

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE STATEMENT

ON THE CASE OF JOHN ZANELLOTTI

During preconvention discussion for the 1971 YSA convention, a resolution entitled "Toward a Mass Working Class Youth Movement: A Resolution on Perspectives" was submitted by six members of the YSA who declared themselves the "Minority Tendency." This resolution was published in Young Socialist Discussion Bulletin Vol. 15, No. 5 (pages 9-11).

In March, 1972, the National Office received a letter from Tom Burghardt, a cosigner of the resolution under the name of Tom Peterson, who was dropped from membership after the convention for inactivity and non-payment of dues. In this letter he indicated that he was the author of the Minority Tendency resolution and was a member of the Workers League at the time that the resolution was written.

Upon request of the National Office for more information about the functioning of the Minority Tendency, Burghardt submitted a written report to the National Executive Committee stating that the Minority Tendency resolution was written by members of the Workers League in the YSA, in collaboration with and under the leadership of the Workers League. Those YSA members named by Burghardt as Workers League agents, in addition to himself, are: Dave Durstan, Upper West Side YSA; Dick Merrill, Boston YSA; Carol Merrill, Boston YSA; Larry Kerry, Brooklyn YSA; and John ZanelloTTI, Washington D.C. YSA.

Based on this information the National Office initiated an investigation of the comrades named by Burghardt as Workers League agents. All four comrades, when asked, denied the allegations. The fifth cosigner (Dave Durstan) was dropped earlier this year for inactivity and non-payment of dues and could not be reached.

No corroborating evidence has been found in the cases of Dick Merrill, Carol Merrill, and Larry Kerry. No charges have been brought against them.

However, in the case of Comrade ZanelloTTI, two additional reports submitted to the National Office confirmed ZanelloTTI's membership in the Workers League. These reports were submitted by Mike Priddy and Jim McCaffrey, both members of the College Park YSA and former members of the Workers League prior to joining the YSA. Priddy was a member of the Workers League from June, 1971, to the end of that summer and joined the YSA in October, 1971. McCaffrey was a member of the Workers League from October, 1970, to December, 1971, except for a brief period in early 1971, and joined the YSA in May, 1972.

The reports from these two comrades, along with Burghardt's statement, make the following allegations about ZanelloTTI's political activity since becoming a member of the YSA. (ZanelloTTI joined the YSA in mid-June, 1971, as an at-large member in Columbus, Maryland, as recorded in the minutes of the June 16, 1971, meeting of the NEC.)

Zanellotti was a contact of the Workers League during the summer of 1971 and was contacted at least once by members of the Workers League during that time. On the last week of August, 1971, after having joined the YSA, Zanellotti sold the Bulletin, organ of the Workers League, on the corner of 14th and Park, N.W. in Washington, D.C., along with other members of the Workers League, including Mike Priddy.

Zanellotti joined the Workers League at a meeting of its Baltimore Branch at which both he and Mike Priddy were present. His membership was taken up under a special point, separate from other membership applications, and branch members were told that his membership was to remain a secret since his assignment would be to act as an agent of the Workers League in the YSA.

In late August or early September Zanellotti attended a Workers League educational conference in the Catskills, in New York State, where he met with Tim Wohlforth, National Secretary of the Workers League, and other members of the Workers League to discuss his activity in the YSA. Jim McCaffrey also attended this conference.

On the second week in November, 1971, Zanellotti attended a meeting at the Workers League headquarters in New York, to discuss the resolution and the activities of the Minority Tendency in the YSA with leaders of the Workers League, including Tim Wohlforth and Lucy St. John. Tom Burghardt was present at this meeting.

On the basis of these allegations from various independent sources, the NEC voted at its meeting of May 30, 1972, to charge Zanellotti with disloyalty to the YSA based on his membership in the Workers League.

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The decision to bring charges against Comrade Zanellotti was based on the YSA policy, adopted at the 1965 YSA convention, which states: "Membership in, support to, or collaboration with the Spartacist group or the American Committee for the Fourth International group is incompatible with membership in the YSA." (The American Committee for the Fourth International is the predecessor to the Workers League.)

This motion was passed by that convention in response to the cases of several members of the YSA who had been functioning as agents of the Spartacist group and the American Committee and who were appealing to that convention for a reversal of disciplinary measures taken against them by the New York local and the NEC.

These members had developed differences so deep that they found them irreconcilable with carrying out the democratically arrived at decisions of the majority and chose instead to violate those decisions by publicly carrying out a line counter to that adopted by the majority.

It became clear that membership in those two organizations had led these YSAers to carry out, over a period of time, a consistent pattern of calculated and deliberate violations of discipline, under instructions from the Spartacist and American Committee groupings, which demonstrated

their disloyalty to the YSA. Furthermore, it was evident that under those circumstances, the only purpose of Spartacist or American Committee members in the YSA was, not to build the YSA, but to destroy it -- to create havoc within the YSA and to use it as a ground for recruiting YSAers to their own organizations.

For that reason the convention voted, not only to expel those members, but also to set a policy that membership in the Spartacist group or the American Committee is incompatible with membership in the YSA.

The American Committee for the Fourth International was originated by a group of YSA and Socialist Workers Party members who in the early 1960s developed fundamental differences with the YSA and the SWP on several major questions, including our analysis of Cuba. They continued to develop a totally sectarian line and eventually split from both the YSA and the SWP to form the ACFI and launch the Bulletin, in the pages of which they carried slanderous attacks on the YSA, the SWP, and the Fourth International.

Since their departure from the YSA they have carried out a consistent campaign to attempt to destroy the YSA, and have repeatedly stated this intention in the pages of the Bulletin for seven years.

The Workers League is in political solidarity with the so-called International Committee of the Fourth International led by Gerry Healy's sectarian Socialist Labour League in Britain. The "International Committee" states that it is at "war" with the Fourth International and all its sympathizing groups, whom they call the "Pabloites," which include in this country the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance. The Newsletter (now the Workers Press), organ of the SLL, has charged the SWP with having "capitulated to imperialism." (August 20, 1966, Newsletter.) Of James P. Cannon, one of the founders of the world Trotskyist movement, they say that "He had decided to sell out to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialists." And in the same article they state that, "The Socialist Labour League is out to destroy Pabloism and its SWP accomplices. There can be (sic) and, we repeat, there never will be a compromise on these questions -- the fight will go on until we destroy the Pabloites and the revisionist SWP." (September 3, 1966, Newsletter.) Similar statements abound in the Workers League press.

What are the implications of the Workers League and the SLL position on the politics of the SWP, the YSA, and the Fourth International? To them, destroying these opponent organizations is not merely a question of engaging in political debate. They instead use their political differences and frantic accusations of "revisionism" and "capitulation to the imperialists" to justify any and all measures to deal blows against those organizations, physical attacks not excluded.

On November 17, 1966, SLL members, in the presence of Gerry Healy, attacked Comrade Ernie Tate, a member of the Fourth International, for selling a pamphlet criticizing the SLL, outside an SLL public function, injuring him to the point that he had to be hospitalized.

The response of the Workers League to the Tate incident was to publish an article in the Bulletin where Tim Wohlforth defended Gerry Healy and his attack on Tate on the grounds that "Ernest Tate and his political allies represent political scabs of the worst sort."

To make it even clearer that this was no accidental occurrence Wohlforth further stated that the relationship between the SWP and its cothinkers on the one hand, and the SLL and its cothinkers on the other, "is symbolized by this confrontation," thus ~~not only attempting to~~ politically justify such practices on the left, but even praising them. We can only reach one inescapable conclusion: that the aim of the Workers League is to destroy the Fourth International and organizations in political solidarity with it, including the YSA.

The question then arises, can a person who holds these views about the YSA, who has such fundamental differences with the YSA, remain a loyal member of the YSA, help to build the YSA, and recruit to its program? The answer is obviously no.

Membership in the Workers League is incompatible with membership in the YSA because loyalty is one of the fundamental prerequisites for membership in the YSA.

The YSA is the only youth organization in this country structured along democratic centralist lines. Every aspect of its program has been reached after the freest, fullest possible discussion since its very inception. Democratic centralism allows every member or grouping the right and the opportunity to raise disagreements on any aspect of the YSA's program or organizational policies during the appropriate time designated for this purpose to try to win over the majority to its point of view. Every possible measure is provided to assure that minority viewpoints get an adequate chance to be heard and expressed.

Once all the questions have been thoroughly discussed and debated a decision is reached by a vote. The will of the majority then becomes the official policy and program of the organization. Disputed points may be raised again, at the appropriate time when discussion is once again reopened. While minorities have full rights to present their views within the organization, the majority also has the right to have its decisions carried out, and the centralist aspect of our organization ensures that the democratically arrived at decisions of the majority are implemented.

Therefore, loyalty to the YSA is not an abstract concept in the YSA Constitution. Loyalty is a basic prerequisite for membership that ensures that each and every member abides by the decisions of the majority and agrees to build the YSA and carry out its program.

As the NEC statement on the expulsions of Nancy Adolphi and Ken Simpson (Documents on the Cases of Nancy Adolphi and Ken Simpson -- YSA Internal Information Bulletin) states: "It is not correct, however, that one can have any political ideas whatsoever and still be a member of the YSA, so long as one refrains from breaking discipline. There are limits, because we understand that a person can have disagreements with the YSA so basic, so fundamental, that she or he would find it impossible to

loyally build the YSA. One cannot be a member of the YSA and advocate support for imperialist war. One cannot be a member of the YSA and support racism. One cannot be a member of the YSA and advocate the destruction of the YSA."

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The NEC constituted itself as the trial body to hear the charges against Comrade Zanellotti. The trial was held on June 10, 1972. The trial body heard testimony from Comrade Zanellotti, Comrade Priddy, Comrade McCaffrey, College Park YSA organizer Steve Sluchan, and Washington D.C. YSA organizer Chuck Petrin.

In his statement to the NEC, presented during the trial proceedings, Zanellotti charges the YSA with having "abandoned the Marxist method," claiming that "this abandonment of Marxism...is leading (the YSA) into open collaboration with the Stalinists and the petty bourgeoisie."

At no time during the course of the trial did Zanellotti attempt to differentiate himself from the politics of the Workers League. In fact, when asked if he was in basic political agreement with the Workers League, Zanellotti replied "Yes." When asked if he agreed with the Workers League position that the YSA is totally reformist and has to be smashed, he replied "Yes." When asked if he believed that a vanguard party exists today in the United States, Zanellotti replied, "I believe that to be the Workers League."

Zanellotti's differences with the YSA are so profound that he admits to being in political agreement with the Workers League, considers the Workers League the revolutionary vanguard party, and believes that the YSA is a revisionist organization in a state of total crisis.

He concludes from this that the YSA needs to be "smashed." Zanellotti's statements at the trial explaining his attitudes toward the Workers League and toward the YSA, even if he were not formally a member of the Workers League, would be unambiguous evidence of disloyalty to the YSA and grounds for expulsion.

Moreover, the National Executive Committee believes the testimony presented to the trial committee confirming that Zanellotti is in fact a member of the Workers League.

The evidence presented to the NEC confirms that the only basis for Zanellotti's membership in the YSA is that of acting as an agent of the Workers League. The purpose of the Workers League in sending agents into the YSA can only be to destroy the YSA and not to build it.

The National Executive Committee finds John Zanellotti guilty of disloyalty as charged, based on his membership in the Workers League.

The National Executive Committee hereby expels John Zanellotti from the YSA.

Adopted August 7, 1972