

YSA

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 10 No. 2
January 1967

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1. Political Resolution (NEC Draft, submitted January 24, 1967)
2. Political Resolution (Passed by YSA National Convention, March 1966)

35 cents

YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

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

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The political resolution for the 1967 convention is an extension of the previous resolutions of 1966 and 1964. It takes into account changes in the immediate situation in the light of the general lines of the resolutions passed before. The 1966 resolution particularly should be considered a prerequisite for the present one.

Newer members, who did not take part in last years' discussion, are especially urged to read the '66 resolution before reading the '67 resolution.

POLITICAL RESOLUTION
(NEC Draft)

I. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

The war in Vietnam is the axis of world politics today. The imperialist onslaught on the Vietnamese revolution, north and south, is a direct challenge to the world working class. It fundamentally tests every socialist tendency claiming to be defenders and leaders of the working class. The response of each tendency to the American aggression directly affects the defense of the revolution. In turn, it leads either to growth, recruitment and education of cadre, particularly youth, or to setbacks and lost opportunities.

The YSA in its activities and deliberations has recognized the central political challenge and responsibility presented by the Vietnam war. We have participated vigorously in the antiwar movement and assume a heavy share of the organizational responsibilities. In the process we have presented out socialist ideas to radicalizing youth and have won a new layer of comrades to these ideas.

Six previous years of organizational consolidation, consistent education, and campaigns around key political questions prepared us to be in the vanguard of the antiwar movement. We have played an active role in building the antiwar movement and, in turn, the antiwar movement has been the proving ground upon which the YSA has tempered in struggle a national, politically homogeneous organization, with an experienced cadre. This activity has made the YSA the strongest nation-wide socialist youth organization.

The major historic task of the international revolutionary movement is to overcome the leadership crisis in the working class by recruiting, assimilating and educating the cadre capable of leading the working class in a successful struggle for socialism. Around the world, the reaction against the aggression in Vietnam has spurred the development of anti-imperialist forces which can provide many future revolutionary cadres. In the United States, during this present period of relative working class quiescence and partial student radicalization, major political battles are occurring on the campus and in the student milieu, where socialist organizations are competing for future cadres and political predominance. The outcome of this battle of ideas on the campus today will partially affect the gathering of a revolutionary cadre capable of leading the working class to power.

The campus remains our most fruitful arena of political work, as a rising percentage of American youth from all class backgrounds go on to some form of higher education. On the campuses, opposition to the war continues to grow, as does interest in and receptivity to socialist ideas. Among the working class tendencies it is the Communist Party (CP) youth

and the YSA who are the main competitors for the allegiance of radicalizing youth. The struggle of ideas between Trotskyism and Stalinism will be further intensified as the 1968 elections approach.

As the experience of the American CP in the 20's and 30's demonstrated, the working class tendency which can recruit and educate the best of the present layer of student radicals will have an important edge in the coming radicalization of the working class. Thus, today's political struggles in the antiwar movement and on the campus will have an important bearing on the relationship of forces in the working class movement in the future.

II. THE IMPACT OF THE WAR

War casualties, higher taxes, inflation, attacks on living standards, reduction in domestic spending, curbs on union demands and threatened anti-labor legislation are all beginning to have effects on American society.

The existence of an organized antiwar movement, even a student based one, in the midst of a major war is a significant radical development, which we have recognized from its beginning. Already the antiwar movement has involved hundreds of thousands of people in actions, and it can play an even bigger role in the future. The antiwar movement can serve as a catalyst for bringing into motion other sections of society affected by the consequences of the war. As workers begin to express their dissent, they will tend to focus on those things which directly affect them such as inflation or union busting, but the war drive remains at the root of their disaffection. The antiwar movement can encourage their dissent and organizationally reach out to them.

A. Negro Struggle

In the ghettos, opposition to the war in Vietnam is strong, but unorganized. Black people are carrying a disproportionately large burden of the war both in terms of manpower and living standards (through inflation and taxes). They correctly view it as a racist war fought against colored people. The war has prompted the rulers of this country to step up their resistance to the demands of the black population, emboldening them to open an attack on Adam Clayton Powell in the House of Representatives in one of the most blatantly racist moves they have dared make in several years.

Opposition to the war has been both a reflection and a cause of the deepening of nationalist sentiment in the black population. It has been one of the central focuses of the black power development.

The main problem facing black people remains the lack of a strong black political organization independent of the Demo-

cratic Party, to lead the struggles in the ghetto. The development of the Black Panther Party in Lowndes County, Alabama has been a big step forward in this respect and has set a potent example, but it remains a single step and the lessons have not yet been absorbed by a large segment of the black population, or even by the leaders who speak for black power sentiment.

Both SNCC and CORE have been advocates of black power and for this they have borne the brunt of the racist attacks by the government and the press. They have lost much of the white financial support on which they formerly depended and are now in the process of organizational retrenchment.

Outspoken opposition to the war by SNCC and CORE and their willingness to work with the antiwar movement have been most encouraging and important developments for both the Negro struggle and the antiwar movement.

B. The Labor Movement

The war drive has forced the ruling class to put pressure on the union movement to pay for more and more of the war. Labor resistance to this has already resulted in some significant developments, such as the air line mechanics strike in the summer of 1966. Every indication points towards even greater resistance during 1967 by the labor movement.

Several large unions will negotiate new contracts in 1967 and up to this point have shown no willingness to follow Johnson's wage guidelines, let alone set aside the right to strike during the war. Inflation has cut into labor's standard of living and the threat of another 6% tax hike will increase the determination to win escalator clauses and substantial pay increases. The housewives' boycotts of super markets and the picket lines against high prices are another reflection of the spreading discontent over the effects of the war.

In the trade union bureaucracy an incipient conflict exists between Reuther and Meany. The pressure of the war is engendering rank and file discontent which ultimately tends to widen such conflicts. In turn, the divisions among the leadership provide a more conducive atmosphere for rank and file discussions of the war.

Opposition to the war, timid though it may be among the union brass, has been reflected in the willingness of some secondary bureaucrats to attend conferences like those sponsored by the Trade Union Division of SANE in Chicago. Six thousand unionists sat as an organized bloc at the December 1966 SANE rally in New York. These are only infant steps in the direction of labor's speaking in its own interests or taking up the antiwar banner, but they are significant ones for the antiwar movement. They affirm the perspective we have maintained of the antiwar movement effectively reaching out to and eventually

joining up with other more powerful sections of the population on the war issue. They open up in a concrete way the possibility of the antiwar movement gaining real social weight and taking on a mass character.

C. The Campus

Opposition to the war continues to mount on the campus to an extent far surpassing other sectors of the population. In addition to the continued viability of the campus-based antiwar committees, growing antiwar sentiment is reflected in the success of campus antiwar referendums and the numerous "instant protest" demonstrations. A healthy development of the Student Mobilization Committee and a successful April 15 demonstration and Vietnam week can further advance the organization and utilization of this growing sentiment.

The pressure of the war on the university and the example of the antiwar movement loom as the background to the recent large demonstrations against tuition rises, CIA recruiters on the campus, university cooperation with the draft, and other similar issues. In most cases these demonstrations begin as defensive efforts against infringements on students' rights and often revolve around war-created issues. Such demonstrations are a further indication of the influence of the antiwar movement and provide broader arenas of work for the antiwar committees.

The university is not an "educational institution" in the abstract. It is designed to train technicians in the various fields of the capitalist system. University administrators must serve the needs of the ruling class and have little tolerance for student rights or what they consider excessive political discussion on the campus. Nevertheless, many thousands of students have been mobilized to demand greater rights and partial or complete control of the university. These demands are important because they strike at the essential purpose of the university as a capitalist institution. As students struggle for their rights, some will come to see the essential nature of the university and can be won over to a socialist perspective for changing society. Our job is to participate in these struggles showing the nature of class society, the role of the university in society, and the specific weight of the war on the university and society.

The existence of the antiwar movement and the continuing radicalization on the campus foster an attitude of receptivity to socialist ideas. Such a development has convinced most socialist tendencies of the importance of centering their activity on the campus. This is true even of the CP youth, who at one point were hard advocates of "community" work. In this context the YSA's campus orientation takes on an even greater importance in the coming period.

III. THE YSA AND IT'S OPPONENT RADICAL TENDENCIES

A. The CP Youth and the YSA

The CP youth and the DuBois Clubs (DBC) have been our major political opponents during this past period. While the YSA's participation in the antiwar movement is grounded in our understanding of the importance of the antiwar movement and the need to recruit radical youth to socialism, the Communist Party also understands that it must recruit youth today who can play leading roles in the mass movement and CP tomorrow.

Because of their Democratic Party oriented "community organizing" projects and organizational sectarianism the CP youth have involved themselves minimally in the antiwar committees. They are consequently in a weak position relative to us in the antiwar movement and have been unable to divert the movement as a whole into their Democratic Party orientation.

The November 1966 Cleveland Spring Mobilization conference and the December 28, 1966, Chicago Student Mobilization Conference indicated that the CP youth now intend to play a more active role in the antiwar movement in the hope of diverting the movement into Democratic Party politics for the 1968 elections.

The CP began its attempts to rebuild a youth organization in the late 1950's, the same period in which the YSA began to take form. At the Chicago student conference, where a direct confrontation with their youth occurred, it was evident to both us and the CP that in terms of nation-wide breadth, political understanding, tactical dexterity, and roots in the antiwar movement, the YSA had developed a superior organization during the last ten years.

There are two major reasons why the CP has so far been unable to match the Trotskyist movement in the development of youth cadres. First, their peaceful coexistence world perspective, binding them to class collaboration and the Democratic Party in this country has led them to a political dead end. This has been manifested in their analyses of the key issues of the day--Cuba, black nationalism, and Vietnam. They have submerged the revolutionary implications that these issues have for American politics, and have instead embarked on a policy of fostering projects such as "community organizing." They have consistently been found in the right wing of the radical student movement on issues such as black power, independent anti-capitalist politics, and withdrawal of troops from Vietnam.

Second, they have attempted to proceed on the premise that a massive "socialist oriented" youth movement, under their organizational control, is possible during the present period. However, without a mass working class radicalization the

objective condition does not exist for the type of broad, massive, vaguely socialist youth movement which the DBC tried to become. There is no basis for a "socialist SDS" in competition with SDS itself and broad single issue organizations such as exist in the civil rights and antiwar movements. Also, the new generation of radicals are wary, and rightfully so, of any attempt to build front groups.

The Progressive Youth Organizing Committee (PYOC) and Advance represented attempts in the late 50's and early 60's by the CP to build a youth organization. Neither one succeeded in establishing itself due to the political and organizational weakness of the CP, the government attacks on the CP, its failure to intervene decisively in the Student Peace Union and in the defense of Cuba, and the front group character of both organizations.

The DuBois Club, founded in June 1964, represented another, and more successful variation on the PYOC theme. Its political orientation was to involve itself in reformist community organizing and class collaborationist politics, pretending to be the student movement, and viewing organizations such as antiwar committees as competitors. The aim was to draw in many apolitical youth with the goal of becoming a broad, largely socialist-oriented youth group organizationally controlled by the CP, but with no open political solidarity or formal relations with the CP. Recruitment was conducted around reformist action programs and recruitment tended to be on a social rather than a political basis.

Attempts by the DBC to substitute itself for the radical student movement led to its June 1966 convention fiasco when under the illusion that the convention would attract the radical youth of America they rented the Chicago Coliseum (seating several thousand) for a national convention which was attended by less than three hundred. They repeated the same error in their August 1966 "national" march on Washington of 250 persons where they alienated both the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) by falsely claiming their endorsement. This sectarian attitude has also led them to attempt to thwart the development of the antiwar movement, as they did at the 1965 Washington National Coordinating Committee (NCC) convention when they opposed the formation of a strong united front national antiwar organization based on the political line of withdrawal.

The DBC now finds itself in a crisis. Their national office is in debt and virtually without staff. Their bimonthly political organ, Insurgent, has not appeared since July 1966. The DBC's defense against threatened government attack and the dynamiting of their national office in San Francisco was weak, unorganized, and sectarian, and ultimately lead to a further weakening of the organization.

Because the DuBois Club has not proven itself a viable political youth group in terms of recruiting and educating cadre, the CP youth have been speaking more in the name of the CP, making a clear distinction between themselves and the DuBois Club. When important political work has to be done, as at the Chicago conference, the CP youth have played the decisive role, not the DuBois Club. The CP seems aware of the deficiencies of the DuBois Club and it is possible that they will experiment with new organizational forms for their youth movement in the future.

The current united front for building the Spring Mobilization, in which the CP youth and the YSA are involved, provides an opportunity for the YSA to present its ideas, particularly ideas on class-struggle electoral politics, to these youth. By doing this we can help break down the taboo implanted by the CP milieu against Trotskyism. Some CP youth consider themselves serious revolutionaries, and will want to hear our ideas.

The YSA

The growth of the YSA has been in total variance to the path followed by the CP youth. We have politically educated ourselves in the principles of Marxism. As developments of significance to the revolutionary movement have occurred on the international and domestic arena we have analyzed them and taken action on a campaign basis. This was true of the development of the northern civil rights movement in the early 60's, the defense of the Cuban revolution, and the anti-Vietnam war movement.

The YSA has centered its work on the campuses, and from these campus bases has built viable locals in major cities across the country.

Organizationally, the YSA has been flexible enough to draw in the radicalizing youth who were moving toward revolutionary socialism while at the same time maintaining the discipline, effectiveness and democratic procedures of a youth group based on the principles of democratic centralism. While avoiding the error of trying to build an illusory "mass" socialist youth group on a minimal reformist program and loose organizational precepts, we have also not made the ultra-left error of building a "junior party" which stifles the recruitment and natural development of radical youth.

When our organization came under attack at Indiana University we made the defense of our three indicted comrades the primary political task of our entire organization. Our nation-wide campaign successfully defeated the Bloomington witchhunt. By supporting a broad defense committee, the Committee to Aid the Bloomington Students, we set an example of the correct way to carry out a principled defense effort.

The YSA is in a position to realistically strive to become the dominant youth socialist organization in America today. In terms of a solid national organization, nationwide cadre, a regular and attractive press, roots in the radical movement as it exists today, in addition to our political line, we have taken important steps toward that goal.

This conjuncture, and the advantages the YSA has vis-a-vis the CP youth, are historically significant and are part of a changing objective situation for Trotskyism on a world scale. The international revolutionary movement, the Trotskyist movement, has participated fully in the fight against the war. This fact, combined with the failure of the Stalinist and Social Democratic parties to organize and lead an effective opposition to U.S. imperialism gives the world Trotskyist movement, and especially its youth, an opportunity for advancement which it has not seen in years.

This international character of the fight in defense of the Vietnamese revolution and the struggle for the political allegiance of socialist youth has made internationalism a concrete practical necessity and political responsibility. The opportunity for growth and gain vis-a-vis Stalinism and Social Democracy that many Trotskyist youth groups in the world have, requires our closest attention and political collaboration. The ten year experience of the American YSA has given us much of value to share with co-thinkers, just as their experiences and traditions have much to teach us. Our response to this situation is one of the biggest tests of the YSA's revolutionary character.

E. Students for a Democratic Society

The radicalization among middle class students assumes a contradictory form because it takes place in the absence of a radicalized working class. There is no anti-capitalist political party or working class movement with a mass following with the power to attract the new radicals. Students often begin by rejecting the working class, especially its organized sector, as an agent of radical social change. Nonetheless, their existence in a class society in an epoch of heightened worldwide class warfare and the existence of socialist organizations continually forces them to support objectively anti-capitalist causes and to grapple with socialist ideas.

SDS is the organization which most reflects the above contradiction. SDS cannot be placed in the same category of opponent groups as the CP youth who represent a working class political tendency. It has attracted a large number of student liberals and radicals. It claims 6,000 members nationally and another 25,000 in local chapters. The rank and file, especially on the more isolated campuses, tend to be antiwar activists. They often reflect the demoralization that is a result of the weaknesses inherent in the current composition

of the antiwar movement and the absence of an authoritative national antiwar organization.

The disorientation of the SDS rank and file has been compounded by the default of the SDS leadership in playing any significant role in organizing the fight against the war. SDS nationally has had a sectarian attitude toward the antiwar movement. They often see local antiwar committees as competitors and tend to remain outside of national united fronts. Since the march on Washington, which they called two years ago, they have made a consistent retreat from confronting the U.S. government on the war question, orienting instead toward student anti-draft activity and "community" organizing of the social work variety. This shift to the right lays the basis as well for a greater susceptibility to reformist ideas, programs, and gimmicks.

The last SDS National Council meeting in Berkeley at the end of December voted 29-26 against endorsing the April 15 Spring mobilization. This decision further accents the SDS retreat, but the split vote indicates an important division within the organization. The Chicago Student Conference and the initiatives of the Spring Mobilization Committee have influenced many SDSers to endorse the Spring action.

In the last year SDS has published regularly a newspaper, New Left Notes, (NLN) which has enhanced the political discussion within SDS and its milieu on such subjects as socialism, black power, and SDS's self-identity and relation to other radical groups. This discussion will weigh on the future of SDS and we will want to follow it closely.

We should continue to make every effort to draw SDS, along with the general milieu it represents, into the student antiwar united front locally and nationally and at the same time participate in the important political discussions in which they are involved, striving to win adherents to our ideas.

C. The Ultra-Lefts

1. The political setbacks and the ideological confusion of the Maoist forces on a world scale--the massacre of the Indonesian CP, the loss of influence over the Japanese and north Korean CP's, the split with Cuba, rejection of any united action in defense of Vietnam and the "cultural revolution" in China--have been paralleled by the organizational and political decline of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) in the U.S. Their periodic adventures in "community agitation," and their poor defense efforts have been followed by a refusal to participate in the antiwar united front which has left them relatively isolated. Their recent "discovery" of the "capitalist" character of the Soviet Union will further their decline. In some areas they have joined SDS, supporting "community" organizing, anti-draft activity, and opposing mass mobilizations.

In New York they were the main force behind the reformist congressional campaigns of Leslie Silberman and Hal Levin which destroyed the Queens and Brooklyn College antiwar committees. They ran a token electoral campaign in their own name in a New York State Senate district concentrating on "community" issues. Challenge, the PLP paper, has recently announced that it is unable to maintain a bi-weekly schedule and is becoming a monthly publication.

The liquidation of the May 2nd Movement accentuated PLP's isolation and weakness. The fate of M-2-M provides a case history of an unsuccessful attempt to build a broad anti-imperialist socialist youth group, controlled by a Stalinist leadership. The non-PL youth in M-2-M, particularly in the New York area, attempted to form an organization called the American Liberation League, publishing two issues of a paper, Liberation USA, but they have not maintained themselves.

2. The political in-fighting between the Spartacist League and the Workers League, coupled by their sectarian abstention from the antiwar united front has kept them isolated. The Workers League's political cover-up, and thereby assent to the beating of Ernie Tate by their co-thinkers in England further compromises them.

3. Youth Against War and Fascism has participated in the New York Parade Committee and most of the national antiwar conferences. Their major preoccupation is holding antiwar actions in their own name, and continually pushing gimmicks and "instant demonstrations." Although they have attracted some youth they have enjoyed no qualitative growth and remain largely confined to New York.

It is important to remember that while all these organizations remain small, a certain middle class strata will be attracted toward the ultra-left in a period like this. Frustrated by their own weakness in the face of imperialism and impatient with the pace of development of the Negro and labor movements, they find temporary salvation in analysis and acts whose only requirement is that they be to the "left" of the revolutionary movement. Ironically, the very "success" ultra-left organizations have in recruiting this strata is their real achilles heel and condemns them to isolation from the mass movement. While individuals may occasionally be won from them we have no interest in sterile verbal polemics with them. Ultra-left moods affect some individuals in SDS and the Negro movement and, if extended, these moods will be simply the "left" path away from radical politics and back to the safety of the middle class.

D. The Social Democrats

One of the most striking aspects of the new wave of student radicalism is the absence of an organized Social Democratic wing. The Social Democracy remains outside of and hostile to

the student antiwar committees. To them the withdrawal position is too "pro-communist" and "anti-American." They understand, additionally, its incompatibility with class collaboration politics. It is important to remember that the Social Democracy has enlisted for the duration of capitalism in a de facto bloc with the State Department in the anti-communist crusade. To them the most heinous aspect of the antiwar movement remains its non-exclusionist character vis-a-vis us and the CP. The forces whom they influence will systematically try to chip away at non-exclusionism.

Although the YPSL was reorganized this fall it remains extremely weak, almost non-existent, reflecting the failure of the Social Democrats to attract a significant section of the radicalizing youth. Social Democracy represents, however, one of the three major working class political tendencies, and future growth cannot be precluded. With a move to the left of a wing of the labor bureaucracy they could become politically and organizationally attractive to some student radicals.

The Draper wing of Social Democracy at Berkeley, organized in the Independent Socialist Club (ISC) has enjoyed relative success this last year. They refused to support the Robert Scheer campaign in the Democratic Party, but supported the development of the multi-issue Peace/Rights Organizing Committee which was created to destroy the Vietnam Day Committee, and now support the Community for New Politics which grew out of the Scheer campaign. The Draperites, who are continuing the old Schactmanite line on the workers' states, have also entered SDS where they have recruited a handful of members to their political position.

E. Summary

All the radical youth organizations, with the exception of the YSA, view the antiwar movement as a competitor or potential competitor with their own organization. They have become involved in the antiwar movement only with reluctance. It is to the benefit of the antiwar movement and the YSA to try to continue to struggle to involve the various radical youth organizations in the antiwar united front. The antiwar movement is given more forces and life, and the YSA is given a broader milieu to reach with its ideas. It is simultaneously the most effective method of struggling with our opponents and the best defense of the Vietnamese revolution.

The rank and file of opponent organizations cannot be identified with the leaderships. The ranks are not necessarily educated, conscious opponents of revolutionary socialism. Although our primary recruitment does not come from opponent groups, we can popularize our ideas by consistently forcing them to deal with our ideas. Let the leaderships try to explain to their members why they should not take part in the defense of the Vietnamese revolution.

IV. THE 1968 ELECTIONS

The reformist bias of the new radicals is especially strong when it comes to electoral politics, and 1968 will be no exception. As we get closer to the 1968 elections, the pressure to get off the streets and into electoral activity will increase, as will the pressure to adapt to the system and class collaborationist politics.

Every one of our opponents will utilize the weakness of the student radicals and the tremendous pressure of the system to try to build their own brand of reformism. The closer we get to 1968 the more important will become the debate over various electoral paths and the divisions between us and all our opponents will sharpen and become clearer.

It is important for us to take the initiative now in explaining our class struggle approach to politics and in projecting our view of the 1968 elections. We especially want to spread our ideas to the antiwar movement and to the members of other radical groups. It is important to recruit individuals and educate the antiwar movement on these complicated principles before the dispute over '68 becomes too sharp, before the pressure of the system and our opponents takes its toll.

Particularly we want to express our ideas to youth. We can make real gains by making the CP youth confront and answer our opposition to all forms of class collaboration. Supporting the Democratic Party is a bitter pill for many CP youth to swallow and there are indications that many will at least listen to our ideas.

Our general principles concerning electoral action were outlined in the political resolution adopted at the 1966 convention. They have also been discussed in the James P. Cannon articles on the 1948 elections. This material should all be reviewed and studied and this section of this year's resolution should be viewed as an extension of last year's discussion.

Our goal is to build a mass revolutionary socialist party in the United States. Our attitude toward other political formations depends on our analysis of how they affect this long range goal. Our call for a labor party as an alternative to the capitalist two party set-up is one tactic, which, given the indication of some discontent in the rank and file of labor, we can begin to use more fruitfully to explain our independent class political perspective to new radicals.

During the last year we have had some valuable experiences with electoral politics, particularly in relation to the antiwar movement and our opponents in the antiwar movement. The 1966 elections provided us with a concrete test of the correctness of the general principles laid out in our last political resolution and gave us a preview of coming battles in 1968.

The 1966 New York SWP gubernatorial election provided a focal point for our electoral activity nationally. The effect of this campaign was an indication of the impact that our ideas can have on the antiwar movement. The campaign had a two-sided character as an antiwar campaign and as a socialist campaign. It enabled us to take our program directly to the antiwar movement and interest antiwar activists in revolutionary socialism. The SWP candidates were the only antiwar candidates on the state-wide ballot. Through this campaign we drew around the YSA a substantial group of contacts and helped obtain the widest range of sponsors the SWP has ever had. The campaign presented the YSA-SWP as leading spokesmen and builders of the antiwar movement, and as its socialist wing.

The continued escalation of the war, and the weakness of the opposition to it in the two capitalist parties, gave our opponents little room to push for Democratic Party peace candidates. The most significant "peace candidate" campaign was the Robert Scheer candidacy in the Bay Area. The Vietnam Day Committee almost destroyed itself by deciding to endorse Scheer, losing many of its activists to his election campaign. We were able, though, to make gains in the long run as some of these same people came to recognize the correctness of our line on the campaign.

The Community for New Politics, which grew out of the Scheer campaign in Berkeley, represents one of the more sophisticated forms of "radical" capitalist politics. It has been successful in misleading a sector of the radical youth of the area. The SWP campaigns in Oakland and Berkeley counterpose our principled class politics to this formation and help to explain in a concrete fashion the meaning of independent anti-capitalist working class political action.

The "independent peace" campaigns such as Hal Levin's, Leslie Silberman's and the one of the Committee for Independent Political Action in New York were not based on a clear cut rejection of capitalism and the capitalist two party system. All of these campaigns were good examples of middle class "socialism." Each one was oriented to the "community" with the aim of building a "grass roots constituency." No attempt was made to run a serious propaganda campaign that would educate on the war, the nature of capitalist society, or the class road to its abolition. They failed to draw any significant forces around them. Each campaign was predicated not on a class break from capitalism but on "independent third partyism." Thus these "socialist" campaigns cut across our class principles, and we could not support them.

It is important to remember that support of some kind to an electoral campaign is a tactic we use to further the fight for working class political action and revolutionary socialism. Even if a campaign is clearly socialist it may not merit our support. We do not scan the candidacies and release a seal

of approval list. The 1966 Progressive Labor Party candidacy of Wendy Nakashima in New York and the 1966 Socialist Labor Party ritual were examples of campaigns which it would have been possible to support in principle, but from which no tactical gain would have issued. Campaigns of the ultra-leftists are often in the same category.

We were able to support Aptheker's Congressional campaign on a principled basis as a campaign of a working class tendency. Our critical support to the campaign--in which we supported Aptheker's running outside the Democratic Party and yet were unsparing in our criticism of his program--gave us the opportunity to talk politics with CP youth and their milieu. It compelled the CP to take a stand on the SWP's campaign. Their refusal to back the SWP candidates made a bad impression in the radical movement, serving to expose the sectarian side of their politics.

The development of the Lowndes County Freedom Party (Black Panther Party) is a significant step towards genuine working class independent political action, which we have supported nationally. The example the Black Panther Party provides of running independently of the Democrats and Republicans, of rank and file control of the party, of consistent education, and of defending members from attack are all valuable. Its main weakness remains the fact that it is now limited to Lowndes County, Alabama.

The spokesmen for black power have not fully understood the lessons of the party and it is not widely known in the ghettos. Our support to the party in the forms of a pamphlet, news articles, trips to the south, public meetings, and support groups has been important both in aiding the struggle in Lowndes and in spreading the ideas of the Black Panther.

The division over electoral politics in the antiwar movement has existed since its inception, hampering even the initial action of the antiwar movement, the march on Washington. The 1966 elections were a test of force and influence between the two contending sides of the division and the 1968 elections will be a further test. We must begin to discuss our ideas on electoral politics now, taking the initiative and laying the basis for the 1968 presidential campaign of the SWP.

V. THE TASKS OF THE YSA

The YSA is at an important new ~~conjunction~~ **conjunction**. If we are able to carry out our tasks in a conscious, systematic, and conscientious manner we will reap long term gains for the Trotskyist movement.

1. Our analysis of the general character of the period and our tasks as outlined at the last three conventions remain valid.

Our fundamental task is the recruitment and education of new fresh forces in the theory, program, strategy, and tactics of Marxism, and the traditions and principles of the revolutionary socialist movement. At this time we have an increased opportunity for recruitment to the YSA which we must take advantage of. This also means we must place added emphasis on education and assimilation of newer members.

Our work is basically propagandistic and the focus of our attention is the campus, which is the most fruitful arena of work in this period. We strive to build viable campus fractions through which we can recruit individuals to our ideas and organization.

In our activity we project ourselves as the young socialists of America and the socialist wing of the antiwar movement.

2. We must continue to build a non-exclusive movement for withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Central to this task is the building both of campus committees and broad united fronts which strive to build a large scale movement.

We build the antiwar movement as a single issue movement, while at the same time striving to convince individuals that the YSA is the multi-issue organization which stands for fundamental social change.

3. The major source of recruitment remains freshly radicalizing youth from the campus milieu. Nonetheless, competition with opponent tendencies gives the YSA opportunities we must not overlook. We must be alert to individuals in opponent organizations who move in our direction.

4. The strength of the YSA is publicly reflected in our press. The regular appearance of a magazine is an accomplishment that no other socialist youth group has attained in this last period. Changes in the position and opportunities of the YSA must be reflected in the coverage and frequency of the Young Socialist. The YS in turn must be sold with sustained regularity to further strengthen our position in the student and youth movement.

The Militant is the weekly paper of revolutionary socialism and is our best single recruiter and educator. It is a simple rule that the person who becomes a regular Militant reader has taken a big step toward recruitment to the YSA.

The International Socialist Review and World Outlook are of special value in introducing our ideas to those who are interested in theoretical questions. They should also be read regularly by all YSAers to keep abreast of the struggles of the world revolutionary movement and as part of their political education.

5. The Negro struggle is continuing to develop and orientation towards it remains one of our central tasks despite the fact that the present size and composition of the YSA and the current stage of the struggle limit our involvement in the black organizations. We must be alert to openings in the struggle, such as the Black Panther Party, where we can further the development of black anticapitalist independent political action. We must study the history of the struggle, follow the current developments carefully and take part in the discussions that are going on.

6. The defense of our comrades in the Bloomington case is coming to a close. The victory we achieved in this case constitutes a significant example for the radical, civil rights, and peace movements. The facts of the case and how we won the fight should be reviewed by all members, and passed on to the movement.

The Committee to Oppose the Deportation of Joe Johnson and the Hugo Blanco defense are examples of national and international defense efforts which we must support.

7. The growth and position of the YSA can be directly attributed to our consistent education. As we become more active in the antiwar movement we must also continually concentrate on the education of our own cadre. Our aim is to absorb the traditions and lessons of Trotskyism and to continue to develop politically educated self-critical revolutionists.

January 24, 1967

POLITICAL RESOLUTION

(NEC Draft)

Since our last convention American political life has been dominated by the war in Vietnam. The student movement, in response to the war, has reached a new high point in terms of 1) the numbers involved, 2) the fresh forces drawn into political activity, and 3) the depth and radical character of their opposition to administration policies. This political radicalization took place despite continued economic prosperity and a relative lull in the Negro movement.

Our last YSA convention early in 1965 occurred during a period of relative quiescence in radical activity and we did not project a campaign around any one specific issue. A few weeks following the convention the call for the March on Washington and the first teach-ins ushered in the antiwar movement.

The socialist youth organizations all were tested by their ability to 1) shoulder the responsibility of a campaign against the largest imperialist aggression since Korea, and to 2) respond to the opportunities for education, influence, broader political leadership, and recruitment provided by the rapid rise of the antiwar movement.

We intervened in the antiwar movement from the beginning and were major builders and initiators in it. The previous period of organizational consolidation and political education had prepared us to intervene as a national formation. Our strength and the political level of the antiwar movement made it possible for YSAers to play leadership roles - not simply "make the record." We have been able to raise the political consciousness of the entire movement by supporting and organizing around the theme, "Bring the Troops Home Now!" This new experience gave rise to our first national experience in combat with our major opponents, the stalinists.

I. General Historical Setting

The character of the student radicalization of the late 1950's and the 1960's has been marked by:

- 1) the unevenness between the development of the world revolution and the social and political development of the United States, and
- 2) the contradictory legacy of the radicalization of the 1930's.

A. The Colonial Revolution

The world revolution as a whole has been on an upswing since the close of World War II. Although there have been retreats as well as advances, the colonial workers and poor peasants have been in unending struggle against imperialism and have wrested political independence for a whole series of new nations.

With the overturn of capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe and the victory and consolidation of the Chinese Revolution,

the imperialists faced a wholly new and unfavorable relationship of world forces. A revolution in consciousness has affected hundreds of millions as the struggle for land reform and national independence continually breaks out in new places. The victory of the Cuban socialist revolution in our own hemisphere drove this point home.

In contradiction to the struggle of the Vietnamese people, the colonial revolution and the struggle for world socialism has suffered a series of defeats which began before our last convention and have continued since then. In Latin America the brutal repression of the Dominican revolution, the militarist takeover in Brazil, and the electoral victory of Frei in Chile all served notice that the Latin American revolution is to be a long and difficult affair.

The African revolution was set back by Boumedienne's seizure of power, and the bloody defeat of the Congolese by Western imperialism. The Asian revolution suffered an even greater setback in the military coup and subsequent witchhunt and massacre in Indonesia. The Indonesian Communist Party was the largest outside the workers' states and was rooted in a country undergoing a deep social crisis. But it was so paralyzed by its years of popular frontism that it could not mobilize its millions of supporters to defend itself, let alone turn back the military.

All these events have underscored the deepening role of U.S. imperialism as gendarme for world imperialism, and the importance of antiwar and anti-imperialist organization in the U.S. The antiwar movement takes place in spite of these recent defeats, but they contribute to the tendency of the student movement toward moods of pessimism.

B. The Historical Setting Within the United States

While the colonial revolution was rising in the post World War II period, the imperialist countries as a whole experienced a long economic cycle of prosperity, now well into its second decade, and the U.S. consolidated its position as the dominant economic and military power of imperialism. The cold war, McCarthyism and reaction, and a relatively quiescent labor movement were the American counterparts to the new rise of the world revolution.

The student movement began as a militant humanistic response to the Negro struggle. As it grew the young radicals began responding to the rise of the colonial revolution and their radicalism deepened and broadened.

The new radicalism developed more and more under the shadow of the contradictory legacy handed down to the new radicals from the radicalization of the 1930's.

The great step forward of labor in the 1930's was the organization of millions of industrial workers into the CIO. By the end of World War II, more than six million workers were organized in the CIO, a movement that had not existed ten years earlier. But

the political radicalization that went along with the growth of the CIO was derailed. Under the influence of the Communist and Socialist parties and of the class collaborationist labor bureaucrats at its head, the CIO remained tied to the Democratic Party. The revolutionary party, the Socialist Workers Party, remained small and with little mass influence, and the traditions of the American socialist and radical movements were warped or destroyed by the stalinist influence.

As the current radicalization deepens, the young radicals thus continue to develop under the contradictions that face:

- 1) a radical movement in the midst of a politically quiescent working class,
- 2) a movement of political opposition in a capitalist country which has no mass labor party, and
- 3) a vanguard which considers itself revolutionary in a country in which the revolutionary party has little social weight or mass influence.

II. The Negro Struggle

The period following the last convention was marked by a retreat in the intensity and development of the Negro struggle. The biggest single blow was the assassination of Malcolm X a month and a half after the convention. It meant the loss of the central revolutionary spokesman for black nationalism and the only anti-capitalist mass leader in the United States.

The explosion in Watts reemphasized the power and strength of black discontent in the ghettos, and the roots of nationalism. It put respectable Negro leaders on the spot and underlined the deep crisis of revolutionary leadership in the Negro struggle today.

The government continues to wage a conscious campaign to buy off black leadership through the various war on poverty programs. This includes not only the James Farmers, but the young militants as well.

The decline of the Freedom Now Party and most nationalist organizations, along with the almost unanimous support given by the Negro people to Johnson in 1964 strengthened coalitionism. But the concept of all black political action and organization continues to be a major question. In the South where ever growing numbers of Negroes are winning the franchise, a debate has begun. Some leaders of SNCC and southern CORE have spoken out in favor of all black independent political slates in the South and have drawn the fire of more conservative leaders. The experience of the Freedom Democratic Party and the existence of a growing black electorate tend to impel this question to the fore. The appearance of the Black Panther Party is another indication of motion toward independent black political action.

There is very little support for the government's war in Vietnam in the ghetto. But thus far there has been little organized protest by Negro groups. The SNCC statement and the Bond campaign are very important first steps toward further par-

ticipation by civil rights activists and Negroes in the struggle against the war.

III The New Radicals

With the rise of organized opposition to the war in Vietnam the radicalism of American student youth has reached a high point both in terms of the numbers involved and the extent and depth of political discussion and debate within the movement.

The "New Left" has become a national topic of analysis and discussion for everyone from the New York Times to Playboy.

A great deal of confusion has been generated. Some has been intentional as the daily press, the CP, SP, National Guardian, etc., "analyze" the "New Left" to fit their own needs. Some has been unintentional, flowing from the confusions and ambiguities of the movement itself.

What is called the "New Left" is more accurately a new radicalization. It is the emergence of a new generation of radicals, influenced by the civil rights movement, the colonial revolution and Cuba, and most important, the war in Vietnam. Many do not consider themselves "New Left" or anything else except against the war and the hypocrisy of our society.

Characteristic of the new radicals is disgust with the racism, false values, cold war lies, and dirty wars waged by the United States. They want to see a new and better world of brotherhood and honesty. They begin as radical democrats, not socialists.

While they are responding with new types of organizations and protests to national and international factors that are new, their actions link them directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, to the major tendencies and programs of the world labor movement. As the radicalization continues, the student activists find themselves forced to make a transition from conscious moral revulsion and unconscious politics to conscious politics.

In a period preceding any labor radicalization the contradictions inherent in a middle class radicalization are coming more sharply to the surface. The search of the new radicals for a force to change society, a base to operate from, and a strategy that can win, is in large part a search for a substitute for a non-existent radicalized working class and labor party. This involves many contradictory and rapidly changing ideas and formulations. In their rejection of the evils of capitalist society, they look for a "radical constituency," try to build "counter communities," immerse themselves in the "society of the poor," and hope to establish "parallel structures" and a real "participatory democracy."

IV. Students for a Democratic Society

As a result of the antiwar upsurge, the increase in growth of SDS has brought more of the newly radicalized youth under its influence than under that of any other multi-issue radical group. Many activists look upon it as the "New Left." SDS is a heterogeneous organization made up of unorganized or loosely organized political cliques and groupings, as well as many newcomers to the political scene who have no clear political outlook. SDS locals vary greatly from area to area, and often have little communication with each other or with the national office.

SDS activity is characterized by great stress on a radical humanist approach to community organizing, campus reform projects, and research and educational projects. The April 17 March on Washington was a big step forward for SDS. By raising the question of self-determination for Vietnam, and by coming into conflict with the Socialist Party coalitionists, it moved SDS in a left, and more politically conscious direction. But since the April March on Washington when the leadership of the antiwar movement was temporarily placed in their hands, SDS has pulled back from the Vietnam issue into the safety of other less inherently radical projects.

SDS has received enormous publicity-much of it in connection with the March on Washington and the recent abortive antidraft campaign. This has helped to attract many antiwar protesters to its ranks despite the fact of its withdrawal on a national level from leadership of the antiwar movement. At their last national convention held in December 1966 there was not even a point on Vietnam protest on the agenda. Many SDSers are unhappy with the lack of SDS participation in the Vietnam movement, but as yet have been unable to affect the national policy of their organization.

Its most conscious and well organized section is a coalitionist wing centered in New York, which ties community work into the political perspective of coalition politics. It is heavily influenced by the Harrington-Kahn-Rustin wing of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID)-Socialist Party (SP).

This well organized social democratic formation has a weight in SDS disproportionate to its relatively small size. The left wing is less organized and less articulate than the coalitionist wing, and has no clear ideology or revolutionary socialist perspective. No formal provision is made in SDS's structure for electing leaderships and conducting discussions on the basis of written political positions.

"Participatory democracy" as practiced in SDS has led to disorganization and bureaucratic decision making. It has often meant the putting off of decisions seriously affecting the ability of SDS to take effective action. These problems have caused resentment on the part of many SDSers, but they do not know how to go about correcting them. The organizational

counterpart to SDS's formless political ideology is a heterogeneous and decentralized character.

The invitations of the bourgeois educational foundations, the labor bureaucracy, and the federal government, to join them in social work or research projects has been tempting bait for the "New Lefters." An important element of the War on Poverty has been the conscious bribing of young radicals to turn their energies to "constructive" channels. Although the Johnson administration has dealt mainly with the students' radicalization by holding out the carrot, the students also feel the pressure that comes from the fear of possible victimization.

The development and struggles of the antiwar movement have made the "New Lefters" more receptive to political issues and to the ideas of the organized left. It has resulted both in an attraction to the ideas and solutions offered by socialists and a shying away from them as their implications become clear.

Only a real understanding of the need for opposition to the government, and the capitalist system, can help these young people to overcome these pressures. The alternative for SDSers is gradual demoralization and "retirement," or absorption into a revived social democratic youth formation.

V. Opponents

The campus-bred student movement is the focal arena of the competition between the contending socialist programs and organizations. In the battle for political leadership and influence in the antiwar movement and in the competition for recruits, the supposedly irrelevant ideological battles of the 1930's are being refought.

The rise of the student movement, through its various ups and downs, has always had a particular character. It has developed around single issues (Woolworth pickets, Peace, Free Speech, Cuba, Vietnam) which have been its central focus at any given moment and around which the ideological battle between the socialist tendencies has taken place.

The movement also has a general character in that many of the same youth are involved in the different particular phases, involvement in one preparing them for the next. General criticisms about society, and strategies for changing it are generated by debates centering around a particular question facing the movement. This has been strikingly true in the antiwar movement.

The debate on tactics and strategy that began around the Vietnam question has tended to become generalized. Divisions have taken place along the traditional lines of independence from or dependence on the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie.

The weight and activity of the established radical parties and the youth groups who are their ideological co-thinkers have increased and many of the myths and mystiques of the "New Left" have been called into question.

The attempt of the new radicals to ignore and bypass the "old" left is unsuccessful, a fact they are more than ever conscious of since the Washington antiwar conference. First of all, while they may want to ignore and bypass the "old" left, the "old" left has no intention of ignoring or bypassing them. Secondly, a factor they are much less conscious of, their political course, while zig-zagging and confused, eventually leads each of them toward either social-democracy or stalinism, or revolutionary socialism.

The pace of this process is slowed down and muted by two factors previously noted:

- 1) The quiescence and conservatism of the working class, especially its powerful organized sector, puts a brake on the conscious acceptance of Marxism. The concept of the class struggle approach to social change-including the social democratic and stalinist caricatures seems utopian. This is accentuated by the absence of the class tradition which would be embodied in even a right-reformist mass labor party.
- 2) The numerical smallness of the organized parties embodying these currents (SP-LIP, CP-PLP, SWP) makes it appear as if the existing socialist tendencies and parties can be bypassed. This slows down recruitment, and gives added life, brief and unstable though it may be, to centrist and ad hoc formations.

The myth that the "New Left" could bypass and avoid the "old" organizations and old "irrelevant" ideological divisions of the 1930's was dealt the biggest of what will be a series of blows by the clashes at the Washington antiwar convention.

The basic conflict was not between the arbitrary categories new and old, but among the conflicting socialist tendencies - and their perspectives for the antiwar movements. Old battles took place in new forms.

The antiwar movement has had a major effect upon our opponents and our relations to them. The major tests of all the socialist youth groups has been their response to the organizational and political challenges generated by the development of the antiwar movement.

A. The W.E.B. DuBois Clubs

The DuBois Clubs (DBC) are the strongest and largest opponent we have. Restricted primarily to the West Coast at the time of their founding conference in June, 1964, they have spread to the Midwest and East Coast where they now have functioning units in several major cities.

In the period immediately following the April March on

Washington, the DuBois Clubs concentrated few of their forces in the antiwar movement. Viewing their own organization as a major "peace group" they treated the single issue Committees to End the War in Vietnam as competitors, concentrated on community work, and were outspoken partisans of the negotiations position.

But the success of the October Days of Protest and the approach of the Washington antiwar convention forced them into the Committees to End the War in Vietnam and they began to turn to more campus work.

At Washington, they officially opposed the line of immediate withdrawal. But the pressure of the Vietnamese revolution itself and our campaign on withdrawal has opened up a political fissure within their organization that reaches into the top leadership. The negotiations position tends to get stuck in the throats of even stalinist youth who are active in the antiwar movement.

The political vulnerability of the DBC must be viewed in the framework of the announced decision of the Communist Party to come more into the open, to hold public "debate" on their draft program, and to penetrate the "New Left."

In their attempt to differentiate their brand of reformist activism from that of SDS, the DBC leaders have been stressing their "socialist oriented" character and have increased their identification with their adult cothinkers of the CP. For the first time on a national scale we have the strength and opportunity to force the stalinist movement to a more open confrontation on political program.

The DuBois Club publishes a bimonthly magazine called Insurgent, has started a theoretical public discussion bulletin, Dimensions, and puts out Spur, an organizational newsletter. YSAers should be familiar with all of these.

B. The May 2nd Movement

In the period since our convention the May 2nd Movement (M-2-M) has suffered a relative decline. Considering themselves the organization against the war in Vietnam, they tended to counterpose antiwar activity through the M-2-M to participation in the single issue Committees to End the War in Vietnam. Their verbal support to the position of immediate withdrawal was vitiated by their refusal to campaign to win individuals to this position within the antiwar committees. They concentrated on support to the NLF and tried to identify themselves as the American counterpart to the colonial revolution.

The Progressive Labor Party (PLP), which dominated the leadership and political direction of M-2-M, reaped the fruits of their former super-activism as their membership and activity dwindled. The conviction and trial of Bill Epton with no meaningful national defense, and the blows to Peking's version of stalinism on the international scene further discredited

them. This decline of PLP weakened M-2 M's ability to attract radical youth.

M-2-M remained restricted, except for a few isolated campus followers, to New York, Boston, and the Bay Area. They did not establish a functioning national organization. They published six issues of the Free Student at irregular intervals.

On the weekend of January 30-31, M-2 M held a national conference at which a decision to dissolve M-2-M was made. Introduced by members of PLP, the decision was opposed by some of the non-PLP members. The perspective outlined was to enter the Committees to End the War in Vietnam where they exist, and SDS locals where independent antiwar committees either do not exist or are led by the YSA.

It remains to be seen whether the non-PLP members of M-2-M will go along with the decision, whether they will continue to publish Free Student in any manner, or whether the PLP will attempt to intervene in the student movement solely under their own name and activities. But it is clear that a blow has been dealt to PLP's attempt to build a viable youth movement.

C. The Ultra-Lefts

In the absence of an organized third camp youth group, the Spartacist-American Committee for the Fourth International organizations have had a modest growth, but have not established a national organization.

Their rejection of the single issue committees and their ultra-left criticisms of the "conservative" immediate withdrawal demand, put them on the fringes of the antiwar movement. In this situation their radical verbiage serves as a convenient cover for the policy of sectarian abstentionism. By insisting on immediately "linking up" the various social struggles with the antiwar movement, they play right into the hands of the right wing SDS and social democrats.

D. The Social-Democratic Youth

One of the noteworthy features of the current upsurge in student radicalism is the absence of a nationally organized social democratic youth organization. As the entire political axis of the student movement has shifted to the left, the YPSL has been unable to reconstitute itself and the small Schactmanite splinters have neither maintained their publications nor made any meaningful organizational progress. This provides a vacuum which SDS, the DBC, and to some degree the ultra-lefts fill.

Some of the leading social democratic spokesmen, like Tom Kahn and Michael Harrington, the most active and open advocates of Bayard Rustin's coalitionism, are attempting to attract some youth around them as they attempt to rebuild the discredited social democracy. Through a liaison between LID and Dissent magazine they try to present themselves as the theoreticians

for the "radical" but "anti-Communist" peace movement pressing for a cease fire and negotiations.

The combination of a student radicalization, and a ruling class that consciously seeks to channel this radicalism into safe channels and large sources of funds for social welfare and educational projects makes the eventual emergence of a social democratic youth organization possible. Large layers of SDS are potential material for a formation of this type.

E. Summary

While our opponents are not our main area of recruitment the pressures and debates of the antiwar movement have given us important openings. Our dominant national role in the antiwar work further impels our opponents to attempt to come to grips with the threat of our ideas. The DBC is especially vulnerable as the stalinist movement puts on the face of non-sectarian participation in the student movement and tries to combat our campaign for immediate withdrawal.

It is important not to identify the ranks of our opponents with the leadership or write them off flippantly as hopeless, second generation radicals. The DBC ranks are not all Stalinists or even politically educated. Quite the contrary, our head-on competition with these opponents for the radical youth is helped by forcing them to deal with our pressure and debate our ideas. By doing this we weaken our opponents even when we do little direct recruiting from them. Their inability to counter our ideas and answer our criticisms was a factor in the decline of both YPSL and M-2-M.

VI. Independent Political Action

The frictions which began around the preparations for the first March on Washington developed into full scale debate on liberal coalitionism's effect on the fight against the war in Vietnam. This raised the central question of "independent political action," and the key political divisions in the antiwar movement have been subsumed within this question. The debate over various experiments and experiences with political action will increase. Already, "peace" candidates have made their appearance and have sought support from sections of the antiwar movement. As the antiwar sentiment increases so will the politicians and candidates who try to corral that sentiment.

The antiwar movement has threatened the cohesion of the coalition that swept Johnson into office in 1964. The rejection by many of the new radicals of third campism and the negotiations approach brings the value of the liberal coalition sharply into question. Thus the central issue of American politics - the political dependence of social protest movements on bourgeois parties - reasserts itself. The debate of the 1930's and 1940's over dependence and a perspective of reform versus independence and a perspective of the American revolution reasserts its relevancy.

The same groping after a substitute for a radical working class that shows itself in the search for "counter-communities" is also revealed in the political arena as the new radicals reject the political institutions of the ruling class and begin seeking an alternative to the Democratic Party. A progressive party, a peace party, a "movement" party, no party, a committee for independent political action - all these are considered and none are rejected out of hand.

The stalinists, liberal politicians, and respectable civil rights leaders try to submerge the true character of coalitionism under a mountain of myths designed to win rebels over to the "realistic" character of coalitionism.

When the mass of workers and Negroes are included in the term "Democratic Party coalition," what is being referred to is not party membership or control, but party votes - electoral weight. The average worker or Negro who once every four years votes Democratic, is a voter, not a party member. He plays no role, he takes no regular part in, and knows little about the Democratic Party.

The party's policy is not determined by who pulls the lever for its candidates every four years, and it does not serve the interests of most who pull the lever. The party is defined and determined by the program it puts forth, by the policies and strategy it follows at home and abroad, by the class it serves.

The class the party serves, not the class that votes for the party, is what determines the nature of any party. By this criterion the Democratic Party has always been and remains now a bourgeois party, a party whose basic program reflects the interests and needs of the American ruling class.

Thus the phrase Negro-labor-liberal coalition refers to a coalition between the owners of American industry and finance and the professional ward heelers who keep the party machinery oiled and the various trade union bureaucrats and leaders of protest movements, whose job it is to bring out the ranks of the voting bloc on election day to guarantee the continued rule of the Democratic Party. The only time the Democratic Party is in the "mainstream" is on election day.

Once we have separated the electoral bloc from the coalition, and the coalition from the Democratic Party, we can answer a much more important question and that is - who needs this coalition? A small minority who through this coalition manages to maintain its rule and run this country is the sole beneficiary. Coalitionists insist that the Negro people need allies, or that the antiwar students need allies. But those who really need allies, those who are desperate for allies, are the members of the ruling class themselves. If they alone voted for themselves, they would be a tiny minority, unable to put anyone in office. If they lost the voting bloc they command every election day they would have to find a new way of ruling or step from the scene.

Just as the central question of the 1930's was whether or not the working class would build their own political arm, so the major concern and task for the politicians who serve the minority class is to prevent such a development from occurring, to prevent the majority class from organizing itself as a political force and destroying the coalition.

Thus the rejection of coalitionism is the beginning of political wisdom. But it is only the beginning. The term independent political action is algebraic and open to widely divergent interpretations. Even the Communist Party states that it is for "independent political action."

A revolutionist's approach to independent politics is not limited to the electoral arena, but is part of our propoganda and action against the cement of the coalition, the Meanys and Reuthers, Rustins, Kings, Harringtons, Gus Halls, and peace politicians.

We judge independent political action according to the degree of its break from bourgeois parties and programs and its direction toward political action by or in the interests of labor or the Negro people. This flows from our understanding of the class character of society and our support to the right of self-determination.

Electoral action involves taking positions on many different issues and automatically raises the basic question of "who should run things in this country." Since the only alternative to the present rule of the capitalist class is the mobilization of the workers to take the war making power from their hands, we support those actions in the political arean which objectively help split up the Democratic Party coalition and mobilize the masses of workers and Negroes politically and those political campaigns which propagandize for this.

There is no immediate prospect of independent political action by organized labor. Thus our immediate conjunctural task cannot be agitation for a labor party based on the trade unions. Our main task is to understand, analyze, and explain our position in the face of peace candidates, some of whom may run independently of formal Democratic party endorsement.

1) We insist that any candidate who claims to be independent must have broken from capitalist politics. If he does not he is not independent of the politics of war. This must be reflected in his program and not be a pretense of "independence" which is in reality a maneuver to gain strength for future Democratic Party primary battles.

2) We oppose the antiwar movement being sucked into peace politics and its independent and militant direction diverted and atomized. Concentration on "peace" campaigns is the surest path to the paralysis of the antiwar committees.

3) We counterpose a socialist program to any "peace" campaign based on a capitalist program.

A party formed by the labor movement or the Negro movement is in its very composition a step away from ruling class politics. However, we cannot simply call on the antiwar movement to establish a party based on itself. In its social composition the antiwar movement is petty bourgeois, and as such is dependent on one of the basic classes for its politics. Thus, the question of program becomes dominant, for there is no such thing as non-class "movement" politics. Whose interests it would be serving would be determined totally by its program.

The coalitionists are especially desirous of "broadening" the antiwar movement, of linking up the war question with other questions. This is not because they have some abstract dislike for a single-issue, but because the antiwar movement and its militant thrust have raced ahead of the movement as a whole and threaten to clash head-on with the Democratic Party, the liberal-labor-Negro coalition.

With the appearance of large labor forces on the scene, we would become the loudest advocates of a "multi-issue" labor party to run candidates opposed to the war in Vietnam. Today, however, the demand by the "progressives" to turn the antiwar movement into a multi-issue political movement is an attempt to head it back into the "mainstream," i.e., Democratic Party politics and "fighting" for negotiations. At the best it is an attempt at reviving a Henry Wallace third capitalist peace party adventure or finding a way around open socialist electoral work.

To many antiwar activists, "peace politics" may at first seem merely an extension of the fight against American aggression in Vietnam, an additional propaganda platform.

The young radicals have a hard time understanding the role of class criteria for judging the independence of political action. This is true not only because of their middle class background, but because the quiescence of American labor hides its latent power. They do not see these forces and thus are liable to accept a counterfeit substitute.

We reject as sectarian and exclusionary the attempt to turn the antiwar committees into electoral committees for phony peace candidates. But at the same time we must understand that many of the individual activists will go through the experience of throwing energies behind some peace fakers and some committees may end up endorsing them.

To coalitionism, we counterpose socialist political action and a break from the parties of war. In answer to bourgeois peace candidacies and ventures we explain the lessons of the Henry Wallace campaign and the need to organize and educate for a revolutionary socialist party and labor's break from capital.

The stalinists and social democrats criticize the new radicals' "romantic" or "nationalist" tendency to withdraw from "mainstream" politics. We applaud every rejection of

capitalist politics and urge its completion in a socialist direction.

It is not correct to reject beforehand the possibility of genuine independent candidates opposed to the war in Vietnam. We apply our political criteria to each case, and to the degree that the character of the campaign is not decided, try to influence it in an anti-capitalist direction.

It is important to be sensitive to the possibilities of independent Negro political action. The debate over all black political parties in the South and the political instability of the Northern ghettos mean that truly independent campaigns could develop. These would also be important lessons for the antiwar activists looking for a new political path.

It is also extremely important that we support and campaign for all genuinely independent socialist candidates especially when they are counterposed to liberal politicians or peace candidacies.

VII. Tasks

1. The general character of the period and our tasks as outlined at the last two conventions remain valid.

Our fundamental task remains the recruitment and education of new fresh forces in the theory, program, strategy and tactics of Marxism, and the traditions and principles of the revolutionary working class movement.

Our work remains basically propagandistic and the focus of our attention is the campus where we strive to establish viable campus fractions in all locals.

American labor remains relatively quiescent and a large working class political party does not exist. American imperialism, politically unchallenged by American labor, stands more and more astride the world revolution as counterrevolutionary cop. It is within this context that we understand the importance of the antiwar student movement, as well as its weaknesses.

2. The Vietnam war is the most unpopular war in the history of American imperialism. Already it has triggered the deepest going radicalization of the last two decades - a radicalization which will go beyond the student youth who are now the activists in the opposition.

Our immediate task is to continue our campaign against the war and to strive to build a large scale movement for the withdrawal of American troops.

Our participation and leadership role in a national campaign represents a new experience and the YSA's most important test. We have entered the antiwar movement not to "make the record," but to fight for the line of immediate withdrawal of American imperialism as the cornerstone on which the movement is built,

to fight for political leadership and respect from the militants, and to compete with our opponents for the recruitment of the radicalizing forces.

3. The major source of recruitment remains fresh youth from the student movement to whom we orient the bulk of our basic prop-
aganda and attention. But the deepening competition with our opponents and the ideological battles in the antiwar movement give us new openings that we must be sensitive to. Each new member recruited from our opponents is not only an increase in our forces but a decrease in theirs.

Both locally in our work and nationally in our propoganda we counterpose three basic concepts to the stalinist and social democratic lines:

- a) the responsibility of socialists to respect the right of self-determination for the Vietnamese, fight for the unconditional withdrawal of American troops, and break with the self-defeating line of pressure on the liberals to negotiate;
- b) the rejection of the subordination of any social protest movement to the Democratic party or capitalist politics, the rejection of support to the capitalist war parties, and the necessity of supporting genuine independent socialist political action and every move of the new radicals away from dependence on coalitionism;
- c) the necessity for a perspective of, and a transitional program for, the American revolution, opposed to reformism of all kinds.

Neither the ranks of our opponents nor the wave of second generation radicals that make up much of the "New Left" can be equated with politically hardened stalinists or social democrats. This is one of our opponents' major weaknesses and one we must take advantage of when there are realistic openings.

4. The Young Socialist and the Militant constitute our biggest propoganda advantage over our opponents. The expansion and improvement of the YS, and the beginning of a selection of basic pamphlets has been a major step forward. The regular appearance and sale of our press gives us a national voice stronger than we have ever had before.

The Militant is the weekly paper of revolutionary socialism and is our best single recruiter and educator. It is a simple rule that the person who becomes a regular Militant reader has taken a big step toward recruitment to the YSA.

The YS and the Militant are political complements and the propoganda organizers of our work. The increase in our activity and participation in the antiwar movement should be matched by increased subscriptions to the YS and Militant. It must be second nature to YSAers to establish a growing number of regular subscribers in the areas in which we are working.

5. The defense of our Bloomington comrades has entered its fourth year. While the pace of the case has slowed down as we fight in the federal court system, the possibility of further

appeals and even a trial remains. The facts of the case and the record of our fight and initial victories should be reviewed and made available especially to the young comrades who have joined since the case began.

6. The turn to greater activity in the movement must be matched by a continuation of concentration on the education of our own cadre. The strength of the YSA flows from its program and disciplined character. This depends on the absorption and reabsorption of the traditions and lessons of American Trotskyism and the continued development of politically educated self-critical revolutionists.

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