

LEFT WING BULLETIN

LEFT-WING CAUCUS EXPANDS

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LEFT WING BULLETIN

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EDITORIALS

I. THE FUTURE OF THE YSL

We would like to publicly welcome into our ranks the many comrades who have joined our caucus since its formation just a short month ago. We have printed statements from some of them in this issue and urge all the comrades of the Left Wing to express their views through the LEFT-WING BULLETIN. (See pages 5-8). This issue of the LWB is evidence of the broad nature of our caucus. Various conceptions of regroupment and differing estimations of the ISL and the SWP are expressed. We stand united on the fundamental issue: opposition to dissolution of the movement and entry into the SP-SDF.

The current issue of the Young Socialist Review contains an article by Comrade Harrington, National Chairman of the YSL. In this article he raises some extremely serious charges. We refer our readers to the answer of the Chicago comrades to Comrade Harrington (p. 13).

For our part we wish to make one thing absolutely clear: none of us in the Left-Wing Caucus have any intention of splitting the YSL or subverting it in any way. We consider this charge on the part of Comrade Harrington as utterly irresponsible, coming from a leader of our organization, and certainly not one that will promote a sane and comradely discussion in our ranks. It seems to us that its aim is quite the opposite: to push a section of the YSL out of the organization.

We stand 100% opposed to any split. In almost every unit of the YSL across the country our comrades of the Left Wing are working to

The LEFT-WING BULLETIN is published under the following section of the YSL Constitution:

"Article seven, section four: Minority tendencies or caucuses may publish their own material for internal and external distribution, but they must make clear that these publications do not represent the views of the organization as a whole. All national and local mimeograph and mailing facilities shall be open to such tendencies or caucuses for use at cost."

All signed material in this and all subsequent issues of the LEFT-WING BULLETIN represents the views of the individual author or authors and not necessarily the views of the Left-Wing Caucus as a whole. Statements or resolutions that "officially" represent the views of the Caucus will be clearly labelled as such. Unsigned material and Editorial Statements represent the views of the Editorial Board. In any event it should be clearly understood that nothing published in the BULLETIN necessarily represents the official viewpoint of the Young Socialist League.

Address all communications to: Wohlforth, 305 E. 21 St., New York 10, N.Y.

build the YSL.

In fact the very reason for our banding together was to prevent the move of the right wing towards dissolution and entry into the SP-SDF. We urge these comrades not to leave the YSL. Even if they choose to join the SP-SDF we ask that they continue their membership in the YSL and not split from it.

We hope that in the future this type of charge and this way of conducting a discussion will be abandoned by the right wing. We on our part will have nothing to do with it. In order to help restore a comradely atmosphere to the discussion, we ask Comrade Harrington to publicly retract his charges. This we consider his duty as National Chairman of the whole YSL, including its left wing. We ourselves will do all in our power to preserve and strengthen the YSL and prevent any sort of split from occurring. You have it from us in writing, comrades, and you can hold us to our word.

II. WHAT WE MEAN BY "UNITY TO THE LEFT"

In her article in the current YSR Comrade Debbie used our slogan "Unity to the Left" to poke some gentle ridicule at the YSL Left Wing. We would be the last to deny Debbie her fun, but the basic idea expressed is a serious one, and should be taken seriously.

Debbie asks: "But unity to the left of whom or what? To the left of the YSL?" No, comrade, we do not mean what you assume, that we simply want to join the SWP. We are for socialist youth regroupment, meaning the regroupment of socialist youth on the basis of pro-working class, pro-socialist politics. What we mean when we call this unity "to the left" is simply this: we wish to unite first of all with those socialists who, in the spectrum of those with whom unity is conceivable, stand furthest to the left, "left" being defined as pro-working class, anti-capitalist, anti-Stalinist. That is the political basis on which we seek to regroup American socialist youth: not on the basis of a hard and fast "revolutionary" program, not on the basis of acceptance of the guidance of any existing socialist political organization, but in the independent, broad, socialist youth organization, the YSL.

We frankly and openly orient to those youth who are in the process of breaking with Stalinism in the name of real socialism, who are as opposed to the pro-capitalist politics of social democracy as they are to the anti-democratic politics of Stalinism. We believe that it is possible to build a socialist (note well, socialist, not social-democratic) youth movement in America today, and we intend to build such a movement. That is what we mean by "Unity to the Left."

III. FOR AN OPEN AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE UNITY QUESTION

Three recent actions in the YSL could place serious limitations on the possibility of conducting an open and public discussion of

the unity question.

First, the NAC recently received a request, approved unanimously by the Berkeley Unit, that the pages of Challenge be open to articles opposing the NEC unity proposal. All the comrades favoring this unity on the NAC voted against this request and thus barred Challenge to the minority. Also by so doing they went against the ruling of a higher body, the NEC, which passed a motion in September to allow the minority access to Challenge.

But most important of all, these comrades went against the basic tradition of our movement which calls for an open and public discussion of the differences amongst us. It has been the habit in the past to allow discussions to take place in Challenge; now when an all-important question is raised, involving the dissolution of our movement, these comrades denied the minority access to Challenge.

Following this NAC meeting Comrade Wohlforth sent a protest to all the units of the YSL. He and other comrades of the minority then brought up the issue at the recent N.Y. YSL business meeting where the NAC majority persisted in defending its decision to bar Challenge to the minority. In spite of the fact that one pro-SP-SDF unity comrade publicly defended the minority's right to access to Challenge, the New York Unit turned down a motion asking the NAC to reverse its decision.

In the meantime several protests were sent to the NO from other units and at the next NAC meeting the majority reversed itself and opened Challenge to the minority's views in a limited way. We applaud this step of the NAC majority and hope that it will lead to establishing an open and public debate that will be fair to all in the YSL and will remove from the discussion any contention on this issue.

We hope that with the general consideration that the discussion must be conducted primarily in the YSR and in the LWB, the editors of Challenge will take a sane attitude towards printing future discussion articles and letters. We of the minority of course do not want in any way to inhibit the normal functioning of Challenge and we feel that this matter can be worked out without resorting to a series of detailed notions on the number of inches of space to be given to whom and when.

Secondly, also in answer to the request of the entire Berkeley Unit, the NAC has refused to print a denial in Challenge of the statement made in Labor Action that the YSL supports unity with the SP-SDF. The Berkeley comrades simply requested that on this basic question -- until such time as the membership itself speaks -- this position be referred to as the "draft" or "tentative" position of the YSL. Thus they were asking only for the same rights given in the recent debate in the CP.

In order not to prejudice the discussion and not to give a false impression to the public we of the Left-Wing Caucus ask that in the

future the position adopted by the NEC be labelled so as to make it clear that the issue has not yet been decided by the membership. This seems to us to be a very modest proposal and in all fairness we urge the comrades throughout the country to support us on this.

Thirdly, we note with regret that the New York Exec has refused to allow Comrade Wohlforth to give one class out of four even though the three other classes were given by majority supporters and two of them were actually used to attack the minority. At one of them Comrade Shachtman of the ISL spoke and publicly attacked the left-wing members of the YSL. We consider this an unfraternal act on the part of the ISL and feel that it amounts to interference in the internal political life of our organization. We hope it will not happen again.

We hope that ample opportunity will be given for the minority to present its views in debates and at public forums. Also we hope that no moves will be made to limit the functioning in the organization of members of the minority.

We urge the New York comrades to reconsider their actions and allow members of the minority to participate in the education of the unit. Such an approach will strengthen the unity of the YSL and will lead to an atmosphere conducive for the continuation of the discussion.

We know that the members of the YSL are dedicated to the principles of internal democracy and that they will support us on these proposals. (For the communication of Comrade Wohlforth regarding the Challenge matter see p. 55.)

FROM OUT OF THE PAST WHICH SOME FORGET SO EASILY

It seems, moreover, that our "approach" is wrong because... it leads to splits prior to the revolution. It would have been better if our theorist(Editor of the Socialist Call--ed) of "trotskyism-equals-Stalinism" had remembered the proverb that it is imprudent to speak of a rope in the house of the hanged. Is it not a fact that before the unmentionable virus of "Trotskyism" entered the body of the S.P., that Party passed through three splits, carried out in such a demoralizing way that they resulted neither in numerical growth or consolidation, nor in political clarification? And is it not also a fact that the Centrists in the Socialist Party, who have had but one audible war-cry--"Unity at all costs!"--have followed a policy which has left only a broken shell of the old Socialist Party?

--From the introduction . To Leon Trotsky's Stalinism and Bolshevism written by Max Shachtman

YSL LEFT-WING DECLARATION

The National Executive Committee has adopted a resolution calling for unity with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. This action calls into question the continued existence of the YSL as an independent organization of revolutionary socialist youth.

The NEC resolution states that it is for unity on the basis of the present political program of the SP-SDF. This program is reactionary and anti-socialist. In world politics the SP-SDF supports U.S. imperialism and its basic policies. In American politics the SP-SDF supports the labor bureaucracy and its alliance with the Democratic Party.

Genuine democratic socialism has nothing in common with these policies. On the contrary, the socialist movement can be built only by political struggle against the class-collaborationist and pro-imperialist politics of the social democracy.

If the YSL unites with the SP-SDF it will be abandoning this struggle -- as is already shown by the refusal of the YSL national leadership to criticize the SP-SDF in public, and by the refusal of this national leadership to attempt to recruit members from the SP-SDF into our organization.

We are members of the YSL because we want to assist in the formation of a revolutionary democratic socialist youth movement in the U.S. We are not sectarians. We are willing to unite with all socialist-minded youth on the basis of the minimum program of genuine socialism: independent political action of the working class and the oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world, against both Stalinist and capitalist oppressors.

We consider that the basic question posed by the proposal for unity with the SP-SDF is: either to build the YSL on a socialist political basis or to liquidate the YSL in its present form on the basis of the anti-socialist politics of the SP-SDF.

We believe that this is a question of such vital importance that it is our duty to form a caucus in order to present our views to the members of the League and to save the socialist youth movement from the political disaster of the YSL liquidating itself into the SP-SDF.

We call on all members of the YSL who remain committed to building a real socialist youth movement here, in America, and now, in 1957, to join with us in this undertaking.

LEFT WING CAUCUS NOW HAS 25 MEMBERS!

10 JOINED IN ONE MONTH!

We wish to welcome into our caucus the ten new signers of the Declaration who are listed below along with the other members of the caucus. We feel that this response is indicative of the desire of a large section of the YSL to continue to build the YSL. These comrades have faith both in their own organization and in the future of a militant socialist youth movement in this country.

We urge all other comrades of the YSL who are considering joining the caucus to send their names in right away in order to make the next issue of the BULLETIN. Those who are interested in the basis upon which our caucus is formed are referred to the "YSL Left-Wing Declaration" reprinted in this issue. (See page 6).

-- The Editors

SIGNERS OF THE LEFT-WING DECLARATION

New York Unit:

Tim Wohlforth, NAC, NEC, former member New York Exec.
Frank McGowan, Minority Representative on New York Exec.
Columbia Fraction
Danny Freeman, Columbia Fraction
Sherry G.
Martha Wohlforth, former member New York Exec.

Chicago Unit:

Scott Arden, NEC Alternate, former YSL National Secretary
John Worth
Margaret Collins

Dayton Area Unit:

Shane Mage, NEC
Judy Mage, NEC Alternate
Herschel Kaminsky
John L.

(Continued on Following Page)

Berkeley Young Socialist Club, YSL:

James M. Robertson, Chairman, former NEC member
Roger Plumb
Dave Carleton
Stan Larssen
A. Thorstein
Jerry Friedman
B. Gibetsky
Marion Syrek, Jr.*
Gerard Abel**

At Large:

Paula Bram
Harold Bram***

* "After reading the YSL Left-Wing Declaration and the first LEFT WING BULLETIN, and especially after Comrade Shachtman's recent visit to this area, I find that I am in full agreement with the Left-Wing position and wish to join the Left-Wing Caucus, and therefore wish to be recorded as a signer of the Left-Wing Declaration." -- Marion Syrek, Jr., March 12, 1957.

** "After listening to Comrade Shachtman speak this evening on 'Socialist Regroupment', I wish to declare my support to the YSL Left-Wing Caucus and be recorded as a signer of the Left-Wing Declaration." -- Gerard Abel, March 8, 1957

*** For statement of Paula Bram and Harold Bram see page 9.

JOIN THE LEFT WING CAUCUS!!!

BUILD THE YSL!!!

* EDITORIAL NOTE: The following letter is a statement of grounds for joining the Left-Wing Caucus.

Feb. 27, 1957

Dear Tim,

We must admit to considerable vascillation while reading the left-wing bulletin, particularly on the idea of "winning over the SP-SDF left wing." Such a struggle does not enhance or bring closer the prospect of unity any more than would an appeal of theirs to us to leave the YSL and join their organization. It is this proposal along with the "unite against unity" appeal of the declaration which prompted my last letter to you in which I stated that "I do not feel that unity with the SP-SDF is capitulation to capitalism or class-collaborationist". That is, I qualified it by saying if the left wing of the SP-SDF together with the YSL and ISL formed a strong left-wing caucus within the united organization, publishing a minority organ (of whatever name), and have due representation and voice as a minority and looking toward the day when this left wing might speak as a majority.

This is the kind of unity we want. We want it with the SP-SDF, with the Dissent group, with the Cochranites, with the stalinoids, stalinos, socialoids and socialos. However, after reading a report of the Shachtman-Haskell debate, we begin to see that this is precisely the kind of unity we are not about to get under the leadership of Shachtman, Martin, et al. And, we do not propose abandoning the YSL to the Martins (if they want to join the SP-SDF, by all means let them do so.) We do propose broadening the left-wing caucus to include those of us who want unity with, rather than membership in, the SP-SDF, as one step in a broad socialist regroupment.

We repeat our previous letter: the function of the left wing of the SP-SDF, the ISL, YSL, etc., in such a unified organization is the formation of a strong left-wing caucus within that unified organization with: 1) The right to publish an organ for the expression of its view, 2) representation on the NEC, 3) the right to express its view outside of the organization as long as it is clear that this view is a minority view, and 4) the right to discuss with, and influence, others, looking toward the time when it might conceivably become a majority. It is because we look forward to this kind of unity and growth in the socialist movement rather than the dissolution of the movement, that we both add our names to the Left-Wing Declaration.

Paula and Harold Bram

(Tim, include this letter in the next LWB). As soon as we get straightened out financially, we will do what we can to help meet the costs.

WHY I SIGNED THE LEFT-WING DECLARATION

By Danny Freeman

I would first like to state clearly and unequivocally my belief in the politics and perspectives of the YSL. This means that I wish to continue to build the YSL on the basis of its existence (as stated in the Declaration) as an "independent organization of revolutionary youth." The future of the YSL as a serious political organization can be maintained only on the political basis of genuine democratic socialist principles which as stated in the Declaration can hardly be called sectarian: "Independent political action of the working class and the oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world against both Stalinist and capitalist oppressors." This political tradition is clearly and emphatically expressed in the Resolution on War, adopted three years ago by the founding convention of the YSL (YSR Vol. 1, No. 1, May, 1954). Parts of this document are particularly worth quoting:

"The YSL is an internationalist third camp, anti-war socialist organization. It identifies with the revolutionary anti-war traditions of socialism -- that is, with those socialists who, remaining true to their traditions and class interests, opposed the two imperialist wars.

"It is however meaningless to express opposition to war without at the same time opposing and organizing against the system which breeds war. The struggle against war therefore goes hand in hand with the struggle against capitalism and Stalinism, and exploitative social systems in general.

"The first duty of the socialists living under Stalinist domination is to oppose the war preparations of their ruling class; our first job is to oppose the war preparations of our ruling class.

"We raise the internationalist slogan: **AGAINST BOTH IMPERIALIST CAMPS!**

"To raise the slogan of 'critical support' or to talk of soft pedalling the class struggle toward either of the imperialist camps is to capitulate to the politics of that camp, since it is the ruling classes of the two camps who will determine the basis and the condition under which such a war could be fought.

"Socialists who today give support to the war preparations of either of the two camps -- or to the political, economic and ideological preparations for such a war -- are betraying socialism.

"To fight effectively against such a war we must redouble our efforts to make the working class conscious of its interests, since only the intervention of the working class and the colonial peoples on the political scene as an independent factor can stave off the Third World War.

"OUR IMMEDIATE ENEMY IS OUR OWN RULING CLASS!

"AGAINST BOTH IMPERIALIST CAMPS, FOR THE THIRD CAMP OF THE WORKERS AND OPPRESSED COLONIAL PEOPLES."

THIS document expresses the basic revolutionary third camp politics on which our organization is founded.

Regardless of the question of the imminence of another (and final) imperialist war (there does exist some possibility in the near future of a Korea-type police action) the world situation of 1954 continues: two counter-revolutionary imperialist blocs compete against each other for world domination, willing to cooperate ("peaceful coexistence") if threatened by their main enemy, the working class and the colonial people throughout the world. We are in the "epoch of imperialist decay" in which the Stalinist bureaucracy feeds on the class conflicts engendered by capitalist society, in order to maintain and further its privileged position as a bureaucratic class. Nothing has changed since 1954 to alter our characterization of this period or our revolutionary third camp position which follows from it.

The Left-Wing Caucus declares that it is apprehensive that the present "unity" perspective of the majority comrades involves a subordination of the political principles of the YSL in order to enter the SP-SDF, on a "non-programmatic" basis. The caucus as a whole, including myself, is said to be a sectarian and Cannonite tendency. This abuse we receive for opposing an entry into the SP-SDF (not a unity based on our political principles) -- the SP-SDF which is, next to the SLP, most sectarian tendency calling itself "socialist" and which, while calling for "critical" support of "our" imperialist government, actually supports the concrete programs on which American imperialism rests.

Comrade Shachtman was obviously correct when he said in a New York speech before the YSL that you can't unit with the SP-SDF on a political basis. Comrade Draper was correct when he stated at an ISL forum that after all, Shachtman is not proposing "unity". After all, unity of political organizations can only be on a programmatic basis. We can "enter" the SP-SDF (perhaps) but we can't merge or unite with it because the majority of its members -- and especially the leadership -- is opposed to our Third Camp program.

The position that we desire regroupment with the SP-SDF, but on some sort of meaningful political basis, does not seem

tenable. The holders of this position are in a contradictory position, since practically speaking, the only way to "regroup" with the SP-SDF is without discussing program; and this tendency is, I believe rightly so, opposed to this course. As for myself, I am willing to unite with the SP-SDF, not when it has adopted my complete political program and theoretical orientation, but when it ceases to allow support to capitalist electoral candidates, when it opposes the Marshall Plan and other programs of that sort which attempt to defend the "free world," when it opposes the French SP and ceases to consider Mollet a comrade (just as we do not consider Foster a comrade), when it generally renounces its support of the State Department. Then and only then am I willing to unite, without considering the SP-SDF's stand on the Russian revolution or its present incapability of working in the labor movement in opposition to the labor bureaucracy. Under these conditions, we could be sure that there was some political basis for unity, even if we were not sure whether the move as a tactic would reinvigorate the socialist movement and help bring about a labor party. I myself and all the YSL comrades, to the extent of my knowledge, consider the labor party to be the most possible development of the working class in the near future.

I do not believe that the formation of a labor party means that a revolutionary tendency or force (which will function in the labor party if it is formed) is any alternative. Rather the development of this force as a force supporting the independent action of the international working class against the opponents, capitalist and Stalinist, of the working class, is as imperative now as it will be once a labor party is formed.

I said before that the proposed "unity" with the SP-SDF is not considered to be programmatic. Since it cannot be programmatic. Since it cannot be programmatic, and cannot be a unity, it would have to involve an entry which is not based on any political agreement, but the political meaning of which is a programmatic and organizational victory for the current politics of the SP-SDF. These politics, objectively, despite socialist labels and declarations, support the American ruling class and its imperialist politics and despite itself, strengthen the Stalinist bureaucracy (however indirectly). Our first consideration must remain:

"OUR IMMEDIATE ENEMY IS OUR OWN RULING CLASS!

"AGAINST BOTH IMPERIALIST CAMPS, FOR THE THIRD CAMP OF THE WORKERS AND OPPRESSED COLONIAL PEOPLES."

AN OPEN LETTER TO MIKE HARRINGTON

March 4, 1957

Dear Comrade:

Your article "On the 'Left-Wing' in the YSL" raises the most serious possible charges against the Left-Wing Caucus of the YSL, and two of its leading organizers.* Your first paragraph states that "With the formation of the 'Left Wing Caucus', the YSL is confronted with an organized, sectarian tendency. But more than that, the politics of this grouping are not those of an ordinary loyal faction: rather, they lead in the direction of a split toward the Cannonites." (YSR, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 2). The caucus "represents the tendency toward a split and amalgamation with the Cannonites." (Idem.)

The article is studded with similar references. "The sectarians are, on every practical point, for a narrow, tight SWP-oriented socialist regroupment." (Ibid., p. 7). "The leading comrades of the sectarian tendency have Cannonite politics on almost every major political question." (Idem.) "The sectarians are without perspective - except that of building a sectarian movement with the SWP; as a result, their politics lead toward a split." (Idem.)

You discuss the 'theory' upon which the politics of the caucus are based in the same terms. "The comrades of the 'left-Wing' bulletin," you write -- referring specifically to a signed article by Comrade Shane, "have ... put forth as their fundamental conception"*** a set of views on the application of the theory of 'combined and uneven development.'" (Ibid., p. 2); "... those comrades not only assert their 'laws' and attempt to impose them upon reality, ... they derive the tactics of the movement from them as well." (Ibid., p. 3); "since Comrade Shane, and the 'left-wing'," do not hold a position "of reaching the American working class"; "they want to form a tight organization"; "they disdain laying out a perspective." (p. 6), etc.

You cite absolutely no source for your characterization of the Left-Wing Caucus except your own undocumented opinion (on "Cannonite", "split", "not" a "loyal faction", etc., and three paragraphs out of the signed article by Comrade Shane on "Lessons of the Recent NEC Meeting."

Now Mike, is it necessary for you to be dishonest? The Editorial Statement of the LEFT WING BULLETIN (Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 2) clearly states: "The material in this issue and in all subsequent issues represents the views of the Left-Wing Caucus if it is marked as an editorial statement. Otherwise it represents the view of the author."

* It should be clearly understood that in this letter we take no position on theoretical questions, but deal exclusively with the question of the programmatic base of the tendency, and your analysis of it.

** Emphasis ours, here and in succeeding portions, unless otherwise specified.

You pointedly ignore the "YSL Left-Wing Declaration", although you cannot possibly be unaware that it is the only statement of policy of the caucus as a whole which appears in the Bulletin. The caucus, acting democratically, will undoubtedly adopt further "official" points of view, and these will certainly be presented to the YSL as a whole. In the meantime, however, please don't trouble yourself to formulate our views -- or if you do, don't present your formulations as our views.

The same applies to our "leaders." We reserve the right to elect our own leaders and spokesmen, and consider it an outrageous presumption for you to appoint the m for us -- as you blandly expound "dogma" throughout your article.

Miko, the socialist movement has suffered long enough from the sectarian vices of slander and dishonesty. You know damn well that if the caucus includes (and you haven't established it, by any means) individuals moving in the direction of the "Degenerate Workers' State" theory, it certainly includes members with such divergent views as "State Capitalism" or "Bureaucratic Collectivism."

You further know (if from no other source than the reports Comrade Dobbie claims she has made) that not one member of the caucus in Chicago is "sympathetic" to the SWP, in the manner that you represent.

Despite the fact that you know these things, no reader of your article could be aware of the facts of the case. Perhaps, from your factional point of view, you consider it desirable to "forget" facts which make your position embarrassing. And it certainly would be "convenient" for you to tie the Red Herring -- SWPism -- around the neck of the caucus, in place of dealing with its political views as these are actually expressed. (Or is 'realism' too 'real', when it comes to hatchet-work?) You will forgive us if we brand your tactics as they are -- slanderous and dishonest!

Concluding, we demand that you produce documentation for every charge, or issue an immediate public retraction.

John Worth
Scott Arden
Margaret Collins
Chicago

(In addition to national circulation of the contents of this letter in its present form, the letter will be published, in reply to Harrington, in both the LEFT WING BULLETIN and YSR, in the immediately succeeding issues.)