

Herndon Makes Plea For Unity of Youth

Attempts of Splinter Groups to Disrupt Proceedings Fail—Green Pleads with Socialist Groups to Accept Decisions

By Sandor Voros
(Daily Worker Ohio Bureau)

CLEVELAND, Ohio, July 6.—After adopting a constitution and by-laws and electing a National Council of 66 members, the Third American Youth Congress listened to a stirring plea for unity by Angelo Herndon and adjourned yesterday with the pledge:

"We, the young people of America, reaffirm our right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. With confidence we look forward to a better life, a larger liberty and freedom. To these ends we dedicate our lives, our intelligence and our unified strength."

Attempts of the Young People's Socialist League, the Trotskyites and various "splinter groups" to disrupt the orderly proceedings of the Congress met with dismal failure. The Congress, representing a real cross-section of organized American Youth, was determined on unity to carry out the tasks embodied in their Declaration of Rights.

Delegates Want Unity

This determination of unity manifest throughout the Congress was in marked contrast to the conduct of the YPSL and its associates who employed every known method of obstructionist and filibustering tactics.

Starting with a strong support at the opening of the Congress, the YPSL and its associates long before adjournment found the number of their supporters steadily shrinking away. Failing to advance any constructive ideas, and often offering opposition for opposition's

ASKS YOUTH UNITY



ANGELO HERNDON

sake, they found themselves at the end of the Congress reduced to a mere handful, unable to muster

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more than twenty-five or thirty votes, in pitiful contrast to the approximately 1,300 voting majority in Congress.

Their opposition reached a climax when the Congress with overwhelming majority decided to adopt a constitution and a set of by-laws. Unwilling to submit to the overwhelming majority, Ben Fisher, national secretary of the Young People's Socialist League took the floor to declare:

"We regret, that this Congress, that could have served a real purpose, reaffirmed the Declaration of Rights and adopted this constitution and by-laws just because the majority favored it. I must state here that my organization will issue a statement and make our position clear on the American Youth Congress."

This evident threat repeated by others among his supporters caused an uproar among the delegates.

Waldo McNutt, member of the National Council, and representative of the Kansan Allied Workers, was the first one to retort, stating that the stand taken by the YPSL was due to the fact that they did not speak from actual experience gained from building the Congress.

Ed Mitchell, representing the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, supported Fisher, stating he couldn't accept the Declaration of Principles and the Constitution and that he was in favor of united front on specific issues alone.

Green Appeals to Socialists

Mitchell's statement, threatening the unity of the Congress, caused an even greater uproar and order was not restored until Gil Green, general secretary of the Young Communist League, clarified the issue and pleaded with the delegates to maintain order and leave the Congress with the determination to build a united youth movement. Green stated:

"I want to appeal especially to the Young People's Socialist League, who have placed themselves in the position of opposition and disruption."

Green pleaded with the YPSL to accept the democratic procedure of the Congress, accept the decisions made by such an overwhelming majority and added:

"You must recognize that a minority can not bludgeon a majority into submission, nor can a minority dictate its will on a majority."

Refusing to be placated by the pleas of Green, Hinckley and a number of other delegates, Maxwell Harvey of the YPSL, Morris Green of the ILGWU Local 22, Edwin Mitchell of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the Young Poale Zion Alliance's representative declined to accept their nomination to the National Council.

Leave Seats Open

On motion of Gil Green their places were left open "in the hope that they will reconsider their action before many days are over."

Judged by the ovation and the overwhelming majority with which this motion was adopted, the Congress fully shared the sentiment embodied in the motion.

This sentiment was further expressed by Miss Rose Troiano, representing the National Industrial Council of the YWCA, who stated:

"Despite declinations, we go back to carry out the decisions of the Congress and we earnestly hope they'll reconsider their declinations."

A similar thought was expressed in the summary of Wm. W. Hinckley, chairman of the Congress and in the speech of Miss Elizabeth Scott of the N. Y. Presbyterian Church who stated:

"We'll go back to fight more vigorously for peace, freedom and progress."

A rising vote of thanks was given to the officers of the Congress.

Herndon in Moving Plea

On motion enthusiastically supported by the entire Congress the final summary was made by Angelo Herndon, who "best represents what the American Youth Congress stands for." Herndon made a deeply moving speech for unity, calling on "my dear Comrades of YPSL" to unite in their common fight for the rights of youth, otherwise "the forces of reaction and fascism will sweep all of us away." He concluded:

"Those who decline are only isolating themselves from the young people of the United States."

"I know from experience what unity means. Even my freedom depends on unity."

"Let us work together harmoniously as brothers and sisters for the building of the American Youth Congress, for the peace, freedom and progress of American Youth."

Congress Resolutions

The American Youth Congress resolved:

To question all candidates for political offices on what they propose to do on the American Youth Act;

To send a delegation of two thousand youth with one million signatures to the inauguration of

twain evils, and fastened the greatest fascist menace on Lemke and Coughlin's left-handed Republicans in the "Union Party."

A proposal from the floor to insert a sentence characterizing the Republican-Liberty League-Hearst combine the greatest source of this danger, was beaten on a motion to table, by a combine of Old Guard and other Socialists and Progressive Miners of America delegates. The miners' delegates were undoubtedly influenced by their long-standing disagreement with John L. Lewis and his present endorsement of Roosevelt.

To Discuss Constitution

Another short controversy came up on the question of embodying in the statement of principles a paragraph proposing affiliation of working class organizations other than trade unions. It was finally declared out of order because it conflicted with the Party constitution.

Professor Paul Douglas, Socialist delivered an address in which he disagreed with the position of the Labor Party that no one should be attacked as a "red." He urged that Communists be excluded, though he emphasized that he was voicing "only his own personal views." The address was coolly received, and the Steering Committee of the convention announced that the Labor Party did not agree with the professor.

The Party program declares itself a class struggle party, emphasizing the clash between the owning class and the producing class. It declares the basis of the movement must be the trade unions and proposes to restrict itself to trade unions for the present.

To Form Clubs

The convention decided to restrict affiliations to only unions temporarily—but to allow non-unionists into Labor Party Clubs, which may not have more than one-third of the votes at conventions.

Resolutions passed during the course of the two days of session condemned war and fascism and urged a boycott of Hearst newspapers. Others called for the freedom of Tom Mooney and Angelo Herndon. A Workers' Rights Amendment was also urged.

A resolution presented by a miners' delegation praising the organization drive in steel and rubber was ruled out of order by the Socialist-dominated Resolutions Committee. The committee objected to the resolution being read, because it was said to have been in violation with the constitution rule against jurisdictional disputes.

Randolph Resolution

A resolution to endorse the Randolph Resolution for the organization of Negro workers into the American Federation of Labor was received with an ovation from the delegates. Later, Louis Harper, Negro delegate from the Technical and Research Workers Union, was added to the Executive Committee. Opposition from several Socialist delegates, who objected that Harper's union was too small to have representation on the Executive Committee, was defeated.

At the final session, chairman Dave McVey was given a vote of thanks by the convention. McVey then introduced the new chairman, John Walsh, of Lake County Central Labor Union, of Waukegan, Ill.

the next president petitioning him to enact the Youth Act;

To support the World Youth Congress on August 31, in Geneva, and send two delegates;

To urge all affiliated organizations and trade unions, community groups to participate in next year's demonstration against war;

To protest the expulsion of Robert Burke from Columbia University;

To support the campaign to free Angelo Herndon;

To protest the frame-up of Murry Melvin, N. Y. union official;

To support the strike of the Milwaukee Guild against Hearst.

Due to lateness of time, the rest of the resolutions were referred to the new National Council for action.

Picket Jim Crow Hotel

Delegates to the Congress took time out to throw an effective picket line around the Euclid Hotel in protest against refusing quarters to Negroes.

Putting into life their declaration for racial equality two hundred delegates carrying state banners picketed the Euclid Hotel despite a downpour of rain and decided on further action to stop racial discrimination. Similar action is planned against the Sterling Hotel. The Earle Hotel, following this action of the Youth Congress, quickly capitulated, and withdrew its discriminatory ruling.

Greetings from the representatives of the youth movement in Canada, China and others were received in the morning session. Great applause was given to Vernell H. Partleau, official representative of the Milwaukee Guild strikers, who asked support for their fight against Hearst.

Pledging their support to organize the unorganized the Congress decided to print the speech of Homer Martin, International President of the United Auto Workers.

The inauguration of the next president of the United States may see a march on Washington by 10,000 young people, if the recommendation of the National Committee is adopted to demand from the new president in person, the enactment of the National Youth Act.