

P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10003
October 31, 1977

TO ALL ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a report on the fourth national convention of the Young Workers Liberation League, the youth group of the Communist Party, which took place October 7-10 in New York City.

The main resolution adopted at the convention, A Better Life for Our Generation, makes a series of slanderous charges against the YSA, among them that we are promoted and financed by big business to "do the class enemy's work." The YSA National Executive Committee has prepared an "Open Letter to the YWLL" answering these charges and urging the YWLL to delete them from its resolution.

We want to circulate this open letter as widely as possible to YWLL members and supporters, as well as to other individuals and organizations in the radical movement. A national mailing has been sent requesting that statements protesting the charges be addressed to YWLL National Chairman James Steele, 235 West 23rd Street, Fifth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011. YSA chapters should circulate the open letter locally with the same request.

The Militant will report on the progress of this campaign during the following weeks.

Comradely,



Chuck Petrin
YSA National Office

REPORT ON YOUNG WORKERS LIBERATION LEAGUE NATIONAL CONVENTION

by Doug Cooper

The Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL) held its fourth national convention October 7-10 in New York City. The theme of the convention and the title of the main resolution adopted there was "A Better Life for Our Generation."

Total registration figures for the convention are not available. However, attendance at the two main plenary sessions was 300-350, including delegates and guests. Of these, about 20 percent were Black, Latino, or Asian, and about 40 percent were women.

Guests included leaders of the Communist Party, U.S.A., representatives from communist party youth organizations in the Soviet Union, Panama, Canada, and other countries, and representatives from the MPLA in Angola and the ANC (African National Congress) in South Africa. Frank Viggiano, president of the National Student Association, presented greetings at a YWLL rally held during the convention.

The main political report was given by YWLL National Chairman James Steele. It highlighted unemployment as the central problem facing youth and urged the building of a national movement to pressure Congress to pass a "youth jobs bill" sponsored by Massachusetts Democrat Michael Harrington.

This fall, according to Steele, the YWLL will participate in a drive to collect 100,000 signatures on petitions backing the Harrington bill. The drive is being coordinated by the National Coalition for Economic Justice, a group dominated by the Communist Party. The coalition, Steele said, is considering plans for a national march for jobs in Washington, D.C., next April.

The report also emphasized the issue of affirmative action and the need to defeat the Bakke decision, but no specific proposals for YWLL activity were made. There was no mention of the October 3-8 anti-Bakke protests, although excerpts from material prepared by the National Coalition to Overturn the Bakke Decision were included in delegate packets.

The report mentioned only in passing the issue of women's rights, and it did not spell out the YWLL's attitude toward passage of the Equal Rights Amendment or struggles in defense of abortion.

Steele concluded the report by stating, "The YWLL must become as much a movement of youth as an organization of youth." And he added that this might mean "lubricating and if need be overhauling our organization."

The organization report was given by YWLL National Organiza-

tional Secretary Jay Schaffner. It concentrated on explaining the kind of organization the YWLL should become, a "home for youth" where political and organizational commitments are minimal. This was spelled out in more detail by Schaffner in a pre-convention discussion article he wrote, "Branch Life -- Key to Mass Growth of the League." (See Appendix A.)

Special emphasis in the report was placed on the need to involve youth in social and cultural activities, as well as politics. Schaffner said the YWLL should initiate photography clubs and jogging clubs, for example, and hold more dances and parties. This would be a way to attract potential new members and eventually convince them of the YWLL's ideas.

No statistics are available on the present size of the YWLL, although the YWLL claims to have recruited 1000 members since December 1974.

Gas Hall, general secretary of the Communist Party, presented greetings to the convention in which he reiterated the theme of the organization report. Hall stated that most people join the YWLL today "because they believe the YWLL is an effective fighter for reforms. Therefore, the inner life of the YWLL should reflect this reality."

A "Building the Young Worker" report was given by Jill Furillo, editor of the Young Worker newspaper. The YWLL claims a monthly circulation of 40,000 copies of the Young Worker today and plans to increase that figure to 100,000 in three years.

The final major report was "Anti-Imperialist Solidarity, Peace, and Friendship" by Antar Mberi, a report on the tasks of the YWLL in building the 1978 gathering of the World Federation of Democratic Youth in Cuba. The YWLL opposes "a few organizations" affiliated to the federation that "ape the posturings of so-called Euro-Communism." (See Appendix B.)

Nine workshops were scheduled during the convention, but no information is available about the discussions that took place there. The workshops were: 1) the struggle of young workers on the job and in the community; 2) the struggle of youth for jobs and other economic needs; 3) the YWLL's work among high school students; 4) the struggle for student unity against the educational cutbacks; 5) youth rights and the struggle against racism, for full equality and equal rights for women; 6) building a mass Young Workers Liberation League -- preparing the League for mass action and growth; 7) the Marxist-Leninist education and character-building of League members; 8) tasks of U.S. youth in the struggle for peace, detente, and anti-imperialist solidarity; and 9) for a democratic cultural, sports, and recreational life for young people.

James Steele was re-elected as national chairman and Jay Schaffner was re-elected as national organizational secretary. A national council of 63 members was elected, including 24 Blacks, 15 other oppressed national minorities, and 28 women.

APPENDIX A

From Viewpoints Pre-Convention Discussion #1
4th National Convention Young Workers Liberation League_7

BRANCH LIFE - KEY TO MASS GROWTH OF THE LEAGUE

Pre-convention sub-report on organization, structure and leadership
By Jay Schaffner, National Organizational Secretary, YWLL
August 17, 1977

"The decisive condition for a given person to enter the RMS (Bulgarian Youth Communist League) is that he should be honest and devoted. He may not be sufficiently prepared - but RMS is a school for the education of youth, isn't it? You will not prepare him such as he is, outside the RMS, but you will take him such as he is, with his shortcomings. The most important thing is that he should be honest and devoted, and the RMS will work for his improvement. In this respect the doors of the RMS should be held wide open. Youth is getting educated in the process of our work, in the process of fulfilling the tasks set before our people, before the Fatherland Front, before the Party and before the RMS."

From Dimitrov On Youth, p. 83

As part of our continuing struggle to expand the League and make our League a "continuing school of learning, struggle and education" for the battles against monopoly capitalism and for socialism, it is also helpful to refer back to the classics of Marxism-Leninism on the nature of youth, youth organizations and to learn from the history and experiences of other youth leagues, and even with different conditions to apply certain generalized features to our work.

I would like to explore certain aspects of our structure and organizations -- some that I feel infringe upon our most rapid development as both a League of mass youth struggle and a mass League.

Let's start with the branch, our most basic unit. The branch, the link between our organization and the mass of youth must and should be the starting point in all of our discussions. How are we aiding and helping the branch? How accessible is the branch for other youth in the community or the campus? What style of life do our branches have? What are our branch activities?

We must lay to rest the notion that branches can be centers of youth activity, and yet not be rooted in a specific community, in the bounds of a specific neighborhood. We have discussed before, in CC meetings, what should go into this, into applying our policy of industrial concentration. Our Convention should start the process of the most rapid further development of real community branches, branches with relations with other youth and community organizations, with a feel for not only the

general problems facing youth, but also for their specific application in the neighborhood.

Is League membership in fact open to "any youth who resides in the United States and is willing to participate in any of the activities of the YWLL..." as stated in our Constitution?

In life, I feel that we throw up roadblocks to youth who may be coming to the League, who may be traveling paths of their own experience, their own way, unlike not only our fathers, but also unlike even some of us who have been in the League for a few years.

What do I mean?

Let's look at our membership card, which is the most basic piece of League literature that most of our comrades have.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP

1. Each member shall belong to a branch and pay dues.
2. Members shall strive to participate in branch, section, and national programs and activities.
3. Members shall strive to deepen their knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and attend classes of the Y.W.L.L. established for that purpose.
4. Members shall participate in the formulation and discussion of policy and seek to win new members on the basis of that policy.
5. Members shall subscribe to and promote the circulation of the Young Worker.
6. All members of the Y.W.L.L. must fight against all manifestations of white chauvinism, racism, anti-Semitism, male supremacy, discrimination, and oppression. Members must fight for political, social, and economic equality for Black people, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Asian and Native Americans and all oppressed nationalities.

Most of these are responsibilities, but there are very few listed "rights." Nowhere is there what the League gives to its members, who come into the League from different backgrounds, with different experiences. Nowhere is it stated how the League educates and convinces its members, wins them to understand the program of the League, but it is left that this automatically is the member's responsibility. We should re-work this, citing the quotation from the Constitution, and then list what the League gives its members, what in effect are the benefits of membership.

Can someone be a member of the League if they don't participate in League activities? What are League activities? Can a young member who comes to and builds our parties, parties where youth are exposed to a variety of different national cultures, learning from one another, being educated in the contributions of all youth, and even in this elementary way building an understanding of other youth and the need for youth unity. Can such a comrade be

a member if all they find rewarding in the League is the common social ties or the tremendous learning experience?

But what of branch meetings? Nowhere in our Constitution does it state that our members must attend branch meetings, only that they must belong to a branch and pay dues. But if our dues are only collected at branch meetings, and if comrades from their own experience and development cannot relate to branch meetings, then in life we have no place in our organization for such comrades. We must change this.

We have to take youth as they are, and to educate, win them, convince them. We can't abandon this, because "youth are apathetic, not interested or not read."

Branch Leadership

Similarly, I feel we should change the scope of our branch leadership. We need a chairman, secretary-treasurer, membership secretary, educational director, with specific responsibilities assigned to the press, literature and social and athletic functions. These can in the larger branches be added to the branch, or members have responsibility but not be on the exec, or exec members have this responsibility.

This has to be looked at in the context that branches will be meeting once a month, rather than every two weeks as now. Similarly we have to examine the gap between leadership and membership. In most cases our leadership is respected and even admired. Still they are held in awe, there is an unwillingness at the branch level to assume positions of leadership: "I can't handle that." Or there is the attitude that if I become a leader in the League, that there goes my life. How can we build a youth organization with such attitudes? How do we train the branch leadership?

Likewise we have to define the responsibilities of branch leadership. The Ed. Dir. plans educations, forums, the self-study of comrades, works with the section educational apparatus, etc. The membership secretary should be a developed comrade with experience, able to keep up with the activities of all the members, to know the members, be sensitive, possibly also handle the cultural and athletic responsibilities in the branch, etc. The Secretary-treasurer is responsible for collecting dues and pledges, for communications with the membership, possibly for the press, for some of the follow-up work, etc. The chairman, with at present no defined responsibilities is the main political leader of the branch, responsible to both the branch and to higher bodies for the life and work of the branch. I feel the chairman should have more responsibilities for follow-up than at present, some that the org-sec now has, possibly should head up work on the press, our mass organ, the basic mouth-piece and voice of the League. The chairman is a main spokesperson of the League with other community organizations, is the link of the branch with higher League bodies and with other branches.

On the question of democratic centralism, the following articles and sections of our Constitution (Article 3, Section 6; Article 4; Article 5, Section 1; Article 6, Sections 1-3; Article 7, Sections 3 & 4) spell out in essence the form of "modified democratic centralism" in our organization, which I feel is correct. There is the unity of action of our leadership based on the fullest collective and democratic discussion at all levels, and to guarantee that this aspect of our democracy can in fact be carried out, there is the unity of action by our leadership. There is no democratic centralism in our membership, nor should there be in a Leninist youth organization. In fact, as a school of socialism, we should continuously wage a campaign to win and convince our membership of our policies, of consulting with them, etc. This is a major question of being an educational organization, of winning youth to carry out our program and activities, of taking youth at the level that they are at, at elevating that level.

Proposals - Not Directives

We have to end all bureaucratic tendencies, to dictate to our branches. A case in point, the National Office issues memos, that can be often described as "directives." But this is a distortion of our character and nature, we should in fact give the membership our fullest confidence, taking propositions to them, and campaigning for their acceptance and implementation. As can be seen by the response on the Fund Drive, the election campaign in 1976, and the preparations for the Convention, when the membership fully understand the problem, they will respond.

This gives new meaning to the question of who can be a member, and what in life are "standards for membership."

...Part of our organizational and educational work is the fullest use of literature. We should aim to have a full display of available literature, titles from International Publishers, Imported Publications, New Outlook and Novosti pamphlets, etc. at our activities. Possibly this can be done in conjunction with the local Marxist bookstore (where they exist).

In this sense, League organizations and branches should have the responsibility to circulate the press, but as to members we should word it, that the League makes publications and press available to them to distribute.

...We should institute a membership pledge or credo that we would recite at every League meeting and activity, something that would clearly express where we, as an organization stand, and that inspires all members to continuously raise their level of commitment and activity. Such a pledge might be the Paul Robeson Credo that we read and adopted at the Youth Salute to Paul Robeson, this past April.

As we refine our concept of the character of what a Marxist-Leninist youth league in fact is, we are also adjusting our organizational thinking into this perspective. Still, there are certain features that are developed under capitalism that are even utilized under socialism, for as Lenin said the new system is built from the old. I am referring to the need for budgets and planning. Planning in all senses -- for carrying out our activities, functions, dances, etc., and planning for budgeting, recruiting, and building the circulation of the Young Worker.

APPENDIX B

/Excerpts from Viewpoints: Pre-Convention Discussion No. 4
4th National Convention, Young Workers Liberation League/

THE WORLD ANTI-IMPERIALIST YOUTH MOVEMENT AND THE WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH

Pre-Convention Sub-report

By Danny Rosenberg

...The World Federation of Democratic Youth, over 150 million strong, constantly extends and improves its work. Nevertheless, a few organizations have endeavored to challenge WFDY's direction and purpose. They contend that the global nature of WFDY's concrete activities conflicts with the domestic responsibilities of WFDY's member organizations. There are some who feel that the WFDY Bureau, and the Federation generally are "dominated" by the youth of the USSR and other socialist countries. WFDY, they feel, must be more loosely constructed. Curiously, these few organizations of our anti-imperialist Federation of Democratic Youth have echoed the cynical "human rights" campaign directed against the socialist countries by Jimmy Carter.

Arguments that deny or minimize the role of the USSR and the socialist countries are arguments that are directed AGAINST anti-imperialist movements. In the name of "up-dating" WFDY, or "realizing" the "new realities" of the democratic youth movement, several organizations endeavor to isolate the youth of the developing and capitalist countries from their natural and fundamental allies, the youth of the socialist countries. With the objective of winning "acceptance" from reaction and imperialism, of proving themselves worthy of anti-Communist ruling class support back home, of reassuring imperialism that they are really not so "dangerous," several organizations ape the "independent," "autonomous," posturings of so-called "Euro-Communism." The mutual interests and solidarity of world youth are not contradicted by the concrete needs of each particular nation's youth, despite the claims of "Euro-Communism." "Euro-Communism," an unscientific, non-Marxist-Leninist concept distorts the relationship between international and national tasks and needs of youth. "Independence" from the anti-imperialist movement is not independence. It is alignment with imperialism. WFDY welcomes a broad, wide-ranging discussion of policy, proposals and initiatives within the context of the Federation's anti-imperialist principles.

The growing unity between the socialist camp and the struggles in the capitalist and developing countries is reflected on the world youth level in the growth of WFDY, in the consolidation of new anti-imperialist victories. In the interest of U.S. and world youth, the Young Workers Liberation League upholds the cohesion and the world anti-imperialist youth movement.

Notwithstanding the baseless assertions of these organizations, the overwhelming majority of the WFDY gives recognition to the leading role of the socialist countries, a role scientifically borne

out by life itself. The greater number of WFDY organizations work daily to augment WFDY's anti-imperialist contributions through material manifestations of solidarity. WFDY's members, Communist and non-Communist alike, regard any attempted erosion or belittlement of the indispensable role of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries as a service to imperialism, as anti-youth in essence. The Young Workers Liberation League understands that it cannot lead U.S. youth in struggle against monopoly for their rights on the domestic plane and simultaneously align itself with U.S. imperialism in the international arena. These are contradictory paths, leading only to the perpetuation of U.S. youth's worsening conditions.

The majority of WFDY, acting in a responsible principled fashion, seeks to consolidate WFDY's strength and unity, strives to involve all member organizations in WFDY initiatives, but steadfastly rejects anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism in the interest of anti-imperialism, world peace and youth's progress. In the fight for world youth unity the Young Workers Liberation League must continue to be active and sharp. We must be especially vigilant against any anti-Sovietism in WFDY. Because we are the youth of the greatest imperialist power we must know that any dropping of our guard against anti-Sovietism would eclipse the harm rendered by anti-Soviet manifestations of others. Such is the case on every question relating to WFDY and world youth solidarity. We must be visibly, actively, literally, in the forefront, with WFDY. ...

OPEN LETTER TO THE YWLL

✓The following letter was addressed to Young Workers Liberation League National Chairman James Steele by the Young Socialist Alliance National Executive Committee, October 31, 1977.✓

We are writing to you about a serious matter concerning the need for unity in defense of political rights.

The main resolution adopted by the YWLL's fourth national convention, A Better Life for Our Generation, makes a series of slanderous accusations against the Young Socialist Alliance. If allowed to stand, they will do a grave disservice to the fight against government harassment and victimization of political dissidents.

Serious political differences divide the Young Socialist Alliance and the Young Workers Liberation League. That is a fact. But you demonstrate a notable lack of confidence in your ability to confront the YSA politically when you stoop to the preposterous charge that we are promoted and financed by big business to "do the class enemy's work."

The Young Socialist Alliance has a proud record spanning more than seventeen years in the fight against capitalist oppression and exploitation. We strive at all times to unite the broadest possible forces on the side of the world working class, including the Soviet Union and other workers states, which we defend against imperialist attack.

It is precisely because of our revolutionary views and activities that the YSA has been a prime target of government harassment. The facts of this are well-documented in the mountain of previously top-secret FBI counterintelligence files uncovered by the YSA and the Socialist Workers Party through our landmark damage suit filed in 1973.

Attorney William Kunstler noted one year ago that this suit "has breached the dam erected by J. Edgar Hoover that for decades hid the excesses of the bureau from the eyes of all of us." It is a challenge to the kind of government disruption suffered not only by socialists but by all progressive movements for social change: Black organizations, trade unions, the women's movement, antiwar groups, and political organizations such as the Young Workers Liberation League.

"An injury to one is an injury to all." That is the principle embodied in the YSA and SWP lawsuit, and it is a principle we have steadfastly adhered to throughout our history. We know that if the government succeeds in trampling on the democratic rights of anyone, regardless of their political views, it will take that as a license to attack whenever and wherever it wants.

In 1966, for example, the W.E.B. DuBois Club, predecessor of the YWLL, was ordered by the government to register with the Subversive Activities Control Board as a "communist front organization." The YSA recognized this attack as part of Washington's campaign to divide the growing movement against the Vietnam War, in which the DuBois Club was then active.

One day after the government order was issued the Fifth National Convention of the Young Socialist Alliance sent a telegram to the DuBois Club offering full support "to defeat this threat to the democratic rights of all Americans, especially our generation of fighting youth."

This same kind of solidarity was demonstrated by the YSA in 1973 when the right-wing, fascist-type group known as the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) launched its "Operation Mop-Up" against the YWLL.

The YSA waged a vigorous campaign for the right of the YWLL to hold meetings and carry out activities without fear of violence or intimidation, and YSA members helped to physically defend the YWLL from attacks by armed NCLC goon squads.

Unfortunately, the YWLL seems to attach little importance to closing ranks in defense of the rights of political groups it disagrees with. But the implications of such a position are very grave, because the FBI and other government disruption agencies would like nothing better than to have each political group isolated in that way.

The way to fight back against the real anticommunist, anti-labor, anti-Black, antiwoman disrupters in Washington is not to go around spreading slanders about other political groups. What is needed is a united campaign by all victims of political persecution to expose and halt the government schemes that endanger the rights of all Americans.

We therefore urge you to delete the charges against the YSA from your resolution.

In addition, we urge you to join with hundreds of other organizations and prominent supporters of civil liberties in endorsing the Political Rights Defense Fund, which is coordinating support for our massive lawsuit against the government dirty tricksters.

Among the fund's sponsors are such groups as the National Lawyer's Guild, Operation PUSH, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, and the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression; activists like Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Anne Braden, Frank Wilkinson, and Daniel Ellsberg; entertainers such as Pete Seeger, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Jane Fonda; political

figures such as Ronald Dellums, John Conyers, and Eugene McCarthy; and trade unionists such as Cesar Chavez and Victor Reuther.

We hope that you will soon add your name to this growing list.

The following is excerpted from A Better Life for Our Generation, Page 22.

"Increasingly, phoney left organizations are used to sow confusion and to discredit Communists, the YWLL and other genuine left forces. They especially prey upon newly radicalized middle-class and student youth, although in recent years the corporate bosses have begun recruiting ultra-left elements into the plants and mines to disrupt the rank-and-file movement.

"To this end, more and more media coverage and in some cases money -- as the revelations about the CIA and FBI show -- is given to fake socialist grouplets, to Trotskyite, Maoist, and other ultra-left disrupters like the Socialist Workers Party, Young Socialist Alliance, Revolutionary Communist (formerly Revolutionary Union), October League, CIA-inspired National Caucus of Labor Committees-U.S. Labor Party, ad nauseum. It is not an accident that these groups are venomously anti-Soviet Union and anti-CPUSA Communist Party, United States of America. This is the reason they exist.

"Monopoly uses these groups to confuse, mislead or to turn off left thinking youth, especially workers in basic industry (young and older) from the real Marxist-Leninist revolutionary forces in U.S. society -- the CPUSA and the YWLL -- as well as from existing socialism. Parading under the banner of 'socialist revolution' and 'workers power' while in practice playing a counterrevolutionary role these elements do the class enemy's work by attempting to impose provocative, dangerous actions that invite police repression. They disrupt unity and divert attention from the main issues."