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New York, N.Y. 10014
February 13, 1975

TO ALL BRANCH ORGANIZERS, EDUCATION DIRECTORS, AND EDUCATION
COMMITTEES

Dear Comrades,

This communication is the third in a series of mailings from the National Education Department drawing on the ideas and experiences of branches in carrying out educational tasks. As has been noted in previous mailings, the value of such communications is greatly enhanced if the department receives regular reports from the branches on socialist conferences and other activities.

Organizers should note that an additional copy of this letter is included for the branch educational director. It should also be made available to members of the branch educational committee.

1. Report on the New York Socialist Conference held November 1-2

The following report on the New York fall Socialist Conference may prove useful to branches in planning spring conferences. It is excerpted from a contribution to the YSA Discussion Bulletin by Comrade Linda Loew of the Lower Manhattan Local of the YSA. The YSA national office has permitted us to use this excerpt as a fraternal courtesy.

Comrade Loew writes: "We decided to hold the conference on the first weekend in November in order to maximize the attendance of all the people interested in our movement that we had been working with throughout the fall. The scheduling of the conference was an improvement over previous years when we held them towards the end of the campus semesters.

"We felt it was crucial that our conference address itself to the major political questions on people's minds. Some questions frequently asked us on college campuses and at street campaign tables are, "What will socialism look like?" "Why is there a lack of democracy in the Soviet Union?" "Will socialism be democratic?" and so on. We decided the best way to take up all of these questions as well as others was to hold four classes, each in two-part sessions (morning and afternoon) with discussions following the presentations."

[The classes were: What is Socialism?; An Introduction to Marxist Economics; Marxism and the Black Liberation Struggle; and The Soviet Union and China: A Marxist Analysis.]

"The conference was launched on Friday night with a keynote speech on 'Prospects for Socialism' by Jack Barnes.

"The approach that we took to publicize the conference reflects how important we thought the event was. We started several weeks ahead of time in September to get out the word that it would be happening. We sent mailings to all the people around us who had signed up on mailing lists, endorsed the campaign in New York State, including to interested people in the region. In addition we sent out a mailing and called every single comrade in the region, and made publicizing the conference a major focus of the work of the fall team,

the two regional organizers, and all the comrades who traveled into the region. These efforts were well worth it as over 20 people attended from the three states around New York City, half of whom were not YSAers. Throughout New York City and the region we distributed the 3,000 posters and 5,000 brochures we had printed. We placed articles in the campus press, as well as an ad in the Guardian newspaper, and a news announcement to the Village Voice. We also ran an ad for two consecutive weeks prior to the conference.

"Most importantly we spoke to every individual we had been working with in various campus struggles, in the District 1 community control struggle, in our work to defend Chilean political prisoners, and so on. We talked to individual supporters and endorsers of the 1974 New York SWP election campaign and to people who regularly read our press, and those who attended other events on the campuses and Militant forums. We sought to involve other people in helping to publicize the conference along with us.

"Over 400 registered for the conference and attended the Friday night talk. Of these 117 were people who had not yet made the decision to join the YSA or SWP. Over 20 high school and college campuses were represented. At least 15 unions were represented.

"At the conference we set up Pathfinder literature tables, sales tables, YSA and SWP election campaign tables and invited other groups we have worked with such as the Congress of African People to set up tables as well to maximize the political discussions at the conference and to further get our ideas out in the form of Militant subs, pamphlets, etc. We organized informal lunches and dinners during the breaks in order to carry on the discussion of our politics.

"On Saturday night there was an election campaign rally that featured our candidate for governor and our candidate for senator. There was a slide showing reviewing the highlights of our '74 campaign in New York.

"The work involved a team effort that imparted to others the seriousness and enthusiasm with which we build our organization. I think if we give it some thought these factors played a major role in our own decision to join the YSA.

"Two people actually joined the YSA on the weekend of the conference. The conference, however, was part of a process of work that took many months and still continues in order to bring new people into our movement. Since the beginning of our political work this fall over 30 people have joined the YSA in New York City."

2. Twin Cities Spring Internal Series on the Labor Movement

Comrade Joe Henry writes, "A survey indicated that comrades were very interested in educationals pertaining to the labor movement in the United States, but that they haven't read a great deal about it. In the past years there has been an increase in the opportunities for branch work within the trade-union movement. This is still of a limited nature, but presents increased opportunities. We felt we should have a class that would give a background as to how our trade-union policy developed in this country."

The proposed classes are: (1) Early American Radicalism -- the IWW and the Socialist Party and their trade union work; (2) The Early CP and the Union Movement (taking up debates over "undergroundism," "Americanization," electoral policy, and trade-union tactics; (3) The Early Trotskyist Movement and the Trade-Union Movement (focusing on opposition to "red unions," the relationship of the party to the trade-union functionaries and the unions in general with Trotsky's "Communism and Syndicalism" in Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions assigned, and the fusion with the Musteites); (4) Trade-Union Policy in the Minneapolis Strike; (5) The Over-the-Road Organizing Campaign; (5) The CIO -- What It Was and Where It Came From; (6) A Class Struggle Approach to the Trade Unions.

Some of the questions and readings come from the study guides on "A Marxist Approach to the Labor Movement," "Teamster Rebellion," and "Teamster Power" (available in Party Builder, Volume 8, No. 3.) Others came from the series "James P. Cannon -- Party Builder," and others developed independently by the branch.

3. Pre-Branch-Meeting Educationals in Detroit

Mike Kelly, the Detroit organizer, reported on December 16 that "the history of Detroit series is going quite well and interest is running high. Classes last about 30 minutes: 20 minutes of lectures and 10 minutes of questions and comments. We have had five of a projected 11 classes so far. Our schedule was interrupted several times due to the teacher's job schedule, etc.

"With only five completed, it is clear that they will have the impact on comrades we hoped for. We aimed to interest comrades in local politics (both city and state), and in the history of the Black and trade-union movements in this city over the decades, and the role of the party in them. The series appears to be stimulating this interest. With regard to Detroit, it is perhaps easier than in some other cities to get a clear focus on the historical dynamics of the class and national struggle. In addition, the comrade teaching the class is good at making references to the situations we face today which makes it more exciting as comrades immediately see its use."

Detroit is also considering a series of pre-branch-meeting educationals on problems of day-to-day branch work and organization. These include classes on: How to chair a meeting; how to clean the hall; how to make leaflets; how to use the mimeograph machine; and others.

Comradely,

Fred Feldman

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