality are used by employers to discriminate against gays. Some cities ban gays from certain types of employment, such as teaching, bar tending, and taxi driving.

The gay movement has reacted to these acts of discrimination with everything from court suits to mass demonstrations. Gays have also formed caucuses with the Unions. Librarian Michael McConnell who was refused employment at the University of Minnesota helped set up a gay task force within the National Association of Librarians. Gay teachers

announced the formation of a gay caucus for similar purposes at the National Educational Association Convention.

6. Oppression by the Psychiatric Profession

Most psychiatrists believe that human beings are heterosexual unless they have had some emotional or unnatural tampering. This is why the psychiatric profession torture therapy on open homosexuals. Since homosexuality is a sickness psychiatrists argue for the use of electric shock therapy, castration and other barbarous techniques on gays in prisons and psychiatric hospitals. The Gay Liberation movement has sought to fight against psychiatrists' self-fulfilling formulas. The Gay movement has campaigned within the American Psychiatric Association to remove the label of mental disorder placed on homosexuals. This label is used as the psychological justification for gay discrimination.

7. Elections

Beginning with the 1970 campaign gay activists have been trying to get unequivocal stands of support from the major capitalist candidates. Their activities have been effective enough to get the gay question on the agenda before the National Democratic Party convention in Miami. The McGovern campaign served to instill illusions in the ability of capitalist parties to be reformed. This caused a temporary demobilization of the gay movement.

The overwhelming defeat of the gay plank at the convention and the McGovern downplay of his previous program has isolated the capitalist parties and their reformist supporters in the gay movement. The strategy of reliance on the handouts of the capitalist parties can only lead to the demobilization and derailment of the gay movement.

In contradiction to the campaigns of the capitalist parties, the YSA campus election campaigns and the campaigns of the Socialist Workers Party have been consistent supporters of the rights of gays. We must utilize our campus campaigns and the campaigns of the SWP to reach gay activists. We must educate students about the rights of gays, the discrimination they face in society and why we should support their struggles. Our position on gay liberation can only lead to recruitment of gay activists and the increasing of our influence on the campuses.

Forces in the Gay Movement

There is no organized central leadership in the gay movement. The ultralefts of the Gay Liberation Front period have lost much of their influence. The reformists appear to have filled the vacuum.

The attitude of the reformists is to oppose mass action replacing their electoral orientation. They orient toward influencing the good capitalist candidates and discrediting the bad candidates. What this tends to do for the gay movement is to make it a mass begging movement for the con-

cessions that good politicians are willing to give. Such attitudes have led to the defeat of the Intro 475 bill in New York. Gay advocates secured the votes of enough members of the city council to pass it, but the politicians reneged and the bill was defeated without a mobilization of the gay community.

In opposition to this strategy must be posed the need to build an independent gay movement dependent upon its own power of mass action and not on the good will of the capitalist parties.

A small section of the gay movement believes that homosexuality is better than heterosexuality. These people believe that gays should separate from society. Some develop countercultural lifestyles; others advocate a separate state such as "Lesbian Nation." None of these solutions can work. Gays cannot escape their oppression while the capitalist system remains. As Marxists, we see the liberation of the gay community through the destruction of capitalism and the replacement of its institutions that foster sexual oppression.

Of the organized political tendencies in the workers movement, only the Youth Against War and Fascism and the International Socialists relate to the gay movement. The Maoists and the Stalinists reject the movement as a carry over of bourgeois decadence.

International Aspects

The gay liberation movement is an international phenomenon. This phenomenon can be expected to increase because the causes of gay oppression are rooted in the patriarchal system that is worldwide and an institution of capitalism worldwide. A directory of gay organizations produced by GAA this year includes 200 gay groups in twenty countries other than the United States. The nature of these groups vary, including old line homophile groups and groups with independent mass action struggle perspectives.

The struggle for homosexual rights can be felt in the Stalinist workers states as well. In these states under the Stalinist regimes, gays have been faced with great hardships. This is contrary to the record of the Soviet Union under Trotsky and Lenin, which repealed the sodomy laws and published pamphlets dealing with the sexual question. Their position was that gays were as normal as heterosexuals and that the question of their sexuality was a scientific one. As of yet, no gay groups have appeared in these states, and the human rights movement has yet to take a stand on gay rights. This is probably because in the Stalinist society the gay issue is unpopular. Gays in the Soviet Union face up to eight years imprisonment for their acts, and who knows what psychiatric treatment. The Chinese claim that there is no such thing as homosexuality in China. In North Vietnam the situation is a little different, and some toleration is shown, although more research is necessary to resolve these questions.

The issue of the discrimination of gays by the Cuban revolution has caused widespread distrust of socialism by many gay activists here in the United States. Preparations are being made to provide up to the death penalty for gay acts. Only an analysis of Stalinism and Bolshevism from the Trotskyist point of view can combat these skepticisms.

Gay Liberation and the Struggle Against Capitalism

Homosexual behavior is suppressed by the institutions of capitalism. The family, the first institution that children encounter, trains them in their sexuality and distorts sexuality by placing fears and prejudices in the minds of the young. This serves to train the young into sex roles, with the object of the sex roles to maintain the Judeo-Christian, exclusively heterosexual norm, and to maintain the family roles. This is all reinforced by the schools, religions, mass media and the psychiatrists. Anyone who deviates can be punished by the law, and further by police, the state, landlords, and employers.

When one discovers homosexual feelings, they are told that they are sick feelings. This pressure brought to bear on homosexuals has a direct bearing on their ability to function in this society and has a direct influence on the reaction of gays psychologically to their oppression.

Revolutionary Marxists oppose all forms of oppression of homosexuals. This includes rejecting the bourgeois and Stalinist theories that are used to justify the oppression of gay people. We reject the notion that gays are inferior to heterosexuals with the same contempt that we reject theories that women are inferior to men or that whites are superior to blacks. We do this because these theories are used to divide the working class into antagonistic forces and instill a hatred among the oppressed against other members of the oppressed instead of the real oppressor, the capitalist class.

We welcome the new combativity of the gay liberation movement and solidarize ourselves with the affirmation of gay pride and dignity reflected in the slogan "Gay is Good!"

Virtually all the institutions of capitalist society harbor anti-Gay prejudices, and the struggle for gay liberation must be directed against these institutions.

The struggle for gay rights is a struggle for democratic rights--equality with heterosexually oriented persons, and an end to discrimination, persecution and oppression. The struggle for such rights has developed independently of the ruling class and its institutions; the thrust of the gay liberation movement is directed against these institutions and is in the interests of the working class. The struggle to win such rights will continue to play an important role in the current radicalization. We must reject the view that the gay liberation movement is "peripheral" to the central issues of the class struggle. However, we must reaffirm the fact that the gay movement will not have as much social weight in the

coming American revolution as the movements of the oppressed nationalities or the women's movement, or even of the student movement.

The struggle against gay oppression has a useful contribution to make to the overthrow of capitalism. It will necessarily help to undermine bourgeois morality, a key prop of capitalist society.

Gay oppression has a conservatizing effect on straights as well as gays. Periods of reaction throughout history have used anti-homosexual witch-hunts as a cutting edge. The struggle against society's ingrained anti-homosexual norm can only serve to undermine the effectiveness of this tool for keeping the working class and the oppressed in line.

The struggle of gays against the constricting sex roles will be welcomed by many heterosexuals. This too will contribute to undermining the sexual repression that functions as one of the pillars of capitalist oppression and exploitation.

The struggle against gay oppression directly affects a large number of people. The Kinsey studies, for instance, show that at least 25,000,000 Americans have at least a few years' homosexual behavior during their adult lives. Large numbers of Americans engage in homosexual acts despite the severe repression. Homosexuality is not a rare or even unusual phenomenon restricted to peripheral elements of society. It is widespread, and so is the suffering and persecution that result from the efforts of society to combat and eradicate it.

Millions of homosexuals--including millions of gay workers--have been given a new sense of their own worth by the rise of the gay movement. Even if they never join a gay organization or demonstration, the self-confidence they have gained because of the movement will make them more combative in other arenas of class struggle. The powerful energy of the assertion of human dignity by those who have been denied it is a central driving force in the entire radicalization.

Moreover, it is virtually assured that, as the gay movement continues to struggle and begins to win victories, many more of those who are now its silent supporters and beneficiaries will step forward to openly join the ranks.

The ultimate impact and appeal of the gay liberation movement can only be understood on the basis of the fact that it involves a struggle not merely for the rights of a presently constituted minority who are defined as gay, but for an end to the built-in need of capitalism to suppress homosexual behavior in all of its members. Homosexual oppression is reflected not only in the discrimination and persecution directed against persons who are either known or suspected to be gay, but also in the pervasive efforts of capitalist society to completely suppress homosexuality even before it may arise, and to threaten violators with severe

repression both in this world and the next. The effects of this oppression are felt in a wider scale than merely among those who admit, whether to themselves or publicly, to being gay.

Millions who have never engaged in homosexual activities must and can be won to the banner of gay rights. The American working class in its struggle to overthrow capitalism will join with the revolutionary movements in putting aside racial and sexual prejudices in the struggle to transform this society into a socialist one. To believe that the working class will be unable to grasp the demands of the gay liberation movement and support them is to fail to see the historical and revolutionary tasks that the working class will have to assume to transform society.

Another indication of the potential support of the gay liberation movement is the trend developing in the radicalization toward more openness in sexuality. This new attitude is reflected in the election of Jack Baker an openly gay militant as student association president of the University of Minnesota, one of the largest campuses in the country.

While the fear of homosexuality and anti-Gay prejudice run rampant in the population, the main hindrance to winning the masses to the support of the gay liberation movement has been the crisis of leadership. This is reflected in the inability of the movement to build aggressive, educational, and mass oriented campaigns. This is a crisis that revolutionists can and must help resolve.

The YSA and Gay Liberation: Our Tasks

The YSA must intervene in and champion the rights of gay people and the struggle for gay liberation. Not only will this intervention benefit the gay movement but it will increase our influence and benefit the YSA. The benefits include recruitment, sales of our press and literature, increased support of our YSA and SWP campaigns, etc.

Our approach should be flexible. While there is no national gay campaign that we can intervene in we should seek ways on a local level to intervene, support, build and recruit from the movement. We should actively relate to the gay movement on a local level.

The following are some of the kinds of activities that we should be involved in:

Propagandizing in favor of, and building, united fronts around law-repeal campaigns on a statewide level, where appropriate. We should encourage the formation of such united front campaigns and participate in them, putting forward our perspective of mass mobilizations independent of the capitalist class. We should also support united front fights to win equal rights legislation, whether on a local or national level.

The major focus of such united fronts will probably come from the campus and city-wide gay organizations, but efforts should be made to reach out and involve other forces, including such sympathizing non-gay organizations as unions, nationalist groups, and other political groups.

Local issues, such as campus recognition fights, free speech fights, defense cases, gay pride marches, child custody cases, struggles against job discrimination, police harassment and entrapment, etc.

We should use the YSA campus elections to reach gay groups and draw activists toward our program. We must educate through our campaign the need to support gay rights and we must be seen as the champions of those rights. In our support to the SWP campaigns we must point to the un-

conditional support given gay rights by the SWP platform and battle those who would have the gay movement support capitalist candidates. Our campaign involvement will be an effective way to bring our revolutionary Marxist program to the Gay movement.

As Marxists, we seek to bring our entire program to the masses. This should include our analysis of why Marxists support the Gay Liberation movement. We must also point out the attitudes of our opponents especially of the Stalinists toward Gay Liberation. Our YS educationals, and YS press and other materials we produce should reflect our championing and involvement in the gay liberation movement.

December 10, 1973

CRITIQUE OF A YSAer's ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND SOME COMMENTS

By Danny Laird, Houston Local

"Ken Miliner--the Socialist Workers Party candidate for congress--is talking on the telephone about election tactics... Miliner's final goal in running for congress is 'to help make a peaceful transition to socialism.'

NOT REVOLUTIONARY

"He denied that the Socialist Workers Party is a revolutionary organization. 'To get hold of this country, we have to work within the system; we must convince the majority of America to vote our way.'"

The above quotation is excerpted from an article in the Daily Californian, page 3, October 30, 1972.

Since its inception, the YSA has endorsed and actively built the election campaigns of the SWP, the party of socialist revolution in the United States. It has done so because it considers the SWP campaigns to be significant steps toward independent working class political action, and models of revolutionary socialist intervention in the electoral arena. As an independent revolutionary youth organization, it has been concerned with insuring the maximum success of these campaigns. Today, however, the SWP election campaigns have fallen into a number of questionable practices. Because of the respect it has earned as an independent Trotskyist youth organization, the YSA has the authority and the responsibility to help correct these errors. The purpose of this article is to give one example of such incorrect campaigns, and to resolve that the YSA national leadership approach the SWP to encourage it to make the necessary corrections.

Although the author of this article disagrees with the current status of the YSA's relation to the SWP, the article is based on the assumption that such relation as now exists will be continued.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE INTERNAL POSITION AND PUBLIC STANCE OF THE YSA TOWARD THE SWP'S CAMPAIGNS?

The Evolution of the SWP Campaigns

The SWP's election campaigns used to be one of the major channels of the Party's autonomous propaganda. They had assumed the function of mass educational work on the basic ideas of socialism and the class struggle, much in the spirit of the pioneering socialists of the Second International in its healthy days. In addition, it expressed the Party's own position on a number of current issues. Later on, the Party began de-emphasizing its autonomous propaganda within the united front-type activities in which it engaged, mainly the antiwar movement. The election campaigns were a welcome chance to make up for the sorry neglect of

independent revolutionary propaganda, mainly explanations of imperialism, which our unbalanced role as "best builders" of the mass movement had led us to.

However, a transformation has gradually occurred in the SWP election campaigns, which we of the YSA have continued to dutifully support. This new style of election campaigns found its first full blown prototype in the Linda Jenness campaigns of Georgia and Atlanta. Today, this new style has been so stretched and expanded, that in the present municipal election campaigns it is used as nothing more than a cover-up for the fact that most SWP campaigns have sunk to the level of sewer socialism, or below.

The Elements of the New Style

There are a number of salient features to this style:

1. Abusive individualization of candidates: From the baby-kissing of Fred Halstead to Linda Jenness' personalized invitations, this practice has led many candidates to speak only in the first person, rather than as spokespersons of the SWP and YSA. Comrades should count the number of I's in the candidates' speeches. Often the SWP is not even mentioned.
2. Fragmentation of the program through specialized candidates: There are now Black-Candidates-of-the-SWP, Chicano-Candidates-of-the-SWP, Feminist, Gay Liberationist, Student, and an occasional token Trade-Unionist-Candidate-of-the-SWP. The drab, multi-purpose candidate is usually only resorted to in extremes. The candidates specialize in presenting only one aspect of our program, that closest to the immediate aspirations of the particular sector they are addressing. The consequence is frequently a paternalistic omission of our full program and only a cursory reference to the major issues of the world class-struggle. Many comrades have had the experience of leafletting in mixed neighborhoods and having to select a different brochure depending upon the person approaching them.
3. Abusive extension of defensive formulations: The practice of posing as serious candidates with concrete proposals for government to be implemented upon our assuming office has led to a complete omission of education concerning the class-nature of the state, the need for proletarian revolution. Instead we hear of fundamental transformation, changing the system, rule of the majority, ending corporation rule, Nixon's war, and other such populist verbiage. Instead of introducing new concepts, and explaining them, the campaigns adapt to the existing consciousness of the broadest masses. The class content of the transition to socialism (the dictatorship of the proletariat) is not mentioned. Instead, we hear utopian images of socialism of the New

Jerusalem, land of milk and honey variety, etc.

4. Blurring of class lines: The word working class is seldom used or explained. Instead, we hear of the oppressed, the majority, the masses, the poor. Labor is treated as merely another sector with particular interests. The petty-bourgeoisie has disappeared, often modestly referred to as the "middle class." The SWP becomes merely another party, among the three or four parties whose formation it advocates, possibly the party of the "generally concerned" or "radical" constituency.

5. Parochialism: Under the guise of digging up issues in a branch or local's "own back yard," the municipal and other local campaigns have become centered on utterly reformist proposals which fail to call into question capitalist rule. Often these local problems are totally unconnected to any mass struggles, and are only made into issues by rival cliques of the local ruling class. Our own counter-proposals are couched in terms of re-ordering of priorities. The most frequent answer is to re-assign the existing financial resources to more worthy projects. Major events in the world class struggle which require public statements, such as Cambodia, Chile, or the Mid-East, are considered disruptive of the planned activities of the campaign, because they interfere with credibility and coverage from the local bourgeois press. This is nothing less than sewer socialism.

6. Minimalism: Many election campaigns which have been confronted with unfair ballot laws have made the question of whether or not their particular district, county, state, or the US itself, should remove these laws, the main issue of their campaign. Similarly, many candidates have made various forms of local separatism, home rule, constitutional reform, redistricting, and reorganization of the police, a major plank in their campaigns. Often this is done under the heading of community control. While some of these positions (excluding support for police reform) are not incorrect per se, to make them central is to mislead the masses into focusing their struggles on minimal and ultimately fruitless reforms, without the benefit of their learning any lessons from confrontation with the bourgeoisie as a class.

The Orientation of the Campaigns

Some of the more extreme deviations of the SWP election campaigns are obviously due to the particular candidate's reformist inclinations. However, they are possible because of the general tail-endist drift of the SWP's election policy, and the apparent failure of the more conscious Marxist cadre of the SWP to take on these deviations. A vigilant stance of the YSA could help rectify this problem.

However, a correct solution implies more than the curbing of some ultra-liquidationist individuals. The basic problems of SWP election campaigns stem from their whole orientation. They represent an attempt by the Party to

artificially become the best exponent of the aspirations of the masses at their current level, while maintaining a modicum of socialist rhetoric. This electoral tactic is merely one application of the general orientation of the SWP. Since the YSA has a similar orientation, it is unable to recommend the necessary corrections through the proper channels.

It is not our purpose here to make a lengthy analysis of party-building strategy, but merely to point out that the problems and choices we have encountered in the electoral arena are related to our whole practice. Revolutionaries seek at all times to transform the reformist ideology of the working class into revolutionary class-consciousness. They are successful when the broad masses follow the most advanced elements into actions which show the need to smash the bourgeois state. However, it is not always possible for the conscious revolutionaries to bring these elements to mobilize the masses in such actions, and their activity is then necessarily of a propagandistic character: explaining the need for socialism and a class-struggle revolutionary course. But this should always be combined with participation in the day-to-day struggles of the working class.

During the late sixties the SWP and the YSA failed on two counts. They failed to maintain and expand a base in the working class. This was necessary to prepare future, more elaborate, work in the unions, and to relate correctly to the radicalization of the students, from the vantage point of the class struggle. And secondly, within the sectoral movements which developed on the periphery of the organized, industrial working class, the SWP and YSA failed to orient toward the most advanced elements. These elements alone had an understanding of the central role of the working class and they alone can serve as a unifying force between the different sectoral movements, and between these movements and the working class.

The content of our election campaigns lagged behind the actual practice of the SWP and YSA. Without a base in the working class, the campaigns were purely propagandistic. To correct this, they were fitted to the sectoralist intervention we were carrying out. Candidates attempted to become the best antiwar activists, nationalists, feminists, university reformers, anti-pollution fighters. This line has been continued to this day despite the drastic transformation of the current radicalization; it has become a completely bankrupt line, which will lead the movement from crisis to crisis until this line is thoroughly analyzed and rejected.

In the present period, the petty-bourgeois movements have declined, while there is a molecular radicalization of the workers. The advanced layer has somewhat contracted and undergone changes. Major battles over economic issues are looming. Nonetheless, we continue to relate to non-existent movements and to avoid the existing incipient broad vanguard.

In the elections, we are faced with the choice of what

priority to give propaganda for the masses in general as opposed to explanations and actions oriented at the broad vanguard. Speaking engagements and press coverage can be obtained for candidates speaking to the current concerns of the broad masses interested in the elections (Kiwanis Clubs, League of Women Voters, in the worst cases). However, the character of our propaganda is then tailored to this audience, and fails even to interest the more advanced elements whose questions are not answered. The candidates merely attempt to become the best spokespeople for the grievances and immediate demands of the constituency they are assigned to.

What we propose, instead, is to recommend to the SWP that its candidates apply a different orientation. It is necessary to maintain basic socialist propaganda addressed to the broadest masses. However, it must return to explanations based upon a class interpretation of society, and not multi-class populist rhetoric about the oppressed vs. the big corporations (monopolies?). They must not concede an inch to parochialism, constantly putting the world issues, and the general interests of the working class to the fore. This requires fulfilling the necessary legal and other tasks to insure the audience, but these tasks should not become an end in themselves: "establishing the legitimacy" (in whose eyes?) "of the party." The candidates must use the campaign to propose solutions on how those who consider themselves radicals and revolutionaries can further the class struggle. They must explain the decline of the former mass movements and the present lull of the workers as the quiet before the tempest, that is, make an analysis of the state of the left movement and the current struggles of the workers. This must be combined with proposals for activity to mobilize the workers on a local and national level: strike-support, actions against inflation, for a workers party to evict the Watergate class.

Let us turn in conclusion to a sample of one election campaign, that of Kris Vasquez, a member of the YSA, for School Board of the Houston Independent School District. The basic campaign brochure is appended. This was the main if not only piece of literature used by YSAer Kris Vasquez, and the only piece of literature used by the campaign as a whole in the Chicano community. The candidate held a few rallies under the banner "Kris Vasquez for School Board," a slogan whose sole content is the Spanish surname, in the glorious tradition of municipal politics. According to her running mate who attended some meetings with her, the candidate would often forget to mention the Socialist Workers Party, in the flow of suggestions of how to run the School Board. Because there were no other Spanish surname candidates, and because the candidate was not known as a socialist, or attacked as such, she received 35% of the votes in the Chicano electoral precincts, which was, however, drowned in the total vote. However, it is conceivable that with different election laws, one of our candidates may have been elected on such a platform. This adds interest to the particular leaflet, and the style of campaigning which it implies.

The whole brochure is a concession to the bourgeois form of government in that it centers almost exclusively on school issues. The pretext given for this adaptation, in answer to the first question of the "interview," is that "education has been one of the most important issues in the Chicano community." This is an incorrect answer. In fact, Comrade Vasquez is running because her party decided she would. The reason for this fact is that the Socialist Workers Party will take every opportunity to present the truth about the burning issues facing the working class and its allies, and the means of dealing with them, and the school board election is hopefully just one such opportunity, whether the bourgeoisie considers our ideas relevant or not.

The second comment concerns the fact that over one half the space is devoted to a list of atrocities committed against Chicanos. Nowhere is this related to the economic and social needs of the capitalist class. It all seems due to racist and sexist attitudes, period. The major problems which the Chicanos share in common with the rest of the working class are not worth explaining. For that matter, nowhere is the working class mentioned as a class with common interests or a future of its own. Not even the ruling class (the bourgeoisie) is mentioned as a class implementing a particular educational policy in pursuit of its basic needs.

While speaking mainly as a Chicana nationalist and a feminist, the candidate does endorse the teachers' strike and call for socialism, apparently features of a working class candidacy. However, the brochure is unable to explain why the teachers' strike should be supported as an elementary act of CLASS solidarity and a part of the trade-union struggle in its present phase. Instead, the teachers are merely pictured as relatively UNFAVORED, given current prices. As for the abstract call for socialism, it is only developed as "a total re-structuring from top to bottom." Since this is not further explained as rule by the working people, it becomes a mere petty-bourgeois utopian dream formula.

The advocacy of independent political action is totally devoid of any class content. The candidate advocates the formation of a multi-class Black Party, but omits the usual lip-service to a Labor Party (for the left-overs). She states that LRUP (La Raza Unida Party) "represents a giant step forward toward political power for La Raza," a bizarre formula, at any rate in line with Party and YSA verbiage, since it is carefully devoid of any class content. The alternative to the Republican and Democratic Parties is therefore not presented as class struggle, but rather as "independence" in the abstract.

To summarize, although the leaflet pays lip service to socialism, it is dominated by a spirit of pusillanimous reformist proposals, most of which (except for the bilingualism demand) do not even come near the root of the problem (re-allocation of resources, re-districting, ban on corporal punishment). And this is the one problem which the leaflet

mistakenly tried to separate out: education for Chicanos.

If the vacuum left by the absence of any viable social-democratic formation did not threaten such campaigns with success, the whole thing would be farcical, a sect trying to act as a mass populist party. As it is, these campaigns reflect a tragic degenerative course of our movement. We do not think that instances of sewer socialist propaganda such as the one contained in the leaflet appended, a leaflet which is neither particularly good nor bad as they go, are a-typical. This is why we are proposing that the YSA make a major effort to re-orient itself and encourage the SWP to do likewise.

Appendix

TEXT OF THE EDUCATION PLATFORM OF YSAer KRIS VASQUEZ

Kris Vasquez is a 23 year old activist in the Chicano and socialist movements. She is running on the ticket of the Socialist Workers Party for Houston School Board. In this interview, Kris answers some of the questions she has been asked by those who have come to support her campaign.

OF ALL THE OFFICES YOU COULD HAVE CHOSEN, KRIS, WHY ARE YOU RUNNING FOR HOUSTON SCHOOL BOARD?

Education has been one of the most important issues in the Chicano community. Struggles by Chicanos and Blacks for an end to the terrible inequities we face in the public schools have been among the most significant fights we have waged. As an activist in the Chicano movement, I participated in those struggles. I know we have won a few gains, but I think the fight must continue.

What is called for is control by Chicanos, as well as Blacks, over the schools in their communities combined with a massive allocation of funds to provide for a decent education for our children.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE ISSUES IN THIS CAMPAIGN?

The Houston Independent School District is among the most backward and racist in the entire country. A recent US Commission on Civil Rights report documents the fact that Chicanos are neglected throughout the entire Texas educational system. That's what we've been saying for years. Chicanos have the highest "push-out" rate of any group. The schools, which deny and distort our real history and language, have forced as many as 89% of Chicanos out of school before we complete high school.

As a Chicana active in the feminist movement, I am particularly concerned about the sexism in the school books and in the tracking of Chicanas out of certain classes and into homemaking and sewing. All of La Raza is tracked out of courses that would lead to a higher education. I call for

an end to the racist and sexist practices of discouraging Chicanos and Chicanas from developing their full capabilities.

One of the things that contributes to the "push-out" is that virtually no bilingual education is available. One of the first things I would do on the School Board is to institute a crash program of bilingual education and courses that teach the real history of La Raza, starting from kindergarten on up.

I am opposed to the creation of the Westheimer School District. It would carve out an all-white district and its formation represents a step backward and re-inforces separate and unequal education. That district would mean the deepening of the division between the quality of education in the wealthy Anglo areas and the inner-city where most Chicanos and Blacks go to school. It would do that by taking a huge portion of the money collected in taxes for the public schools out of the inner-city.

As a member of the School Board, I will do everything in my power to back the struggles of Chicanos for adequate funding of the education of our youth. I endorse the May 2 march organized by the Raza Unida Party and others of 3,000 Chicanos on the state capital in Austin demanding money to provide equal education.

The recent Supreme Court decision in the Rodriguez case put the official seal of approval on the current racist method of financing public education. That decision held that it is legal to base the financing of schools on the property tax available in a given community, which means children in poorer districts will continue to receive less money than children in wealthier districts. I whole-heartedly condemn that method of financing public education.

We need more money poured into the schools. I oppose the recent cutbacks in the federal programs that were won in past fights. As an immediate solution to the crisis of decay in the public schools, the money in Nixon's war budget should be funneled into our district and others like it throughout Texas and the rest of the country.

THERE HAS RECENTLY BEEN AN ISSUE OVER CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE SCHOOLS. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION?

I am totally opposed to any form of physical punishment administered by teachers and principals in the schools. It isn't surprising that this issue has been the severest in the Chicano and Black schools. The conditions in those schools are intolerable for students. The administrators of HISD have publically stated that the real solution is special programs and counselling services. But they justify this right to physically assault students because they claim the money isn't available for these programs. I say there is! And it is the members of the School Board who must lead the fight to get those funds. I would be in the forefront of that fight on the School Board.

The use of corporal punishment in the hands of people brought up in this racist society has meant that it is Chicanos and Blacks who suffer the most from it. Just as the Chicanos and Blacks are constantly the victims of police brutality in the community.

The best example of where that kind of thing has been ended is Crystal City. There La Raza Unida won seats on the City Council and the School Board and kicked out the Texas Rangers who had acted as a vigilante force against Chicanos. They also put an end to the use of physical punishment in the schools and the abuses that La Raza had suffered.

WHAT ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOLS?

First of all, I support the right of Houston teachers to bargain collectively and to strike. Beginning teachers in HISD now earn \$7,100 a year which doesn't go very far with today's rising prices. I am in favor of the Houston Teachers Association's request for a \$1,000 across the board raise.

I also favor free speech for high school students. They have the right to organize politically, to circulate literature, bring in speakers, work within the schools to build demonstrations such as those organized by the antiwar movement and African Liberation Day. In some schools, Chicanos have attempted to aid the Farmworkers by demanding the removal of scab lettuce from the cafeterias. I support both the right to protest and the demand for its removal.

YOU MENTIONED THE RAZA UNIDA PARTY. WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THAT PARTY?

The Socialist campaign and all the candidates of the Socialist Workers Party support the independent political action carried out by the Raza Unida Party in Texas. We think that their break with the parties controlled by big business, the Democratic and Republican Parties, represents a giant step toward political power for La Raza.

I support the continued development of the RUP. I think it can serve as a valuable example to Blacks whose struggles could best be advanced through an independent Black political party that would fight in the interests of Blacks.

WHY ARE YOU, AS A CHICANA, RUNNING AS A SOCIALIST?

I have been convinced through my own involvement in the movement, that what is required for the full liberation of La Raza is a total restructuring of society from top to bottom. I think that what we need is a socialist system that will put human needs above private profit. I am also convinced that there will be many other Chicanos who will agree with me and choose to join in the struggle for socialism. I encourage them to support the Socialist Workers Campaign in Houston this fall.

As a member of the Young Socialist Alliance, I would encourage students and other young people to also join the YSA.

December 10, 1973

A SOLUTION TO THE REGIONAL PROBLEM

By Sheldon Lawrence, Brooklyn Local

In the Young Socialist Discussion Bulletin, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Comrade Andy Farrand, an at-large comrade from Liberty, New York, makes some excellent points in his discussion of regional work. The problems that we have encountered in regional work are well enumerated, but unfortunately Comrade Farrand does not present solutions to these problems.

Comrade Farrand correctly points out the values of comrades who are at-large or in small locals of transferring to the regional center. The leadership training and education that comrades receive from such actions are indisputable. He is also correct in his assessment of the region in relation to the regional center, and of the idea that a mass stampede to the regional center would be detrimental to the YSA. Because while the value of comrades working in the regional center cannot be denied, neither can the importance of building the YSA as a national organization (including its existence in areas outside the regional center).

The regional apparatus is an excellent idea, and one that should have the wholehearted support of all comrades. But the way it is presently being run is erroneous in that while the comrades that it draws to the regional center receive valuable education and training, none of this education and training is sent back out to the rest of the region, at least on a permanent basis. And since the comrades who are usually asked to go to the regional center by the regional office are those with the greatest leadership capacity, a leadership vacuum is created in the rest of the region and this vacuum lasts for an unlimited time.

There is a way to solve this problem and thus eliminate the leadership vacuum throughout the region (i. e., on the smaller campuses). Instead of transferring comrades from one regional center to another (New York to Chicago, etc.), these comrades should be transferred to smaller locals like Hartford, San Antonio, Tallahassee, etc. The benefit of the knowledge and leadership training that these comrades would bring to the smaller locals is obvious, and when we turned to the directories in The Militant and the Young Socialist, we wouldn't find locals disappearing as fast as they were formed. This would make the YSA a national

organization to a greater extent than it is now, and would give us a much larger membership, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Comrade Farrand says that we do not want a stampede from the region to the regional center. Unfortunately, this appears to be exactly what those in the regional offices do want, and this is presently the case. Comrade Farrand claims that there is not blanket pressure exerted on comrades in the region or that they are not made to feel "unworthy" by not moving to the regional center, but this is not true. Tremendous pressure is exerted upon comrades in the region and they are made to feel unworthy by not moving to the center.

Nobody can deny that the aid given by the regional center to the rest of the region is important and very valuable, but this aid cannot and does not fill the leadership void that exists now. The only thing that can fill this void is replacement of the comrades who transfer. When this is done the smaller locals will be better able to cope with their problems, will not be so open to demoralization and resignations or turns to ultra-leftism and reformism, and will better be able to assume leadership in the case of a mass upsurge.

Finally, we must realize that the situation in the YSA and on the campuses has changed from two and three years ago. Whereas before it was necessary to build up the regional centers at the expense of the regions to the present lopsided proportions, this is no longer the case. In fact, the changes that have occurred since the mass student uprisings ended and what can charitably be called apathy set in has made this policy detrimental to the YSA. The lack of political consciousness on campuses all over the country has demonstrated the need to have solid revolutionary leadership on these campuses. We have a tremendous historical responsibility, and to fulfill it we must build the YSA to mass proportions. This cannot be done unless the present regional policy of the YSA is changed.

December 10, 1973

By Chris Rayson, Berkeley-Oakland Local

The main danger in the current international dispute is the rejection of the method of the Transitional Program on the part of the IEC Majority Tendency. Rejection of the transitional approach is at the heart of the dispute because, in the final analysis, it is the starting point for the errors (of both an opportunist and ultraleft nature) made by the IEC majority.

One clear manifestation of this rejection is the IEC majority's increasing subordination of program to armed struggle. At the center of the Transitional Program is the concept of building a Leninist combat party able to solve the leadership problem facing the working class. This party is constructed on the basis of programmatic clarity through intervention in the struggles of the working class and its allies.

Counterposed to this political approach is the IEC majority's abstract and sectarian emphasis on armed struggle. It was the tendency to place the gun over politics that led to the strategic error in 1969 of projecting that our sections in Latin America prepare immediately for rural guerrilla warfare. Now the same error provides the basis for the "new" strategy of armed struggle in Latin America and for the task of winning hegemony in the New Mass Vanguard in Europe through "initiatives in action." This error is summed up in the IEC majority's acceptance of the theory of "minority violence."

Minority violence is the idea that our sections should initiate armed actions themselves, regardless of the state of the mass movement and even when the mass movement is in decline. It implies that armed struggle does not arise out of the class struggle but is injected from the outside. (During Comrade C. Charles' debate in Northern California on November 25th, he stated this explicitly.) It goes against the traditional Marxist conception that armed struggle would arise out of the mass workers organizations in the ascendancy of a mass movement.

Minority violence disorients the masses and prevents their mobilization. It can only be counterposed to building a mass revolutionary party rooted in the working class with an uncompromising Marxist program. Armed struggle is the way the proletariat will come to power, but it arises out of the class struggle itself, not in any abstract way through the voluntarist intervention of a minority, and its chances of success are enhanced only when the party is influential enough to prepare for it in a systematic way.

In this contribution, I plan to demonstrate that it is this concept of minority violence that underlies the IEC majority's new "strategy of armed struggle" in Latin America.

The IEC majority pays lip service to the need for a revolutionary party in Latin America, but the reality is much different. Minority violence obstructs party-building in two ways. First, it places guns over politics and thus prevents a section from recruiting cadre on the basis of programmatic clarity. Second, it isolates the section from the mass movement, and provides the ruling class with a handle to repress the revolutionists.

That minority violence is counterposed to party-building is clear from reading the second document on Latin America submitted by the IEC majority for a vote to the next world congress, "The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina."

This document supposedly corrects the "synthetic and elliptical formulations" contained in the "Resolution on Latin America" adopted at the Ninth World Congress. It projects a strategy of armed struggle for our Latin American sections without regard to the state of the mass movement and thus opens the door to minority violence and adventurist actions of all kinds, including terrorism. In doing so, it deepens and extends the errors of the Ninth World Congress.

In the document, the IEC Majority Tendency outlines the development in Argentina of a significant class struggle tendency in the trade unions, which has begun to seriously challenge the reformist union bureaucracy. They correctly point out that revolutionists have to intervene in these struggles and recruit the best militants to the Trotskyist movement: "In the period that opened with the installation of the Neo-Peronist regime, the central task of revolutionaries is to win a mass base, even if only in a few epicenters of the class struggle. This goal can only be attained if the revolutionary organization wins over or influences those vanguard cadres who have played a leading role in the struggles dating from the first Cordabazo..." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 21, p. 7). But how does the IEC majority propose to do this? Through "initiatives in action," armed actions undertaken by the section.

In "On the Question of Armed Struggle in Latin America," submitted by the IEC Majority Tendency as an elaboration of their views prior to the Tenth World Congress, sections are urged to "...undertake initial pilot-projects, to enter into initial actions that are carefully calculated for the effect they can have in increasing the combativity of the masses and their will and capacity for arming themselves" (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 20, pp. 30-31).

The IEC majority makes a fundamental error through this approach. They are guilty of the methodological error of dissolving the concrete into the abstract that Hansen pointed to in "The Underlying Differences in Method."

Here is how the IEC majority describes the evolution of the vanguard in the Argentine working class:

"At the beginning of the 1960s, important changes started to occur. From a structural point of view, the working class in the big cities in the interior, which was integrated into the modern industrial sectors, was acquiring an ever increasing specific weight....the epicenter shifted to Cordoba, which unquestionably became the nerve center of social and political confrontation.

"This development went hand in hand with the emergence of young strata of the working class that had not suffered the negative effects of stagnation and demoralization. A broad vanguard matured politically under the influence of the Cuban revolution and the armed struggles inspired in many countries by the Castroists." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 21, p. 6)

It is true that an anti-bureaucratic workers vanguard has developed in Argentina, and it is true that the Cuban Revolution has had some impact on it. But this correct point is exaggerated -- "A broad vanguard matured politically under the influence of the Cuban Revolution and the armed struggles inspired in many countries by the Castroists." -- in order to draw the following erroneous conclusion:

"It would be incorrect to conclude that Peronism's political and ideological influence is only a throw-back to the past. But the links between Peronism and broad working-class layers have become much less solid than in the past, and their adherence to Justicialism has become much more critical. There are important layers that have broken with Peronism, especially in the decisive epicenters like the huge plants in Cordoba, where the Peronist bureaucrats have even lost hegemony in the trade-union arena. All this boils down to the fact that Peronism no longer controls the workers vanguard." (Op. Cit., my stress)

We can see the effect that the "strategy of armed struggle" has on party-building. By exaggerating the level of consciousness of the working class, the IEC majority eliminates the need for the Transitional Program. There is no need to combine democratic and transitional demands that relate to the existing level of consciousness of the oppressed and lead, through experience, to a realization that capitalism has to be overthrown, if the working class is already willing to fight, arms in hand. Forget the party, all that's needed is to set the example through minority violence.

In the San Jose local discussion, a supporter of the Internationalist Tendency defended "the strategy of armed struggle" in the same way. He asserted, quite emphatically, that the Argentine working class was ready to fight, that raising "armed struggle" as an agitational slogan at all times,

regardless of the state of the mass movement, was correct because it related to the actual level of consciousness of the working class. After all, he said, this was the working class that had precipitated a Cordobazo, Mendozazo and a Rosarioazo.

To bolster his point, this comrade quoted from an interview given by Douglas Bravo, a Venezuelan guerrilla, that was first published in the Intercontinental Press and later reprinted as a Merit pamphlet:

"We think that the historic period Latin America is going through now, of national liberation and socialism has much in common with the past history of these nation:

"We maintain that the Bolivarian conception is fully valid for this epoch, that most of its postulates are still applicable. But I am going to take up only one aspect (of the Bolivarian conception-CR), liberating a single country. When a country succeeds in putting the revolutionary forces in power -- I am referring to a Latin American country -- then it can be said that that country is in the vanguard of the rest of the army continuing the struggle. And, as the vanguard, it must march in step with the rest of the forces in the battle. This liberated country can in no way set up its own individual strategy within its own frontiers.

"The liberated country must follow the strategy of the rest of the continent. Because this continent, divided up into more than twenty republics, is one single nation...." ("Douglas Bravo Speaks," Pathfinder Press, pp. 10-11)

While these are fine sentiments that reflect a sense of internationalism that should guide all revolutionists, it is no substitute for dealing with the concrete tactical problems of building mass revolutionary parties in each Latin American country. But the San Jose comrade insisted that the "Bolivarian conception" corresponded to the real consciousness of the Latin American masses, let alone the Argentine masses. This was the real starting point for revolutionaries. Therefore, it was justified to project a "strategy of armed struggle" on a continental scale.

Unfortunately, this is false. The average Latin American peasant and worker do not consider themselves to be citizens of the Latin American continent (far from it), and they do not sleep with guns at their sides. More importantly, in Argentina, it is not true that "Peronism no longer controls the workers vanguard." Only small numbers of the advanced workers have broken with Peronism, mainly through the efforts of the PST, but the great majority retain illusions in Peron. The effect of the IEC majority's line of reasoning is to reject the political approach outlined in the Transitional Program for breaking the working class from Peronism, and substitute instead minority violence.

This rejection of the method of the Transitional Program is made explicit by the IEC majority when they state in "On the Question of Armed Struggle in Latin America":

"The strategy of armed struggle is combined with the struggle for the Transitional Program as a whole to the extent that the necessary mobilization of the masses for the program's national-democratic and working-class demands itself leads increasingly to violent confrontation with the counterrevolutionary army, that is, to the question of the arming of the masses and to political and organizational preparation for this." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 20, p. 31)

This constitutes a revision of the method of the Transitional Program in two ways. First, a real strategy for arming the masses is incorporated into the Transitional Program. It flows from the method of the Transitional Program; it is not separate and apart from it. Therefore, there is no need to "combine" the two. Second, the relationship between armed struggle and the method of the Transitional Program is inverted. For the IEC majority, the transitional method of mobilizing the masses is to be used only "to the extent" that it corresponds to the "strategy of armed struggle," "to the question of the arming of the masses and to political and organizational preparation for this." This stands the real relationship on its head. The method of the Transitional Program is to mobilize the oppressed in action independent of the ruling class. Armed struggle is a tactic that flows out of the struggle itself, at the height of the mass mobilization.

This revision of the method of the Transitional Program belies the IEC majority's new talk about the need for our sections to integrate mass work with the "strategy of armed struggle." This is a subterfuge designed to answer the obvious criticisms of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. The real content of what the IEC majority proposes is apparent in the inverted relationship between armed struggle and party-building. Mass work is seen as an auxiliary to the "strategy of armed struggle": "...effective integration in the mass movement will assure the revolutionary organization more favorable conditions for facing the inevitable tests of strength and for confronting with increased effectiveness a new stage in which clandestine action and armed struggle once again becomes a priority." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 21, pp. 7-8) This remains a militarist, almost parasitical conception. Our sections engage in mass work in order to gain cadres for the armed struggle. As soon as sections have crossed "a minimum threshold of cadre accumulation," they should "anticipate creating armed detachments of the party" (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 20, p. 31) without undermining work in the mass movement. If we take the IEC majority at its word, i.e., that the formation of armed detachments should not cut across mass work, then we should clearly state that the formation of the ERP, the army of PRT-Combatiente, was in error. They certainly didn't combine armed work with mass work. The IEC

majority criticizes them for this. But the point is that their terrorism, their acceptance of minority violence, precluded them from doing any mass work. Not only were they small in number and isolated from the mass movement, but the armed actions itself brought down upon them severe repression that isolate them still further. Yet the IEC majority defends the formation of the ERP in the document on Argentina being submitted for vote to the Tenth World Congress, stating that at times it "attained the highest level of armed struggle in Latin America since the Cuban revolution...." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 21, p. 9)

This is the real content of the strategy of armed struggle and this is what the world congress is asked to vote for. Our sections are to initiate armed actions regardless of the state of the mass movement. The question has to be asked: who is the IEC majority appealing to with this defense of minority violence? To the working class? I think not. Minority violence leads away from a proletarian orientation and to substitutionism. I think the answer is provided in Thesis 9 of "The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina," where the IEC majority describes the importance of the petty-bourgeoisie and students in the following terms:

"A considerable role will be played by the petty bourgeoisie....(There) has been a growing radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie, along with the radicalization of the so-called marginal layers which fit into a category between the poorest workers and the most impoverished petty-bourgeoisie. It is these phenomena that explain the role played by petty-bourgeois elements in the struggles of recent years and in the armed-struggle organizations, as well as the influence Peronism has gained in these social strata.

"The student movement itself -- which cannot as such be characterized as petty-bourgeois -- has reflected, and in large measure given expression to, this tendency. The significance of such an alliance between the working class and the radicalized petty-bourgeoisie was shown especially by the participation of petty-bourgeois layers in the great mobilizations of 1970-72, as well as the links established between the workers and students at the time of revolutionary explosions in 1969. It is evident, moreover, that the favorable attitude on the part of the petty-bourgeoisie greatly facilitated the development of guerrilla warfare in the big urban concentrations." (Op. Cit., p. 6)

This recalls the quote contained in the "Resolution on Latin America" adopted at the Ninth World Congress which stated that because rural guerrilla war would be the main axis of work for our sections "...the most probable variant is that for a rather long period the peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie in considerable measure will provide the cadres of the movement" ("Resolution on

Latin America," Intercontinental Press, July 14, 1969, p. 719).

No, these armed actions that our Latin American sections undertake won't help to integrate our sections into the working class struggle occurring now in Argentina or anywhere else in Latin America, but it will be attractive to the so-called vanguard that make up groups like PRT-Combatiente. This is the same subordination of program to the gun that enabled the Fourth International to incorporate into its ranks in 1969 non-Trotskyist elements like the typically terrorist, petty-bourgeois PRT-Combatiente.

The IEC majority defends its strategy of armed struggle by projecting it as some kind of middle road between "foquista-adventurism" and "insurreccionalist spontaneism." This is a false schema. What is the essence of foquista-adventurism? Minority violence. Guevara asserted that a small number of dedicated revolutionaries isolated from the masses in the cities could spark a revolution by initiating armed struggle. What links this concept to all adventurist acts, including terrorism and urban guerrilla warfare, is minority violence. Yet the IEC majority refuses to criticize Guevara's Bolivian guerrilla experience in 1967, which was based on the foquista concept, or the adventurist, terrorist actions of Combatiente. They criticize the errors of technique but not the overall conception, because they base their armed struggle strategy on the essence of that conception, minority violence. It's the IEC majority that proposes adventurism through their defense of minority violence.

The other side of the IEC majority's equation are the "insurreccionalist-spontaneists." This is a misdirected polemic against the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. Spontaneists negate the purpose of a revolutionary party. They believe the oppressed will overthrow capitalism without the intervention of conscious revolutionists. Does this apply to the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction? Of course not. It's precisely because the masses need revolutionary leadership that we propose an orientation toward building a revolutionary party. What happened in Chile? The workers were defeated because there was no mass party with the correct political approach for arming them. That approach is not minority violence but mass action aimed at mobilizing workers and their allies in self-defense, and at splitting the army.

It is instructive to contrast the IEC majority's analysis of the situation in Chile following the coup to the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction's in order to see precisely who negates the role of the party in preparing the working class for armed struggle.

At the September 1973 United Secretariat meeting a

resolution on Chile was adopted by a contested vote. The supporters of the LTF on the United Secretariat objected to two features of the resolution and therefore voted against it. The first was the refusal of the IEC majority to characterize the Unidad Popular government as a popular front. The second objection applies to the discussion of "minority violence." The United Secretariat majority proposed that the Fourth International look into the possibility of forming an International Brigade to fight in Chile. Not only did this endanger Latin American Trotskyists who had fallen into the junta's hands, but it reflected a total misreading of the tasks for revolutionists in Chile and around the world. The United Secretariat majority felt the Chilean coup would precipitate a civil war in Chile, assuming the form of urban and rural guerrilla warfare. This conformed to the schema they outlined in the "Resolution on Latin America," which they have never rejected.

But, as the LTF pointed out, the workers had suffered a disastrous defeat in Chile following the coup. The trade unions were smashed, the militants murdered or jailed. The mass movement was on the decline. And the reason? No mass revolutionary leadership. Talk of armed struggle, and the actual carrying out of isolated armed actions by a minority, could only be an adventure under these conditions.

It's the indispensable role of the party in preparing the masses for armed struggle that Hugo Blanco points to in a recent article in the Intercontinental Press, when he assesses the coup:

"The workers and peasants vanguard has been crushed. The best thing the workers and peasants can do now is lie low and regroup, since they have no leadership...."

"If the working class had had a revolutionary party, the coup would not have succeeded. But since there was no leadership, we could not expect miracles. The best thing the workers can do now in Chile is to scatter and reorganize, build a new vanguard party. I hope that the Trotskyist comrades will build the organization that was lacking."

The strategy of armed struggle in Latin America proposed by the IEC Majority Tendency is no different from the line of the Ninth World Congress. If anything, it has been extended, not only in Latin America but in Europe as well. What's necessary is a clear rejection of that line of minority violence along the lines of the "Balance Sheet" and a return to the Leninist strategy of party-building.

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