

# young socialist



# forum

P.O. BOX 471 COOPER STATION NEW YORK 3, NY

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## NOTES ON OUR WORK IN THE STUDENT PEACE UNION

The Motion of the NEC on the Student Peace Union is the beginning of an approach to our work in the anti-war movement. The SPU has, as we know, mushroomed in membership in the past two years. It is the focus of any serious intervention we undertake in the anti-war movement as a whole.

The Motion is a beginning, but only a beginning. About all it does is define the situation, indicate that we must involve ourselves, and raise some slogans. This is barely more than the amendment which was presented at the December 1961 Convention did. It is my opinion that a much more developed analysis of the student peace movement and where it is going is needed. In this article I hope to present some further ideas on this.

A question which brought forth some controversy on the NEC and which, it was decided, would be handled in literary discussion, was the question of transitional demands and the relationship between the demands we propose. The Motion originally handled this question in the following way:

The YSA fraction . . . builds the left wing caucus around our full revolutionary anti-war program, transitional demands, and concrete demands aimed at the imperialists. Our full anti-war program is contained in our document The Fight Against War. The transitional program revolves around demands which raise the concept of labor to power, such as "Let the People Vote on War (or nuclear testing)," "We need a labor party as an anti-war party opposed to the imperialist parties," "The unions should control the army." At every new war-making turn of the imperialists, we must raise within SPU concrete demands against the concrete war actions of the imperialists like "Hands of Cuba!," "Get out of Viet-nam," "No more testing," "Withdraw all troops from foreign soil."

These comments represent the concluding sentence of paragraph 5, and all of paragraphs 6, 7, and 8 of the original motion. My opinion is that these paragraphs handle the question of the slogans we propose in the anti-war movement in an artificially separated, and therefore incorrect manner. To compartmentalize our demands in this way can be extremely misleading. Unlike the Social Democrats and the Stalinists we combine all our demands to form a system and we apply these demands using what could be termed a "transitional approach."

It is in a certain sense less important to know which demands form a part of the transitional program of 1938 and which demands are partial demands which we now raise, than to understand that all of our demands must further the struggle against capitalism. Some demands are transitional in that they pose directly the need to overthrow capitalism. But our other "non-transitional" demands, partial demands, such as "Hands off Cuba!," "Get out of Viet Nam," etc., must also be anti-capitalist in their essence although they do not necessarily pose the overthrow of the system. This is the difference between our "partial" demands and, for example, the supposedly progressive demands which all varieties of reformists put forward, like demands for support to the UN, for support to peace candidates in the Democratic party,

etc. The Stalinists, for instance, say that we are sectarians or worse for not supporting these so-called progressive demands. We answer that these demands are in reality not progressive, but are tied to the framework of capitalism.

It is entirely possible that at a certain juncture, certain transitional demands, demands that stop short of socialist demands but cannot be fulfilled within the present social order, are nevertheless not raised by us except in the most propagandistic manner. This is true of demands involving the proletarian military policy, for instance, because they do not now create a link between the relatively low level of consciousness of those in the anti-war movement and our socialist goals. This link, this raising of the level of consciousness, is what we seek to accomplish, and to do this we raise both partial and transitional demands. We must understand both that certain "partial" demands are not really progressive and therefore do not play any sort of linking or transitional role, while at the same time some demands which fit into the transitional category also do not form a link at this time because they are far above the present level of consciousness. If we do not understand this concept, there is a possibility that we will adopt a ritualistic, dogmatic approach toward transitional demands. There was, I feel, a tendency to adopt this sort of approach at the time of the Washington Peace March of February, 1962. The majority of the NEC at that time adopted an approach which, because it leaned on one and only one transitional demand, did not make the best possible overall impact on the peace marchers. What we need in our intervention in the anti-war movement is not any one or two slogans which we at this time present as a sort of gimmick. In the future, anti-war movements in the U. S. as elsewhere, may center their work on key slogans. But our job now is to present at least several slogans as part of a more worked-out political line.

In discussion material from the Third Congress of the Young Communist International (1922), the following is presented on partial demands and partial struggles:

" It is of supreme importance to remember that our partial demands are not to be considered individually, but as going to form a system. It is nothing but the yoke of capitalistic exploitation which is imposed upon the working youth, and no demand can be put forward without it bringing another problem to the fore... Therefore, in advancing partial demands, we must keep in mind our final objective, which is the proletarian revolution and the construction of the socialistic society...

But even in their content our demands are absolutely different from the reformist demands put forward by Social-Democracy. These people have put forward a program in which they set forth their minimum demands, and in which they have allowed themselves to be guided by the principle of going out for only those that can be carried out under the rule of capitalism. We, in fighting for our demands, do not think it necessary to stop to consider whether or not they can find a place in the profit-making economic system of the capitalist class. Indeed, we make a full turnabout, and make demands of such a nature as will spell the doom of capitalism. Our only consideration in this matter is not the needs and capabilities of the capitalist economic system, but the limit of hunger and want beyond which the proletariat cannot go without losing its fighting capacity. "

In its original form the Motion does not contain this very important concept of the unified approach with which we present all of our demands.

The removal of the artificial distinctions from the original motion is an improvement. The problem with the original motion was that it explained what separates our demands, that is, that some are transitional and others not, without also saying what unifies them.

From an understanding of the nature of the slogans we propose we must proceed to project slogans which guide our work in SPU. Here also the Resolution is just a beginning. There are other important demands which should be proposed, other than those in the Motion, of course. The slogan, "End the peace-time draft" was proposed in the Detroit SPU, in which our comrades have been quite active. Other partial demands we should raise include the abolition of compulsory and under certain circumstances voluntary ROTC, and an end to Civil Defense tests. We must have the general concept in mind of "Hands off Revolution", applying this concretely to Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere. We must also, in addition to urging votes for the socialist ticket, raise the labor party concept. We must seek wherever possible to forge links between the anti-war movement and the workingclass.

These slogans in some cases raise certain problems for us. In proposing demands like an end to ROTC or the draft, we must differentiate ourselves from pacifists who raise these demands. The same can be said in relation to reformists and liberals who will raise such demands as "For a Public Works Program." This differentiation can be carried out in our press and inside the anti-war movement itself. But we should be all for raising common demands with others, as long as these demands further our struggle against capitalism.

Submitted by Fred Mazelis  
August 14, 1962

HUAC DEMONSTRATIONS

LOS ANGELES

HUAC was here: April 24, 25, 26, 27, 1962. The anti-HUAC movement was quite strong locally with the inspiration and lessons of the SF demonstration and "riot" still felt; the ACLU film "Operation Correction" has been frequently shown by various groups. It was therefore possible to mount quite a sizeable picket demonstration against HUAC.

Preceding the appearance of HUAC, Chairman Walters was in town March 19 to present awards at a banquet to several local reactionary figures. At that time the "threat" of HUAC's arrival was made. About 200 picketed Walters under the auspices of an ad-hoc committee, "Walters Reception Committee" in which the CP elements exercised complete control and maintained a monolithic line. Sentiment was turned against them when at 8:30PM, following a prior agreement with the cops, they called off the picketing. The line was still strong and growing at that time and they were forced to insist on the property rights of "their signs" in order to break up the line.

Hoping to take advantage of this situation the YSA decided to form a Youth Action Committee, patterned after the N.Y. YOC, which would call for and organize picketing HUAC when they came. One meeting was held and the support of several independents and of the Workers World was obtained. Due to a lack of experience plus the fact the HUAC's arrival was still uncertain, YAC was not developed into a real organization.

On Thursday, April 12, definite word was received on the time of HUAC's arrival. We received indirect word of a planning meeting to be held the following Monday at the Unitarian Church from one of our YAC contacts. While the CPers were definitely involved it did not appear at that time that they would have complete control. We got out a leaflet in the name of YAC announcing HUAC's arrival and calling for support of the meeting at the Unitarian Church. This was distributed on 3 major campuses (LACC, UCLA, and LA State) on Friday, the day before Easter vacation.

Due to our leaflet, about 10 times the number the Stalinists had expected, showed for the Monday meeting. This upset their plans somewhat, but they were still able to maintain control while appearing to open up what they called the "HUAC Reception Committee" by inviting "un-official" representation from any group, i.e. anyone who belongs to a group can join the steering committee as an un-official representative. The YSA did not operate correctly here and take full advantage of the political opportunities which presented themselves. This was due to a lack of experience in making a correct evaluation of the situation. The important policy decisions were left for a meeting of the steering committee the following Wednesday.

During the entire proceedings a close cooperation was maintained between Los Angeles and the Berkeley, San Francisco and San Diego comrades. On Tuesday Brian and Matt arrived from Berkeley and we met with Party leaders and made a re-evaluation of the situation. In the meantime the Fair Play for Cuba Executive Committee had met and decided on an independent attack against HUAC and organizational identification in the picketing.

We arrived at the steering committee meeting in force, with representatives from Berkeley, San Francisco FPCC, and several YSAers and friends representing various "organizations." The CP crowd, however, is much

The picketing ended Friday on a strong and spirited note. FBI agent Wheeler appeared to observe the picketing and the picketers, in spite of attempts by picket captains to calm them began shouting "Hey Mr. Wheeler, we're still Here!" Then the subpoenaed steel workers appeared and they sang "The steelworkers, they shall not be moved" and the line ended.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. While there was no real break-through, the YSA did manage to successfully challenge the Stalinist monolithic unity.

2. The YSA was definitely in evidence at the picketing and the reputation of the YSA was, at least to some extent, raised.

3. The experience was if nothing else, of great educational value. The YSA comrades gained much valuable experience, and political consciousness.

4. There were, of course, many mistakes. The YAC operated, out of necessity, much as a YSA "front". There is much yet to be done in the way of challenging the Stalinist control of youth-student actions.

#### YOUTH ACTION COMMITTEE:

There has been interest expressed in YAC from a number of directions and we have hopes of establishing it as a permanent organization working on a true united front basis. Plans are for an organizational meeting as soon as school is out.

Submitted by Wayne King  
May 18, 1962

THE SHAPE OF THE NATIONAL PEACE MOVEMENT

YSA Bay Area Joint Conference, August, 1962

When we talk of the 'peace' issue, we sometimes tend to lump it together with other issues—civil rights, civil liberties, labor's struggle. This can lead to a serious mistake—misunderstanding the class nature, and hence the potentialities for development of the peace movement. For the peace issue has on really important distinction from all others—it is now, and of necessity must remain, a fundamentally petty-bourgeois grouping.

This is certainly observably true now—but why must it be so in the future? How is such an issue essentially different from, say, that of civil rights? In reply, I should like to discuss, briefly, one aspect of the difference between the working class and the middleclass.

A fundamental division has been made among the broad mass of society, a division into those who shall think for a living, and those who shall work with their hands for one. It is a division which perpetuates itself, and which is made quite early in the individual's life. Suffice it to say that by the time one is 18 or 20, he is in college being trained to think (so to speak) or he is working with his hands or trying to get a job doing that, (or is in the service and will be placed later.)

And because of this great division, we are faced with two groups who will join themselves to causes for different reasons—to generalize it: the worker becomes involved only when the problem is posed in a concrete form; he is too busy with immediate problems to concern himself with abstract ones—and his whole education moves him to concentrate on the specific. The petty-bourgeois, because he has to deal to some extent with abstractions, and because he has some leisure to consider them, is hence, more moved by them, and will form more and more of the bulk of an organization, the more abstract the issue around which it is built. The civil rights struggle has demonstrated this quite well: Monroe, where the goals of the movement are most immediate and concrete, is precisely where the movement has its most working-class character.

Peace could once be a working-class issue. In 1917, the October Revolution rose on a slogan of PEACE! Then BREAD! Then LAND! Precisely for the reason that in 1917, in the midst of a war that was a national catastrophe, the issue of peace was the most concrete, specific issue around. Today it is a question of protesting that might happen; Something which has thus far happened only to 200,000 people removed 6,000 miles in space and 17 years in time. In 1917 it was a question of what was going on right then in the trench with you, of the empty stomachs at home, of the deaths of countless friends and relatives. And because of the intensification of war and what it means today, that situation—the situation in which the working-class gathers its anger and struggles for peace—shall not come again. If war comes, that phase will be passed over: the abstraction will become so concrete that there won't be enough people around, however indignant, to talk about a peace movement.

After we've made this fundamental qualification of the peace movement, that it's petty-bourgeois, we must ask what our relationship to it should be. Our movement has always had to have a carefully considered relationship to the middle class. We do not regard it forced fundamentally to develop toward revolution, as we do the working-class, but rather see it as something vacillating and uncertain. And our fundamental orientation toward it, at this stage, is one of trying to recruit as many of its radicalized elements as



possible and integrating them into the workers' movement. For that reason we orient primarily toward students—toward the portion of the middle-class that is least committed to a place, a comfortable niche, in bourgeois society.

If we look at the peace movement, we find corroboration of this view, because it is the youth who are the only really leftward moving group there. This is the most essential aspect of the character of the peace movement to grasp: That there is a split in it: that the old pacifist-stalinoid-liberal adult leaderships are what they've been for twenty years—static; and that the new force that is growing in size, and is the only reason for the present blossoming of anti-war actions, is a rapidly leftward moving youth. This has totally altered the character of the peace movement; the old leaderships either must drift left with this tide and try to contain it, or they shall be cast aside and left behind. They can move with it to a degree—they contained it for a while in SANE and now in Turn Toward Peace. But they are, at every step going under. In New York last march, 5,000 people pretested Kennedy's resumption of bomb-testing, under the leadership of this old guard. After being attacked physically by the police, they attempted to stage a protest against the brutality displayed, a demonstration which was called off by this leadership because they thought it would be based on anger rather than love of humanity and sorrow for the soul of the cops. The result is that this leadership has been discredited and probably shall have little part in future major actions. In the aftermath of the Washington Action, the YSA in Detroit forced the local YPSL finally to disavow Turn Toward Peace because of its bureaucratically imposed right-wing line;—and in fact was able to effect a united front on the next demonstration committee between YPSL (sic), the YSA, and the SWP against the TTP leadership, a move which placed us alongside the YPSL in battle with the local SP+SDF.

This new youth aspect of the peace movement has manifested itself over a period of time in different organizations. Some time ago it was Student SANE, but that was ripped apart by internal and external redbaiting. A period of fragmentation and reorganization followed. Several groups coexisted for a while until, finally, during this past year, one, the Student Peace Union (SPU), emerged as the successor. Some of its characteristics should be described.

First: it was chiefly put together by YPSLs, and they, and people just like them, dominate its National office. It is centered in the most backward industrial section of the country—the Midwest—and the main reason for the YPSL's strength in that area. That it should be centered there is quite logical: the Midwestern campuses are becoming radicalized in the manner that Berkeley and East were 3, 4, 5, years ago, and are beginning to seek political expression in simple forms like SPU rather than more developed organizations like SLATE or some on Eastern campuses. Many of these chapters are being built on campuses that have had no radical activity for 15 or 20 years. More than 2,000 people are signed-up members of SPU—a great many of them know little more of the left than that organization and the occasional YPSL from the SPU National Office. Many of them are hundreds of miles from YSAers and wouldn't come in contact with us and our ideas for some time, but for our reputation and discussion articles within SPU.

YPSL has used SPU as its private recruiting ground, and to that degree we have suffered from its existence. What we have done, to an ever greater extent, has been to get into this organization—with a principled program—

to enter locals here, to build locals there, and really to contest the YPSL ideas flowing from Chicago and their other strongholds. So far, we are a tiny minority, 4 delegates at the April SPU convention were YSAers plus a couple sympathizers---out of 120 delegates. Nevertheless, our participation has brought some tangible benefits even in this preliminary stage and has really scared the YPSL. In Detroit in December, we started with 3 taunted, isolated, YSAers out of an SPU of 40. By March we were able to lead a leftwing comprised of slightly under one-half the active membership, and generally kept the YPSL on the defensive. At the SPU convention, the primary activity was a 4-hour Trotsky-bait by the YPSL national leadership, a hysterical panic at the thought of having to oppose us.

Key to the entire notion of entering these groups is that of program: what do we do when we enter? There are various possibilities: we could, like the Stalinists, advocate the most backward liberal views of the membership, gain positions of authority, and try to slide the group leftward without its knowing it. We could, like the YPSLs, try to gain positions of authority and then try to figure out what to do next.

Our movement's historical approach to outside, action organizations that we enter has been very different: the essence of our tactic has been to enter on a principled program and attempt to coalesce the more militant elements around that program, as a left opposition initially, and---when we can lead on our own terms, the terms of that program---becoming a left leadership.

So what comes to be of crucial importance is our program. We don't enter and demand advocacy of workers' revolution and critical defense of the USSR as the conditions for forming coalitions with others in the group---although we don't hide our feelings if they want to talk about it.

Instead, we recognize that what is most important is that there are people moving left in the organization, people who will accept our full program in time, but are still in transition toward accepting it. We want to try to influence these people to move in our direction, and for this we try to find common ground with them for struggle against the right. Our task, the most difficult task of the revolutionary tactician and the ultimate test of him, is to find that point. The demand we introduce in the organization which attempts to gather the left about us, we call a transitional demand---for in the process of struggling for it and realizing its implications our contacts and supporters are raised to a higher level of political consciousness, are helped along on the transition to accepting our full program of proletarian revolution.

Although specific demands come and go, I can mention a few as examples of what has recently been tried:

**NO SUPPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC (WAR) PARTY!**

---an extremely important demand, this one probably represents the issue on which the next years of our activity will be based.

**NO FOREIGN INTERVENTION!**

---this makes specific the platitude slogans like PEACE!, which anybody can support, and is highly embarrassing to the liberals.

**WORKERS' CONTROL OF THE ARMED FORCES!**

—this slogan has been used little in the past few years (so far as I know) and might be a really essential part of our coming agitation. It has the advantage of appealing to a wider audience than "END THE DRAFT!" while making no real concession to the right.

Generally, our slogans seek to point up the capitalist base of the cold war, and are introduced in opposition to the meaningless slogans about brotherhood, etc.

What are the benefits of our participation? We can reach an extremely large segment of those students in the process of radicalization in several ways—through direct personal contact, through discussions on the floor, through the discussion bulletin—and can bring many students closer to us or recruit them. Equally important is another aspect—one which cannot be emphasized enough, an educational aspect. Rather than recruiting people directly to the YSA, we have the chance to confront them in public, to show them what our program is, and the depth of our commitment to it—to give them as accurate a picture as is currently possible of a revolutionary, so that when we finally do recruit them, they come highly aware of the situation and considerably hardened.

Further, for the political development of every single member of the YSA, the meeting by meeting, action by action, sustained activity in such organizations is important. We know pretty well what we are fighting for; we must constantly assimilate the techniques of fighting. Bolshevism is not a text-book theory: it results from a continual dual process of study related to practical action. We don't read theory in a vacuum: we have learned our theory, only when we have related it to a flesh-and-blood context:

Hammering out the best transitional program for a specific time and place;

Defending that program and winning new sympathizers and comrades in open struggle with other tendencies;

Learning the tactics of building a caucus and learning the organization of our activity necessary for leading and holding together that caucus.

These are the teachers of Bolshevism. It is through such efforts that we shall build and harden our cadre for its more distant and greater tasks.

Submitted August 23, 1962  
by Alan Shelly