
THE COMING CONVENTION OF THE Y.C.L.

REPORT TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE

BY GIL GREEN

THE Eighth National Convention of the Young Communist League will take place at a time when war is no longer a remote possibility but an alarming actuality. International fascism has engaged in a new foreign adventure which has as its immediate objective the colonial enslavement of Spain and its people. Nothing brings home to us more clearly the conditions of the world we live in than the Spanish war. Spain is the sharpest expression of that struggle which rages in one form or another throughout the world between the forces of democracy and those of fascism. All the more certain is it, therefore, that only the defeat of reaction and fascism can save our generation from another world slaughter and enable humanity to move forward in the direction of true democracy—socialism.

That socialism is the goal of democracy, that socialism is the highest expression of the democratic strivings of mankind, has received indisputable confirmation in the adoption of the new Soviet Constitution. For the first time society guarantees man creative labor, educational opportunities, recreation, leisure. The Soviet Constitu-

tion provides the material means through which to enjoy, what under bourgeois democracies are only formal rights, freedom of speech, press and assembly. At last the dreams of the old utopians have been realized: man stands secure and free.

Spain is not only an object lesson; to us it is a call to action. Not only the immediate future of the Spanish people, but also that of the people of the world is being decided on the battlefields of Spain. That is why in all of our pre-convention discussion we must not for a single moment forget the significance of this struggle and the words of Comrade Stalin:

“The liberation of Spain from the oppression of the fascist reactionaries is not a private affair of the Spaniards but the common cause of all advanced and progressive mankind.”

Democracy versus fascism is also the major issue facing the American people. This was the issue in the recent elections. On November 3 the masses of toilers declared their desire for peace, for extension of democratic rights and for economic security.

But the forces of reaction are not yet defeated. The masses old and

young alike can only win the demands they voted for by their unity and through struggle. To the extent that they do this and to that extent alone, can they force Roosevelt to carry into life the mandate given him by the people of this country.

Already this can be seen by the events of the past weeks. The reactionary forces are striving to turn their election defeat into a victory. What, if not this, is the meaning of the sudden love displayed for Roosevelt by Hearst and the National Manufacturers Association? This is also the meaning of the much heralded "era of good feeling" and of the press campaign harping on the improved economic conditions and the returning prosperity.

ROOSEVELT RENEGING ON ELECTION PROMISES

A conspiracy is afoot to rob the American toilers of their partial election victory; to destroy their growing militancy. Roosevelt is already reneging on his election promises. Hundreds of thousands of W.P.A. employees have been laid off. If he succeeds in this first attempt, it will be a signal for a general onslaught.

Part of this attempt to bury and forget the issues voted on by the people of this country is the new approach towards the problem of the younger generation. Mr. Brown, of the National Youth Administration, has declared that the problem of transient youth no longer exists and has implied that the entire youth problem is nearing solution.

Let us examine the actual facts. Production is moving up towards the estimated "normal". But what are the

differences between this and previous upturns?

First, the continued existence of mass unemployment; some 10,000,000 jobless.

Second, its limited character. Even now new factors are discernible pointing to another crash in the future.

What general conclusions can be drawn from this?

First, that the upturn in production has not and will not solve the basic problems confronting the younger generation. While it is true that a number of young workers have been drawn into industry during past months, mass unemployment continues as a permanent social disease and the most conservative estimates point to a minimum of 4,000,000 young jobless.

Even those who are working have no guarantees of permanent employment and thus no sense of economic security. Wages for young people are extremely low, especially for Negro youth and for girls. This was dramatically expressed by the pitiful plea sent to President Roosevelt by a young girl in New Bedford who toils in a textile mill for from \$4 to \$6 a week.

The farm and middle class youth continue to face the dilemma of being unwanted both on the land and in the professions. In respect to the growing number of young intellectuals and professionals that present-day society cannot use, Dr. Elliott, President of Purdue University, offers to solve this problem in the following unique manner: He says: "American colleges must abandon their objective of higher education for all people." That such a proposal can be seriously considered is

in itself a severe indictment of our present social order.

It is therefore not surprising that this country has an accumulated marriage deficit of some 750,000—that is, 750,000 who under normal conditions would have been married. Nor should we be surprised at the growth of crime among young people, a matter which has become an acute social problem.

When added to the above we consider the imminent danger of a world explosion which if not stopped will take its ghastly toll in millions of young lives, who can say that the plight of the younger generation is being solved?

VAST AWAKENING OF YOUTH

Under conditions such as these we witness a vast awakening of America's younger generation. Young people, whether in Y's, Settlement Houses, or church youth organizations; whether Catholic, Protestant or Jewish; whether white or Negro; want to know what the future holds in store for them, want to know how to achieve peace, security and opportunity. And while they have many differences of opinion, they are united in the view that these can only be achieved through democracy. This in itself is a factor of greatest importance making possible the unification of the broadest masses of youth for common action in the solution of their common problems.

We are proud of the fact that our Young Communist League has become an integral part of America's younger generation; has linked itself up closely with the many youth organizations of our country and shares with them their ideals and aspirations

for democracy, peace, security and opportunity. We are especially proud of the fact that with our help America's youth are finding the path toward unity as expressed in the student peace strikes; in the movement in behalf of the American Youth Act; in the struggle for the rights of the Negro youth and in the splendid response and activity in behalf of democratic Spain.

Aware of the great program made by our League in helping to cement the unity of America's youth; at the same time we realize how small it is in comparison to the tremendous problems facing our generations and the masses of toilers. It is in light of these greater problems that we wish to discuss the policies and tasks of our League in preparation for our Eighth National Convention.

I. YOUTH IN INDUSTRY FACES NEW PROBLEMS

The first series of questions I wish to discuss flows from the changed economic conditions in the country, the formation and development of the Committee for Industrial Organization and the special youth problems that have arisen.

During the period of the economic crisis and depression the vast majority of young people were outside of industry, especially the basic mass production industries. Today, this is changed. While unemployment is still widespread, large numbers of young people are engaged in industry, especially heavy industry such as steel and auto. This means that the problems of industrial youth are of greater importance than heretofore, in fact, of prime importance. Furthermore, today,

these problems can more easily be met because of the changes in the labor movement, particularly the formation of the C.I.O. and its extensive drive to build powerful industrial unions in the mass production industries.

Industrial youth are in the main unskilled. For this reason most of them were never organized, as the craft unions ignored their problems and made no special efforts to win them; in fact, often excluded them. Hence, the trend toward industrial unions, toward organizing the mass of the unskilled workers is of greater significance for the young people in industry than even for labor as a whole.

That is why we consider the formation of the C.I.O. a great step forward for American labor and its youth, and will support in every way possible its endeavor to organize the basic industries. We also recognize that the establishment of powerful industrial unions will be of prime importance in strengthening the entire progressive movement of the people and will be decisive in laying the foundation for a broad Farmer-Labor Party.

What does this imply concretely? It means that to the degree that youth have entered industry, to that same degree must our League enter industry; to that degree must we consider work among industrial youth as of first concern.

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IMPROVES ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOUTH

Our League can be of great service in helping to organize the masses of industrial youth and in helping their struggles for union recognition, for higher wages and for improved conditions. Another factor which makes

possible effective results in this field is the changing attitude of the general labor movement toward the young workers. Many adult trade unionists recognize for the first time that with the influx of youth in industry, with the apprenticeship schemes of the employers, and with the growth of child labor, the problem of winning the youth is one of prime importance.

An example of this trend was to be seen at the recent Tampa Convention of the A. F. of L. While this was the most reactionary gathering in the history of that organization, the convention, nevertheless, for the first time in its history, adopted a progressive stand on the question of winning young people for the trade union movement. A resolution sponsored by the American Youth Congress was unanimously adopted, concluding as follows:

"Resolved, that the American Federation of Labor now in Convention assembled undertake a campaign to promulgate union consciousness among America's young people and raise among its members the slogan: 'Win your sons and daughters for the Trade Union Movement.'"

Of course, we recognize that without the industrial form of organization this slogan cannot be fully achieved. Despite that fact, however, we consider this resolution a victory for the youth and the labor movement and will do all in our power to make its slogan one that is repeated by tens of thousands of trade unionists and applied by hundreds of local unions.

Let us remember, however, that resolutions are not in the habit of automatically transforming themselves into practical activities. If this resolution is not to suffer the fate of being buried in the archives of the A. F. of

L., it is we who must take the initiative in seeing that it is translated into practical deeds. That section of the resolution which calls for the organization of educational, recreational and athletic activities among young people can certainly be fulfilled in every local trade union if Y.C.L.'ers take the lead in seeing that this is done.

Already a number of unions have developed youth activities of an educational and recreational character with great success. We refer to the splendid experiences of the San Francisco Maritime Federation, which has established a recreational center in which some 3,000 marine workers participate daily and which has influenced the entire San Francisco labor movement in the direction of such activities. We also refer to the educational and athletic activities of the I.L.G.W.U. in New York and to the youth committees and youth affairs being organized in many of the steel regions.

STEEL INDUSTRY OUR CONCENTRATION CENTER

Steel, which is the center of the C.I.O. drive, must become the center of our work. Whether steel is organized or not will have decisive bearing on the whole future development of the labor movement and the nation as such. At stake is not alone the issue of industrial unionism but the living and working conditions of millions of workers and their families in the mass production industries.

Our work in the steel industry has improved in the past two months, but even now barely scratches the surface. What are some of the problems we

face in improving our work in the steel towns of America?

First, our League as an organization is extremely weak in the steel districts. We have tried to strengthen our forces in these districts by sending some leading comrades into them and that is why some improvement is noticeable in our work. Many more forces will have to be sent to these regions in the next weeks. But the problem cannot be solved simply by sending outside forces into these places. Why? Because these districts are made up of dozens of small steel towns and outsiders cannot so easily make contact and win the confidence of the young people. The problem of forces is first of all one of training local people.

In this respect it must be said that our concentration districts have no definite policy towards personnel. An example of this is the fact that not a single steel worker was sent by our League to the national training school. Such districts as Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Detroit did not even submit a single candidate for this school.

When one bears in mind that these communities have few educational facilities and that the general cultural life is extremely poor, it is not hard to understand why we train forces in these regions so slowly.

In the past few weeks the question has arisen of the relationship of the Party and League forces within the mills. It is obvious that both organizations should operate closely together, as under present conditions both organizations are in a measure illegal within the plants. However, we wish to oppose definitely the conception which has arisen in some places,

that the Y.C.L. should actually be abolished within the mills and that all Y.C.L.'ers should instead become members of a youth committee of the Party.

We are for joint meetings of Party and League groups; we are also for joint Party and League units where this is most practical, but we are decidedly against the liquidation of the League in the steel mills. Why? Because the League is absolutely necessary to stimulate the whole work among the youth in the community, and all our previous experiences point to the fact that where the Y.C.L. is liquidated in a short period of time all youth work is also nil.

Taking into consideration the present illegal and semi-legal existence of the Y.C.L. in the steel towns, it is necessary to advocate the building of all sorts of legal youth clubs and youth movements. These can be organized to provide social and recreational activities or around some issues such as the steel drive or the need for recreational centers. An example of how this is possible is our work in —. Here our League has grown to 19 members and a club of about 75 young steel workers has been organized. Another example of how to get support for the steel drive is the steps being taken in the Pittsburgh region to rally the existing youth organizations into a special conference for the aid of the steel union.

With certain modification, what has been said about steel also applies to other industries such as textile and auto.

Now I wish to deal with a few new problems which have arisen since the economic upturn and the growth of

the labor movement; new only in the sense that they deserve special emphasis and consideration at this time.

APPRENTICESHIP A GROWING PROBLEM

First of these is the problem of apprenticeship and vocational training. So important has this question become that the recent gathering of the National Industrial Council took this up as a special point. It found industry suffering from an acute shortage of skilled labor and proposed that the manufacturers establish a system of apprenticeship and vocational training to meet this situation. On the other hand the American Federation of Labor disputes the correctness of this finding and insists that plenty of skilled labor is still available.

It is our opinion that there are elements of truth in both reports. A shortage of skilled labor is to be found in certain branches of industry, particularly in machine production. This can be easily understood if one remembers that for many years whole branches of industry were completely shut down and that a new generation of workers was not given the opportunity of learning trades. Increased production especially during the past year has overnight, so to speak, increased the demand for a type of skilled labor that can only be produced over a number of years of labor and training.

Apprenticeship is therefore a genuine problem even though the manufacturers, for reasons of their own, have consciously exaggerated the existing shortage of skilled labor. What are their reasons?

1. They are more than anxious to

get rid of all workers over forty years of age.

2. The older craftsmen instinctively wish to take advantage of the shortage in skilled labor so as to improve their lot, and in industries such as steel are in the forefront of the unionization drive.

For the above reasons the manufacturers are determined to train their own supply of skilled labor and this is already being done by the steel trust, Ford, General Motors, etc.

This situation creates a serious danger for the entire labor movement and first of all the craft unions. What should labor's position on this question be? One thing is clear. The labor movement cannot deny the need for vocational training and apprenticeship. Young people have a right to learn a trade and the labor movement should help them achieve this end. If the labor movement does not, then these young people will get their training in the scab-herding schools of the manufacturers.

We favor the calling of special labor conferences to discuss this entire problem. The New York Central Labor Union has already decided to call such a conference for that city. Similar steps should be taken in other cities. At such conferences the Y.C.L. should advocate that the labor movement officially launch a drive for a federal system of apprenticeship and vocational training to be administered first of all by the trade union movement.

THE QUESTION OF CHILD LABOR

A second question which has become acute is that of child labor. Employers have pursued the policy of hiring young people of the lower age

brackets as against those who have been unemployed for any length of time. These youngsters can be hired at lower wages and are not considered as part of that "demoralized generation".

Hence the fight against child labor is not alone a battle to protect the health of children under sixteen, but also that of defending the "depression generation" which the employers wish to keep as a permanent locked-out group. This development is one of the main causes for the alarming increase of crime, especially among those young people who have been unemployed for a considerable period of time.

The Y.C.L. calls upon all youth organizations to join hands for a concerted drive to get the child labor amendment ratified in the remaining states before the end of this year. Its ratification will not in itself abolish child labor but it will be an important step in the direction of obtaining the necessary adequate congressional legislation.

CONDITIONS RIPE FOR LABOR SPORT MOVEMENT

Another problem presents itself at this moment as a result of the growing athletic activities sponsored by the trade unions and the victory of the progressive forces at the recent convention of the Amateur Athletic Union.

Mahoney, the newly elected president of the A.A.U., has declared himself in favor of developing the A.A.U. along democratic lines and wants to connect it closely to the labor movement. This situation places upon the order of the day the task of developing a powerful labor sports movement.

We have favored this for many years but realized that this objective could not be achieved without the trade union movement as its mainstay. Today this is possible.

Our line for the development of a labor sports movement has nothing in common, however, with the former sectarian Labor Sports Union nor with the present Workers Sports Alliance which looks upon the A.A.U. as its opponent. Not an opposition labor sports movement, but one functioning as an integral part of the A.A.U. is our perspective. In this manner the labor sports movement can help influence and transform the A.A.U. into a broad non-fascist people's sports association.

In New York steps have already been taken by the A.A.U. and local trade unions to call a special conference and to prepare for a labor sports carnival as well as for an outdoor event next summer. Certainly similar steps can be taken in California, Western Pennsylvania and elsewhere. The I.W.O. workers' clubs, and sport teams of the Y.C.L. should also endeavor to affiliate to the A.A.U. and its leagues.

The building of a powerful labor sports movement has become an immediate task which means that practical measures are necessary to accomplish this objective.

II. THE GROWING MOVEMENT TOWARDS YOUTH UNITY AND OUR TASKS

As remarkable as has been the change that has taken place in the Amateur Athletic Union these last two years, it is only symptomatic of the general trend among the organizations of youth. Thus, the conditions working for a powerful united move-

ment of the younger generation have increased at an accelerated pace. Youth instinctively feels more and more the need for common action in face of their common problems.

This is what gave birth to and helped extend the American Youth Congress as the most conscious expression of the desire for collaboration in the ranks of the youth. In the period since its inception the American Youth Congress has made continuous progress. Since its Third Congress, for example, the Student Christian Movement has affiliated, representing the student divisions of the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A. This means that all three divisions of the Y.W.C.A. are affiliated to the A.Y.C. nationally as well as the largest and most active national division of the Y.M.C.A.

The Youth Congress was a tremendous step forward for American youth, but it has not yet completed the task of uniting the ranks of the younger generation. We must remember that there are only some 2,000,000 young people affiliated to the Youth Congress through their respective organizations, while in the United States there are more than 20,000,000 young people from 18 to 25 years of age, the vast majority of whom consider themselves progressives—and at least stand for democracy, peace and security.

This poses the question: How are we to help broaden and deepen the growing collaboration of America's youth and their organizations? To answer this question requires an understanding of the moods, currents and trends at work among the various sections of young people and a more flexible approach to organizational forms and methods of work.

While America's young people face common problems, they at the same time compose a heterogeneous mass in the sense that they belong to different economic classes and have different religious, cultural and national backgrounds. This factor cannot help but express itself in the movement toward unity. It means that the younger generation will not march toward united action by one single path; it will reach this goal by a number of paths, as diverse as are the conditions and interests of young people.

Proof of this already exists. Various forms of collaboration have arisen from the life of the young people themselves and in certain cases without our knowledge or aid. We all know of the existence of the Christian Youth Building a New World. This movement which unites all Protestant youth organizations on a progressive program will undoubtedly play an important part in the whole future development of the American youth movement.

Catholic youth are banded together in the Catholic Youth Movement.

Negro youth are forming local congress movements such as the one which was established in Alleghany County, Pa., and such as the Southern Negro Youth Conference to be held in Richmond, Va., on February 14.

The Jewish youth have been striving to achieve local and national collaboration in the struggle against anti-Semitism, and in a number of cities have made strides forward in this direction.

Student youth are expressing their desire for unity by the growing movement for student government and by the student peace movement which

includes nearly every important national student organization.

Athletic organizations are already united by affiliation with the Amateur Athletic Union.

Thus, side by side with the Youth Congress, we definitely see the existence of various forms of collaboration. The forms dealt with above are based on specific types of organizations: athletic, student, Protestant, Catholic, Negro, Jewish, etc.

In addition to these forms, there are those that are based on special issues; such as, the United Youth Committee in Defense of Spanish Democracy or the Continuations Committee of the World Youth Congress which unites different types of organizations on the single issue of peace.

Our policy in this situation must be that of helping to develop these natural forms of collaboration and not that of trying to artificially force all of these groupings into one preconceived mold. We must see clearly that while the Youth Congress is the most important instrument to unite America's youth, it is not the only one.

It is our belief that the Youth Congress should pursue a policy of developing close fraternal cooperation among all existing national youth movements with the aim of some time in the near future coordinating these into a truly representative front of the younger generation.

If this is to be accomplished, we feel it is of great importance to broaden the program of the American Youth Congress. What is its present character? It can be summed up in one word—anti-fascist. Yet the vast majority of America's youth are not yet consciously anti-fascist. They are for

democracy. The narrower character of the Youth Congress program makes it more difficult to draw *all* of America's youth organizations into this movement. That is also why there are some who see a contradiction between the building of a Farmer-Labor Party youth movement with that of building the A.Y.C.

What does the above policy mean concretely for the various localities? It means that the leading comrades should place before themselves the question: How can we develop the broadest forms of youth collaboration in our state or region? If the question is placed in this manner, then the most important consideration for us will be the content and not the form. The forms will vary in accordance with the composition and characteristics of the youth of the given region. If we think along such lines and always have as our main objective the development of the widest collaboration among the youth, we will also help solve another question—the specific tasks of the Y.C.L. branch in helping to unite the ranks of the youth.

Too few branches today know what is going on in the Youth Congress and in other youth movements. Often our League below is not in a position to extend further the excellent relations we as an organization have established with the leadership of other national youth organizations. But if the starting point becomes the need for bringing all youth together for collaboration, certainly this is an objective that every branch can aim to realize in its own community. Our approach in the localities should be along this line: "We are all young people living in one community. We face common

problems. Why can we not cooperate to solve these? Will not such cooperation benefit our respective memberships and the community as a whole?"

In local communities the most suitable form of collaboration has been proven to be "Youth Councils". This is also a natural form of collaboration which has developed in many small towns and communities without our cooperation or aid. Is it not possible to help organize youth councils everywhere? We believe it is. Where these already exist our task is not to build new councils but to apply for admission as a Y.C.L. to the existing ones. This policy was correctly pursued, for example, in New Britain, Conn.

On the East Side of New York such a federated community youth council was established with representatives from some ninety youth clubs, including Settlement Houses and Catholic youth groups. Such councils need not be organized on the basis of a definite program but on the principle of common collaboration. If a program is adopted it should correspond to what the young people in the given community are ready to work for. These councils should maintain connections and cooperate with the A.Y.C., although in many places formal affiliation may not be advisable at once, as the young people may desire to keep the movement solely a community one to start with.

Chicago and California have taken the lead in establishing a new city and state form of collaboration which we believe has great potentialities. A Chicago Youth Assembly was established a few weeks ago following a call issued by the Youth Congress. This assembly

draws in many youth groups but bases itself on no definite program. Likewise in California has the Youth Congress taken the initiative in establishing a state Youth Assembly sponsoring a state youth bill.

City or state Youth Assemblies should be organized elsewhere. In fact, this may very well become the regional form of the American Youth Congress. These can model themselves somewhat after the state legislative assemblies or the city aldermanic councils and be delegated gatherings of young people from *all* organizations and of *all* political and religious beliefs. Such assemblies or councils can interest youth in legislative affairs, can introduce special legislation in their own names and can therefore become important factors in communities, cities and states.

After all of the above, it should be clear that we as an organization desire the closest fraternal relations with all other organizations of American youth and wish to help them prosper and grow into powerful progressive organizations. As in the past, the Y.C.L. should not seek to impose its views on these organizations or their members, but should work with them on the basis of joint understanding and agreement.

Now for a few words regarding issues and demands selected and type of methods used. These should always flow from the needs of the youth themselves. They should be based on the actual level of the movement and the readiness of the youth to work for them: and for that reason they must, of course, be practical and effective.

Let us take May 30 (Memorial Day) as an example. For two consecutive

years the Youth Congress has tried to draw large numbers of young people from the Y's, church youth organizations and trade unions to participate in the peace demonstrations and parades. However, in most cases no large masses were gotten to participate in these demonstrations even though the representatives of the various youth organizations voted for the demonstrations.

I do not wish to leave the impression that I am opposed to youth peace parades and demonstrations on May 30. I do strongly believe, however, that the parades and demonstrations should be organized in the name of the Y.C.L. and other youth organizations ready for such types of actions but that the Youth Congress should, for the time being at least, find more suitable forms through which to express its peace stand.

For example, would it not be possible for the coming May 30 to organize week-end outdoor peace encampments or sport and cultural festivals with the aim of attracting large numbers of young people to such gatherings? In some places the A.A.U. could be gotten to help organize the athletic events. In this way the Youth Congress could reach and activate larger numbers of young people.

This general approach must be borne in mind by those Y.C.L.'ers who are cooperating in the work for the Southern Negro Youth Conference; the first gathering of its kind to be held in this country. This conference can become a rallying center for the Negro youth of the entire Southland.

If it is to serve this purpose, the conference should select such key slo-

gans and demands as can rally the largest masses of Negro youth and can also make a first break among the liberal sections of the Southern whites. Y.C.L.'ers, who are delegates to this conference should therefore refrain from pressing for the adoption of our full program on the Negro question and should cooperate with the other delegates in finding such slogans and demands as can at this moment be most effective in building a broad Negro youth movement throughout the South.

While aiding the development of a broad movement for Negro rights both in the South and North, the Y.C.L. should more boldly and energetically come forward with its own position for full economic, social and political equality for the Negro people and should educate large numbers of young white people in this spirit.

The major issue at this time for the entire youth movement is the campaign for the adoption of the American Youth Act, which has received wider support from the organizations of youth and labor than any other proposal. This is quite natural as this bill embodies the main economic demands of young America: jobs, vocational training and educational opportunities.

Certain revisions have been made in the new draft of the bill which improve it from both the legal and practical point of view. Pressure upon Congress for its adoption is one of the best means by which to make Roosevelt live up to his election promises and can win immediate concessions for needy young people. Two immediate tasks face us in the campaign for the adoption of the youth bill:

(1) To help collect at least 1,000,000 signatures to be presented to Congress; and (2) to help bring a minimum of 2,500 young people to Washington on February 19 to place their demands before President Roosevelt and Congress.

If America's youth are to be successful in their fight for the Youth Act, it is first of all necessary to stop all W.P.A. and N.Y.A. layoffs. Every attack on the relief standards of the unemployed and the youth must be defeated. For this purpose special measures should be taken to organize the N.Y.A. employees and to unite them with the W.P.A. unions and Workers Alliance for joint struggle.

WILL SUPPORT ALL PROGRESSIVE YOUTH LEGISLATION

Widespread sentiment exists at this time for a program of progressive social legislation. The victory of liberal forces in certain state legislatures and the election of a bloc of progressive congressmen place before the youth movement the task of formulating a more complete legislative youth program on both a state and national scale. While we are not prepared to do this at the moment, we do urge the calling of special conferences for this purpose. The Y.C.L. is more than ready to support every progressive measure introduced into either congress or the state legislatures. At the moment, in addition to the Youth Act, we urge support for the Fletcher-Harrison Education Appropriation Bill and the Nye-Kvale Bill which aims at eliminating compulsory R.O. T.C. from the colleges. We will also endeavor to get legislation introduced

which will remove the army from the C.C.C. camps.

On a state scale, especially in Minnesota, Washington, California and Wisconsin, we favor the introduction of state Youth Bills. These should not, however, model themselves after the national act. They should instead aim at extending the provisions of the N.Y.A. on a state scale in the form of definite appropriations for concrete projects such as: youth centers, gymnasiums, school buildings, camps, and playgrounds. We also favor the establishment of permanent democratically composed State Youth Administrations to administer such programs. Such bills have already been drafted in a number of states.

This movement for youth legislation is the best answer and solution to the acute social problem which the growing crime wave has created. We are ready to cooperate with all organizations and agencies working to end crime but we are firmly convinced that only the abolition of poverty, only the establishment of guarantees for security can finally solve this problem.

"LEFT" PHRASES AND Y.P.S.L. LEADERSHIP HINDERS UNITY

When proposing the above practical steps and measures by which to improve the immediate lot of our generation, we realize that there are certain people in the Young Peoples Socialist League who, behind the cloak of "Left" phrases, endeavor to hinder the development of the broad youth movement. But we are proud to be different from these dogmatists who, speaking in the name of "Socialism", make more difficult the achievement of this great goal, by their refusal to

take up the immediate problems facing young America, by their failure to recognize what the masses of youth are ready and able to win today. Nor will their narrow policies deter us. Our loyalty is to the masses of toilers—not to a few high-sounding phrasemongers.

Let us take the struggle for peace. Certainly at a time like this, when humanity is so close to the brink of another world war, unity of all who desire peace is a prime necessity. But the Y.P.S.L., sad to say, does not think so. As war is an inevitable product of capitalist society, there is nothing we can do about it anyway, they say. Exploitation is also an inevitable product of capitalist society, comrades of the Y.P.S.L., but who outside of the fossilized Socialist-Labor Party will say that we can do nothing about that?

Maybe it is unfair to say that the Y.P.S.L. gives no answer to this question. It does. It says: socialism will end war and when war comes we'll turn it into civil war. Socialism will also end exploitation, but who would give that as an answer to sit-in strikers in Detroit who want to improve their lot now, yes, under capitalism? And who could be so dogmatic as to fail to see that the practical fight against war and exploitation today will logically lead the masses to an understanding of the need for socialism?

The Y.C.L. believes in the unity of all peace forces because such unity can hinder and stop fascist aggression, as also the war preparations of American imperialism. Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, in his speech at Buenos Aires, said the following:

"The workman at his bench, the farmer on his land, the shopkeeper by his shelves, the

clerk at his books, the laborer in factory, plantation, mine or construction camp, must realize that his work is the work of peace; that to interrupt it for ends of national or personal rapacity is to drive him toward quick death by bayonets, or to slower but not less grievous suffering through economic distress.

"In all our countries we have scholars who can demonstrate these facts; let them not be silent. Our churches have direct contact with all groups; may they remember that the peacemakers are the children of God. We have artists and poets who can distil their needed knowledge into trenchant phrase and line; they have work to do. Our great journals on both continents cover the world. Our women are awake; our youth sentient; our clubs and organizations make opinion everywhere. There is strength here available greater than that of armies. We have but to ask its aid; it will be swift to answer, not only here, but in continents beyond the seas."

We are for answering this request of Mr. Hull by building a movement for peace such as will force the administration which he represents to stop its policy of billion-dollar war budgets.

That is why the American Y.C.L. as well as the Young Communist International were represented at the World Youth Congress at Geneva and consider the outcome of that congress of great importance to the youth of the world. We are cooperating in the U.S. Continuations Committee of this congress and will do all in our power to bring together all peace movements and organizations for joint collaboration. We also welcome the recent growth of Peace Youth Councils in various communities and especially the splendid work of the National Student Peace Committee which is preparing to make the student strike this year an even mightier demonstration than those held heretofore.

THE ISSUE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

While completely rejecting the negative policy of the Y.P.S.L. toward the peace issue, we want to say a critical word in regard to those Socialists who take a positive position toward the peace movement, but who are somewhat confused over the question of collective security. These comrades say: We are for collective security in principle, but we are opposed to it for the United States under any other conditions but that of a Farmer-Labor government.

In the present world situation the danger of war comes first of all from the fascist powers. These are the main aggressors. Everything that can be done to stop these fascist aggressors will help maintain peace. Especially is this so because of the growth of the Soviet Union into a world power working unceasingly for world peace. Therefore the principle of collective security which calls for collective action against all aggressors is a conception we agree with. This holds true for the United States as well, despite the fact that for generations the masses have been fed with isolationist illusions. The slogan "Keep America out of war by keeping war out of the world" expresses the unity which exists between the struggle to keep America out of war and the fight for peace throughout the world.

But these Socialist comrades say: We have no confidence in the present government of the United States; therefore we cannot trust it and have no guarantees that it will apply the principle of collective security. This is correct, but what is the conclusion? Not to demand America's cooperation

for world peace? No, this would be wholly false. The logical answer is: let us build so powerful a mass movement as will make impossible the negating of the will of the masses on the part of the Administration.

To this, these Socialist comrades reply: but the masses of people will not understand this and will increase their reliance and dependence upon the government instead of upon their own organized strength.

Let us think over the argument of this position. Why does not the same principle apply to internal policies, say the question of social legislation? After all, do we have confidence in our present government on this matter? Of course not. We know that progressive social legislation will only be won by the organized pressure of the masses. On this question as well there may be a danger of reliance on the government but we are inclined toward the opposite view that the more we press for progressive legislation on internal as well as foreign affairs, the more of a militant mass movement we shall have fighting the reactionary policies of the government and the closer we shall approach the establishment of the Farmer-Labor government that these comrades and we both desire.

ROOSEVELT'S POLICY TOWARDS SPAIN

The practical result of the failure to force the government to become a positive force working for world peace is to be seen on the question of Spain. Under the cloak of so-called "neutrality", Roosevelt has established an embargo against the republican government of Spain. Whom does this aid, if not the fascist powers? Germany and Italy continue to pour troops and sup-

plies into Franco's armies, while the government of the United States discriminates against a friendly peaceful power, making it impossible for that government to purchase supplies in this country.

America's youth who stand for peace and democracy must demand from the Roosevelt Administration the lifting of the embargo against the government of Spain; must insist that the foreign policies of this country be directed against the fascist aggressors and not against the legitimate democratic government of the Spanish people.

This is of tremendous importance if war and fascism are to be defeated on a world scale and in our country. If fascism wins in Spain, world war is inevitable and reaction will continue to grow throughout the world, including the United States. If Spanish democracy wins this will mark the opening of a new offensive of the toilers and will be the greatest setback to the forces of fascism throughout the world.

It is for this reason that we must completely reject the policy of the leadership of the Y.P.S.L. toward Spain. The Y.P.S.L. refuses to recognize the struggle in Spain as one between democracy and fascism. It wishes to narrow the issue to that of socialism versus fascism. Whom does such a policy aid? Is it accidental that Hearst and the reactionaries throughout the world also endeavor to make the issue one of "communism"? The reactionaries know that the American people stand for democracy but not yet for socialism or communism. Therefore, by making the issue "communism" they hope to divide the

ranks of the toilers and paralyze the movement for the support of the Spanish people.

TROTSKYISTS ENDEAVOR TO KNIFE
SPANISH PEOPLE

But if we must reject the sectarian policy of the Y.P.S.L. on the Spanish struggle, we must organize merciless warfare against the counter-revolutionary Trotskyists in the Y.P.S.L. who are doing their best to knife the Spanish masses in the back. The Trotskyist Erber puts forth the counter-revolutionary slogan: "War at the front and revolution at the rear." How Left this slogan sounds! But is it not the very thing Franco would like? Is not the call for revolution in the rear in a period of civil war tantamount to preparing the Fifth Column within Madrid that Franco boasts about? And that is its purpose. Once again we see an example of how Trotskyist "Left" phrases are used to cover up counter-revolutionary deeds. Is it any wonder that the Trotskyists have been ousted from the Catalonian government and that the Spanish masses are treating them like the scum that they are?

Honest young Socialists throughout the country are beginning to fight against the counter-revolutionary poison within their ranks. We must help them in this inner struggle, as the existence of their organization itself is at stake.

The enthusiastic response of the youth to the campaign for aid to Spanish democracy is an indication of the fact that large masses of youth understand the significance of the Spanish war. The defense of the Spanish people is a matter of honor

for America's youth and the first test of internationalism for the Young Communist League.

III. BUILDING THE Y.C.L. AND THE
PERSPECTIVE FOR A FARMER-LABOR
YOUTH ORGANIZATION

In this last section I am going to deal with the special problems connected with the building and broadening of the Y.C.L. and the perspectives for a united youth organization. I believe that the developments of the past months have proven conclusively the correctness of the line we worked out at our July meeting. At that time we declared that the new type of youth organization called for by the Sixth Congress of the Young Communist International would in the United States grow out of the stream of the Farmer-Labor movement — the movement for independent political action.

Certain steps have been taken in this direction in the past months. In New York a youth division of the American Labor Party was established with participation of some of the most important trade union locals and youth groups. In Minnesota, the Junior Farmer-Labor Association has been moving forward, although at a snail's pace. The same is true of the Youth Section of the Washington Commonwealth Federation.

In most other states no real Farmer-Labor movements have been established and thus no corresponding youth movements. This is true of many regions where some months back there seemed to be the beginnings of budding Farmer-Labor Parties. Detroit is one such example.

Thus, at this time we cannot say that any foundation has as yet been laid for a broad nationwide Farmer-Labor youth organization.

The results of the elections will undoubtedly help spur forward the independent activities of the working class, and thus also the movement for independent political action. But it would, however, be foolish to believe that a Farmer-Labor Party can be formed on a national scale overnight. The exact process toward such a party is still extremely unclear, and depends on many unknown quantities, to be determined by the level and character of the mass movement in the coming period.

Therefore, the whole situation places before us the following question: What are our immediate perspectives? Without attempting to give any final or definite answer to this question, let me indicate a few points. First, even though the tempo of development of the Labor Party movement has not been as fast as we had hoped, this in no way can change our basic analysis.

Some comrades may be impatient at the slow rate of progress toward a united organization. To these comrades we say: we cannot pursue the policy of acting in haste and repenting at leisure. It is far better to proceed at a slower pace and be sure of reaching our goal than to proceed at a rapid pace but not arrive there at all. We must not sacrifice the broad character of the Farmer-Labor youth organization by haste and impatience.

What must be done to help develop the movement for a Farmer-Labor Party among the youth?

1. It is necessary to proceed at a

faster pace in building Farmer-Labor youth organizations where such parties exist in either permanent or embryonic form. This means, at the moment, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Washington and New York, and in those localities where local parties exist or will be established in the coming period, especially during the spring municipal elections.

2. It is important to develop a systematic campaign of education in the ranks of the youth for independent political action. This can best be organized around questions of social legislation. In a section of Boston, for example, around the fight for a youth center, large numbers of youth were influenced and won for the need of independent political action. This can certainly be accomplished in our work for the American Youth Act, which lends itself admirably for such use.

In developing this campaign we should definitely orientate toward winning sections of the large youth organizations. These organizations have traditionally been known as non-political and non-partisan. However, around the issues of social legislation more and more of these organizations will begin to face realistically the problem of government as a matter of vital concern to them. To hasten this process we must help give the *Champion of Youth* a mass circulation, as through this magazine we can win youth for independent political action.

3. In this stage of the Farmer-Labor movement, it is necessary to find those intermediate forms through which to develop the Farmer-Labor youth organizations. I have already dealt with the matter of social legislation as of

paramount importance. Is it not possible in certain regions to call special conferences of youth organizations on this question? I think it is.

Furthermore, in those parts of the country where progressive sentiment is accumulating within the confines of the old parties and is leading to the formation of definite groupings, we must be able to make use of such developments. This is especially so in the South. In this section of the country progressive sentiment is beginning to express itself within the Democratic Party itself. Here we can aid in the establishment of intermediate youth organizations such as Progressive Young Democrats, Modern Young Democrats, etc. We may find that such intermediate forms will play an important part in not only creating a Farmer-Labor youth organization, but in hastening the whole process of political alignment among the masses.

The second major conclusion we must draw from this situation is the need for building and broadening the Y.C.L. as the conscious force working for the unity of the youth and for the creation of the Farmer-Labor youth organization.

On this question of the building of the Y.C.L. I want to be a bit more specific. A year ago, because we thought the whole development in the country would be faster and deeper, we placed before ourselves the task of developing the united organization within a year. Later, when we tied this perspective up with that of the Farmer-Labor movement, we also believed that the election struggle would bring about strong local Labor Party movements and the embryo of a national party. This has not taken place,

mainly because of the threat from the Right and the general swing of labor toward Roosevelt. Under the impact of the hopes for swift and new realignments, certain sections of the League felt that the main question was to build new groups, while others waited passively for the new organization to be created. The result of this was that in some parts of the country the League was taken wholesale into the Party. In others the tempo of recruiting declined.

In the past half year this trend has been reversed. During the election campaign especially, the recruiting into the League reached a high mark. This is first of all true of New York, where some 1,800 members were recruited during the campaign. In the rest of the country while there has been gradual improvement, there is as yet no comparison with New York.

The above is not the only reason why the League has not grown more rapidly. The others are to be found in examining the following two questions: How the League comes before the masses of young people and attracts them; and what the League gives to its members when it has recruited them.

Before we proceed to do so, it may be advisable to remind the comrades of the formulation used by Lenin to define the specific character of the Y.C.L. He said:

"The task of the youth generally, and of the Young Communist Leagues and all other organizations particularly, may be expressed in one sentence: *The task is to acquire knowledge.*"

How is the Y.C.L. to acquire knowledge? Lenin answers this by saying:

"... only by linking up each state of its studies, training and education with the unceasing struggle of the proletariat and the toilers against the old system of exploitation."

How should our League come before the masses of youth? Let us take the present steel campaign as an example. Is it the task of the Y.C.L. to work out the general policy of the campaign? No! It is our task to mobilize the youth for the campaign; to educate them in its spirit; to prepare them for the coming struggle and to study and analyze the lessons of the movement as a whole.

Our job is to help the labor movement in all its struggles; to come forward as an energetic defender of labor and the toilers; as an organization which educates young people, and which in every sense of the term is an organization of the people.

FRENCH Y.C.L. SHOWS THE WAY

An example from France: During the height of the strike wave there, the French Y.C.L. undertook mainly the organization of aid to the strikers. The Y.C.L. helped organize food kitchens; placed its membership at the disposal of the strike committees; raised relief; appealed to young workers to join the strike, etc. By its unselfish aid to the strikers it achieved a great name for itself in the ranks of labor. People saw the Y.C.L. not as an organization only ready to give advice, but as one giving practical aid. This is one reason why the French Y.C.L. grew in the last year from 20,000 to more than 100,000 members.

If our League only learned from our French comrades it could link itself up with the lives of the people in every community; be looked upon

as a friend of the people; as a constructive force. It is not enough for the League to tell the youth to go out and fight for this or that. It is necessary that the League show the masses that it is concerned with their needs not because this provides an opportunity for "a struggle", but because we are concerned with them as people. There are many little ways that this can be done. A few days before Christmas a Y.C.L. branch in Jamaica provided an example. A group of workers who were in a sit-in strike could not provide Christmas toys for their children. The Y.C.L. went into the neighborhood, collected \$30, and on Christmas morning delivered toys to the children of these workers. I can assure you an act of this kind means more than many manifestoes.

I am not proposing that the Y.C.L. should take over the function of a proletarian Santa Claus or Salvation Army. Not at all. One thing we should remember, however, is that the largest and most powerful mass organizations in this country were built up as "service" organizations. This holds for the Boy Scouts, for the Y's, for the Settlement Houses, for the 4-H clubs, etc. We should not fail to learn from their experiences. Our Y.C.L. is also a service organization; but one of a special kind. We serve the masses of toilers and their youth.

AN ORGANIZATION OF THE PEOPLE

But if we are to become an organization of the people we must really feel deeply concerning them. We are not those who believe, as does the Y.P.S.L., in the theory "The worse for the people—the better for us". The Y.C.L. must be known in every com-

munity, in every industry, in every organization, as a League dedicated to the needs of the people. Young people will respect us for what we do along these lines. In this way the League will become an organization of the people; not a Left sect that appears before the masses as being concerned with their sufferings solely to be able to prove the need for a new social order.

EDUCATING AND ENRICHING THE LIVES OF MEMBERS

How about what we give to the young people who join our ranks? After all, as slow as is our recruiting, it nevertheless results in bringing thousands of new members into our organization every year. And yet, the majority of these we do not hold. Why? Because we do not sufficiently enrich their lives. We do not sufficiently help educate them. Every young person wants to excel in something or other. He may want to be a good speaker; he may want to know aviation; he may want to know how to write—or even typewrite; he may want to study dramatics; or learn chess or how to dance. Can our organization, that wishes to enrich the life of our whole generation, ignore the problem of beginning to enrich the personal lives of those whom we reach and recruit?

In the last few months I have had occasion to meet with many comrades in branches. I witnessed a hunger for knowledge and culture. The League must satisfy this hunger. The League must become an organization that answers most of the cultural and recreational needs of the youth. And

while satisfying all of these diverse needs we must first of all educate our membership in Marxist-Leninist theory.

This is not a new question. We have discussed these matters before, but too little has been done to organize our work accordingly. What are some of the problems we face in this respect?

First, we must raise this problem before the whole League and encourage the greatest initiative from below in developing these diverse forms. In many places our comrades are already working along these lines with excellent results. A number of branches in New York City have organized athletic teams, dramatic groups, choruses, classes in journalism, Marxism, art, etc.

In one or two instances the branches have become so large that they are taking steps to divide themselves into clubs dealing with these different types of activities.

But initiative from below is not enough, as experience has shown. The second prerequisite is that of attention and leadership from above. When a number of basketball teams exist in different branches it is necessary to bring them together into a league. This is a problem of leadership. If they wish to excel at the game they need instruction, and this is a problem of leadership.

When a dramatic group is first formed, it can with its own forces organize a few skits. But when it becomes interested in more serious plots and plays it needs people who can write these plays and a dramatic instructor to help produce them. This is also a problem of leadership.

This is even more true when it comes to organizing classes in Marxism.

What does all this mean? It means that the leadership of the Y.C.L. must be constructed so as to be able to give guidance along these lines. In the near future it may be just as important to have a full-time functionary in the center in charge of dramatic activities as in charge of trade union work. And let no comrade smile at this because dramatics can play no small part even in our trade union work.

Although our League has plenty of talent along these fields, this is as yet untapped. We must find this talent, because without it we will not be able to develop the specialized leadership we need. To help do so, and to encourage these forms of activity, we are organizing a national contest for the best play and will give a \$100 prize as premium; furthermore we are going to organize a contest for skits and songs. We shall also encourage the organization of baseball teams and leagues this spring and will arrange for special trophies for winning teams.

We want all this talent to come to the fore, and some day we hope to so excel in these activities as to be able to compete successfully with other youth organizations, whether that be in dramatics, athletics or debating.

To make this possible we must begin by gathering around the leadership of the League specialists of one kind or another. These need not be young people but can be men and women of all ages. Teachers, professors, artists, cartoonists, athletes, writers, playwrights, journalists and pro-

fessional people of all types should be drawn around the League and utilized to train the young people in and around the League.

Some comrades may fear that if we do the above we will forget the class struggle of the masses. If we work correctly these activities will only help draw youth into the struggle.

Of course, let me underline the phrase "if we work correctly", for this will not take place spontaneously. One of the best means of solving this problem is by closely linking our educational and cultural activities with our mass work. An example of how this can be done is the present basketball games for Spain being played throughout New York.

It goes without saying that all of the above cannot be mechanically applied throughout the League. A branch of eight members in Louisville, working in a small town, cannot possibly work in the same manner as an organization of some 7,000 in New York. Nor can our League in Minnesota and Washington, where the main problem is that of building the Farmer-Labor youth organizations, develop their own activities along the same line as other sections of the League. Nor can a branch in a steel town function like one in a university town. In each case we must find the most suitable type and form of activity.

This means that the membership must become the determining factor in deciding the character of the League and its activity in every sphere of work and in every section of the country. The membership must be made to feel that the organization is theirs; that they can make of it what

they want it to be; that they are the deciding force in determining policy and activity.

A year ago we raised the question of setting up section and city committees with elected delegates from the branches. These committees were to be the leadership. Every elected delegate would have the task of reporting back to his branch; the branch in turn could instruct its delegate, could make proposals to the section or city committee. We would like to hear from those places where such committees were established as to how they helped the functioning of the League. As far as our knowledge goes this type of leading committee has proven to be of great value.

In preparing for our convention we should permit complete freedom for experimentation with organizational forms and League structure. We face many problems along this line. Let me mention two of them.

First, the age problem. It is very difficult to get young people of working or college age to mix with young people of high school age. We tried to solve this in some cases by forming "Junior Y.C.L.'s". This did not solve the problem, as the younger-age members do not want to be considered as "Juniors". Could this problem not be solved by forming a separate high school section of the League, with separate dues payments, different requirements and tasks and a completely different educational system? I merely pose the question as one which should not be answered now, but should be thought over and experimented with up to our convention.

Second, the student problem. The student branches of the Y.C.L. face

special problems and need special forms of guidance. It is often extremely difficult for them to get this through the present League structure. Would it thus be advisable to organize a general student division of the Y.C.L., something like those in other youth organizations? I also pose this question for consideration.

Many other questions pertaining to League structure and leadership are in order. I do not want to go into these here. I merely want to encourage the widest experimentation on these matters until our convention.

This whole section of my report, as you can see, comrades, is aimed at broadening our whole conception of the Y.C.L., of making the League an organization that answers the needs of the youth, that provides them with knowledge and comradeship; with responsibility, education and recreation; which offers them a life with a purpose.

The Eighth Convention of our League will take place as we celebrate our fifteenth anniversary as an organization. In the fifteen years of our existence we have made great strides forward in the direction of becoming an important factor in the lives of American youth, of becoming an organization of and for the young people of this country. We have found the path to the masses of youth and have grown in size and influence. We are certain that as a result of the widest discussion throughout the ranks of our organization and on the basis of the line presented here we will make this coming convention the most significant event in the life of the American youth movement.

Forward to our Eighth Convention!