

The Young Communist League Turns to Struggle

By GIL GREEN

THE 6th National Convention of the Young Communist League was one of great significance to the entire revolutionary movement of the United States, especially to the youth movement. The convention based all of its deliberations and decisions on the effects of the deepening economic crisis, on the sharpening offensive of the bourgeoisie against the toiling masses, and on the growing danger of an armed attack upon the Soviet Union. The convention reflected the rising tide of struggle, particularly the growing strike wave, and sharply brought before the League its tasks in winning the youth for a struggle against the offensive of the boss class.

The convention showed very clearly the fact that the League has as yet not become the organizer and leader of the youth in the struggle for their daily needs. What do we mean by this? The League does not take up and defend the day to day interests of the toiling youth. It does not take up the daily problems of the white and Negro youth in the factories, on the farms, among the unemployed, on the sport field, and in the schools. It does not take up the day to day interests of the millions of working class children.

The greatest weakness in the work of the League is its failure to especially take up the struggle for the economic needs of the youth. The letter of the Young Communist International to the 6th Convention pointed out that the chief weakness of the Y.C.L. was its "failure to place in to the foreground of the daily activity of the League the task of organizing and mobilizing the youth for economic struggles on the basis of the most immediate interests of the toiling youth."

What are the causes for this weakness? First and foremost, there is a right opportunist underestimation of the radicalization of the young workers and their willingness to struggle. This is expressed in the deep neglect and underestimation of trade union, factory and unemployed work. This is shown by the small percentage of League members who are to be found in the trade unions.

On the other hand, due to the sectarian isolation of the League from the life of the young workers, we find a failure to under-

stand their daily needs. This is expressed in the failure to put forth immediate partial demands for the young workers in the factories and among the unemployed. These tendencies lead both to a failure to participate in the economic struggle.

The tendency to separate the work of the League from the daily struggles of the young workers, was sharply expressed in the mechanical application of the Plans of Action. To too great an extent the plans were only mechanical figures, and did not turn the League towards its basic work. The comrades failed to see in the figures of the plans a gauge of the ability of our League to organize and lead the struggles of the youth. Instead, the figures become goals in themselves, separated from the struggle.

The convention hit this tendency sharply. It also hit the tendency to negate the principles of planned work. Certain comrades at the convention tried to solve the mechanical approach by doing away with plans entirely. They failed to realize that the Young Communist League is based on bolshevik principles of organization. The League cannot be a loose organization with no plan and no goal. The League must like every army that fights a strong enemy, plan and organize its every advance. Without this, our organization can not, in any sense of the word, call itself Communist.

The League made many mistakes in turning towards planned activity. In the first plan there was much phrase-mongering. All of the plans were drawn up in a bureaucratic manner from above without drawing the membership into the working out of the plan. The plans were applied mechanically and in many places did not turn the League towards its basic work. Despite these serious shortcomings, however, the plans were steps forward in the life of the League. We must not abolish planned work, but improve and overcome the mistakes of our past plans on the basis of our experiences.

The convention paid detailed attention to the development of the economic struggle. It took cognizance of the growing participation of the youth in the struggles of the working class. The youth played important roles in general strike battles such as the miners' and textile strikes. The youth also participated in the struggle of the unemployed. In the past months there has taken place an increasing number of youth strikes. These strikes showed the readiness of the young workers for struggle.

In the past months the League played a more important role in the economic struggles. It was a force in the miners' and textile strikes. In a number of strikes the League played a leading role, and was able to organize and lead successfully strike struggles of young workers.

In the League there is much confusion on the role of youth demands and youth sections. The League does not realize the importance of partial demands for the youth. There is unclarity on the relation of the immediate partial demands to our general youth demands. The convention pointed out that the League must create partial demands for the young workers in the most important factories and industries. These demands must be based on the day to day needs of the young workers, and must be levers by which we create struggle for our general youth program.

In many places the youth comrades and especially the leading comrades of the Party and the revolutionary unions, have developed the attitude that the youth have no specific problems and thus need no youth demands and youth forms. This attitude is still a remnant of the old craft ideology of the skilled workers in the reactionary unions. It fails to see the special problems of the unorganized and unskilled masses.

The failure to see the special problem of the youth leads logically to a failure to win the youth for the struggle. In the two unions where this tendency is most prevalent, we see the fruits of this theory. In the present miners' strike the comrades report that in those sections where there is a back to work movement, the youth are among the first to go back. In the Paterson strike we find an inability to broaden the strike sufficiently among the dye workers who are a majority of youth. In an article of Nat Kaplan in the *Daily Worker* of August 7th, he points out that in the Weybosset mill a group of young workers were among the first to go back after the fake vote.

What does this show? *That the youth are not as militant and as courageous fighters as the adult workers?* Certainly not! In these same strikes the youth played a prominent role. The above incidents of the miners' and textile strikes *are a result of the failure on the part of these two unions to recognize the youth problem as a major problem.* Without fighting for the special needs of the youth for their demands, we will not be able to win and lead the youth.

We also find in our trade union work tendencies to look upon youth demands and youth sections mechanically. The comrades attempted to look at youth demands as separate and apart from the demands of the adult workers. In the miners' strike the comrades failed to see that besides the specific youth demands, the general demands of 55c a ton and \$4 a day for outside work, are also demands which effect directly the youth and must be explained to them as their own demands.

In the work of building youth sections, the League made the error of disconnecting the youth sections from the union and struggle. These separatist tendencies must be fought. They flow from a failure to understand that the youth section is part of the union—that it is the union's arm among the youth. Youth sections can only be built around the struggle for the every day needs of the youth. Without a struggle for these needs, the youth section will only degenerate into a social club and will not fulfill its role of winning the youth for the union and struggle.

In our economic trade union work we also find a dangerous tendency of hiding the face of our League. The League is not placed before the young workers as their leader. Our comrades capitulate to the moods of the most backward masses and to the attack of the press on the "reds." This tendency is sharply expressed in the midst of strike struggle. In the miners' strike, in Paterson, in the Rhode Island strike, and in all other strikes this tendency was apparent. The comrades fail to understand that the building of the League must come simultaneously with the building of the unions. Without building the revolutionary core, we can have no guarantee of the existence of the union after the strike.

This tendency also flows from a failure to understand the entire role and character of the League. In Massachusetts the tendency was expressed of "first we must build the Party and union, then the League." The comrades fail to understand that the League in its composition and character is broader than the Party. The League must be a mass organization not only in the sense that it leads the masses of youth, but also in its composition. The League must include in its ranks as many of the best young workers as possible, and not limit itself to a chosen few. The theory of the "elite" is part of our sectarian sickness. Our comrades must realize that *the League must be built in the preparation of strike struggles, during strike struggles and after strike struggles*. We must fight against any tendencies to hide the face of the League. In these struggles the Young Worker must especially be used as an important means of bringing forward the face of the League.

The failure to see the need of building the League on a broad basis is further expressed in a failure to understand the need of organization in the preparation of struggle. Certain comrades failed to see that we must be the conscious organizer of struggle and not fall back on the spontaneity of the masses. Such a conception means for our League not to lead the young workers, but to lag behind them.

... There was a tendency to forget the importance of day to day

factory work. Comrades were carried away by the growing strike struggles and failed to realize that these are the products of months of work in building shop nuclei, shop organization committees, etc. They could not see the fact that to pay attention to the daily work of a shop nucleus, to organize a shop committee, and to carry on the other so-called routine tasks of the League, was just as indispensable to the organization of struggle as the actual leadership of the struggle when it had started. They failed to see that only by preparing and organizing the struggle in advance could we lead the young workers.

The convention hit very sharply all tendencies to underestimate the organizational end of our work. The convention also hit the tendency that trade union work is only the property of the comrades who are in the trade union apparatus. The convention demanded that every League member and every League unit be active in trade union work. The organization of the economic struggle is the job of the League as a whole.

This means, that we must make every single unit the leader of the young workers with which they come in contact. The unit must take up the daily problems of the youth, must carry on its work around the factory, and must check up the work of its members in the trade unions, and must in its every day life reflect the struggle of the young workers. This is the only basic manner by which the inner life of our League can be changed and the large fluctuation stopped.

While this article only goes into some of the problems in the trade union work of our League, the convention analyzed all important phases of League work. It went into the unemployed work and our mistakes. It sharply hit the opportunist underestimation of the war danger and the neglect of anti-militarist work. It hit the right errors made in our Negro work and worked out the means by which the League is to take over the leadership of the youth in the struggle for Negro rights. The convention went deeply into the problem of winning the working class children. It also took up the work on the sports field, the struggle against the opponents, and the relation of all of our work to the building of the trade unions.

The convention definitely showed that the League was beginning to break its isolation from the young workers and was emerging from the crisis in which it found itself at the time of the Party convention (July, 1930). The fact that the League could take up all of its basic problems and turn towards the daily struggle, is a result of the fact that the League has in the past period begun to

fight against both right and "left" opportunism. The little progress that the League has made was only gained thru the struggle for the line of the Y.C.I. and by the expulsion from the leadership of those elements who were hindering the turn.

The struggle for the line of the Y.C.I. must be intensified if the League is to break sharply from its past. In this connection the League must fight against all conciliatory tendencies which express themselves in agreement with the line in words but fail to carry out in deeds. The decisions of the convention must be brought down to every unit and member.

The Party must realize that the problem of winning the majority of the working class youth. This task is not only the task of the Young Communist League. The Party must realize that this is one of the most important tasks of the entire revolutionary movement. This task grows more and more in importance as the preparations for war grow greater. The Party from the top to the bottom must understand the significance of the youth problem. The Party must mobilize the mass auxiliaries to take up the question of youth. The Party must fight against any tendencies both in the Party and trade unions to underestimate the importance of the youth problem. Only with the full support and daily political guidance of the Party will the League be able to carry out the decisions of its 6th Convention and complete the turn to mass work.