

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014

October 6, 1971

TO ALL SWP BRANCHES, YSA LOCALS, AND EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

The following proposals on education are jointly recommended by the National Office of the YSA and the National Education Department of the SWP. The proposals are designed to integrate fall educational conferences with a followup program of intensive education.

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I. Fall Educational Conferences

Major educational conferences should be held in every region this fall. The political thrust of the conferences should be around the dynamics of revolution today, with talks designed to present our views on the central political issues. Among the topics that are most important to be covered in the educational talks are: the meaning of the wage freeze; socialist strategy in the 1972 elections; feminism; Black nationalism; the Chicano liberation struggle; and the struggle against the war in Vietnam. Intensive education on these subjects can take place in the weeks immediately following the conferences.

Attached is a copy of an article that appears in the October 15 issue of The Young Socialist Organizer. It outlines the best means of linking the educational conferences with our work in building the 1972 election campaign, the YSA convention, and the circulation of the International Socialist Review. This link is very natural: at the conferences, everyone should be encouraged to attend the YSA convention; campaign speakers should be featured; many of the speakers are contributors to the ISR, and some of the speeches may be published later in the ISR. Thus the conferences should be jointly sponsored by the YSA, YSJP, and the ISR.

In accord with this perspective, it is recommended that an introductory three-month subscription to the ISR be offered free or at half-price with the price of admission to the educational conferences. This offer should be made on the local level to those who do not yet have ISR subscriptions. The offer should not apply to YSA or SWP members. For each subscription obtained in this manner, \$1 should be taken out of the conference receipts and forwarded to the ISR business office. Thus, the subscriptions will be subsidized by the conference receipts, not by the ISR. If the conference finances are carefully planned out with conscious attention to outside fund raising possibilities, making this special offer should pose no financial problems for the conferences.

These conferences should be held over the Thanksgiving weekend, November 26-28. They can then be publicized on the antiwar and abortion demonstrations, November 6 and November 20. Holding the conferences this weekend will also allow sufficient time for followup classes to be held in early December, with the conferences used to launch these classes (see point II below). Furthermore, holding the conferences on the same date in each area will enable us to publicize them nationally. A full-page ad for these conferences will appear in the November issue of the ISR, including a listing of the YSA regional centers, so that those who are interested in attending can get further information. Large ads will also be placed in The Militant issues that will be sold on November 6 and November 20. These national ads should be supplemented with ads from each local area outlining the specific details of the educational conference in that area.

The November 26-28 weekend is also the last weekend of the sub drive. The final push on the sub drive can easily be made in connection with building the educational conferences, and the conferences themselves will be an important arena for obtaining the final Militant and ISR subs of the drive.

One conference should be held in each region rather than in each area where there is a YSA local. The YSA locals in a given region should come in to the conference there, bringing as many contacts as possible. This will enable us to build the largest and most effective conferences, maximizing the use of campaign speakers and speakers from New York at the conferences.

Rich Lesnik is arranging the coordination of national speakers for the educational conferences. A list of available speakers and their topics will be sent out shortly. The supply of national speakers is necessarily limited, and requests will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. There will generally be only one or two national speakers available for each region. At least one of the speakers at each conference should be a representative of the 1972 campaign -- national, statewide, or local. To obtain national speakers, contact Rich Lesnik at the SWP National Office, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014. Phone: (212) 242-5530.

## II. Followup Intensive Education

The following proposal on educational work stems from ideas initially raised in a meeting of educational directors at Oberlin and further discussions between the National Education Department of the SWP and the YSA National Office. To improve internal cadre education we are projecting a three-week concentration on education immediately following the Thanksgiving educational conferences. During this period, November 28 - December 19, education should be given the same political priority it has during summer schools.

This proposal attempts to grapple with the problem of continuing cadre education during the non-summer months.

Over the past several years we have established a uniform policy of holding socialist summer schools in each regional center. These summer schools have generally been very successful: the majority of the SWP and YSA members attend the classes on a consistent basis; a considerable amount of reading is done in preparation for them; the summer schools are made a major feature of branch and YSA political activity, so that the classes are held regularly, rather than being subject to postponement or cancellation because of pressing political activity in other areas of work. As a result, the summer schools are unquestionably the most effective means we have for cadre education.

But the summer schools alone are insufficient for the educational needs of a rapidly expanding SWP and YSA. Members recruited in the fall, winter, and early spring should not have to wait until the summer before attending summer school type classes.

Until now, there have been three main ways in which education has been carried out in the non-summer months. Each of these is useful, but experience has shown that these methods have not been totally adequate for our needs.

One method has been the socialist educational conferences, usually held once in the fall and once in the spring. These conferences are primarily a means of helping educate new members and recruiting contacts. By the very nature of the conferences, however, they cannot be a means of in-depth education. Reading preparation for these conferences is done only rarely. Because of the size of the conferences, discussion from the floor is limited. Usually only one class is held on any given topic.

Another method used is that of holding short educationals before or after SWP and YSA meetings. These are also useful, but like the educational conferences, they are not very effective for intensive education. Discussion time is severely limited. In-depth study of a given topic or book over several weeks is generally not possible. Furthermore, such educationals are often postponed because of the necessity of utilizing the planned educational period for an extended report on some major field of SWP or YSA activity in the mass movements.

The third method has consisted of holding classes throughout the year, with the goal of studying a book or topic consistently and in depth over several weeks, or even several months. Often two or three different classes will be held simultaneously. These classes have so far been the most effective means of intensive cadre education during the non-summer months, but this

method also has drawbacks. Usually a far smaller percentage of the membership attends these classes than the summer school classes. This is especially true when classes are held during the middle of major campaigns, such as the sub drive and the antiwar and abortion campaigns that are going on right now. Other classes are so arranged that it is difficult to maintain a high attendance. A class on The History of the Russian Revolution, for example, might be scheduled to last for 10 sessions. Although great initial interest may be shown in such a class, attendance rapidly dwindles. Comrades who miss one or two sessions because of conflicting political assignments will often decide that it will not be possible to put in the necessary attention and study over many weeks, and drop out of the class entirely. Thus, only a few members receive the benefit of this kind of intensive education.

Despite the limitations, each of these three methods is useful in our education work, and each should be continued, as we have been doing. What is needed, in addition, during the non-summer months, is a method of education which will be intensive -- affording the opportunity to study a given topic in depth -- and which will involve the great majority of the membership, as the summer schools do.

To accomplish this objective, it is necessary to plan an educational program which will be given as high a political priority as the summer schools. But a realistic proposal for the non-summer months must set strictly limited objectives. Given the importance of major campaigns in the mass movements throughout the year, such an educational program cannot be effectively extended over two or three months, or even over six weeks. But we think it is possible to hold a class in each area that will last for three or four sessions that everyone will be expected to attend. This can be sufficient time to study a given subject or book in depth. These classes will be most successful if they are planned during a time when there is the least conflict with other campaigns, and if the party branches and YSA locals place a high political priority on the classes. This plan can probably be carried out twice a year -- once in the fall, and again in the spring.

The best time to begin is during the three-week period immediately following the Thanksgiving educational conferences. During November 28 - December 19 there is time to hold a three-session class meeting once each week. Alternatively, a four-session class could be held, two sessions per weekend, for two consecutive weekends. Scheduling of the weekend series can be flexible to allow for possible national gatherings. Other variations are possible, but the objective in each case is the same: intensive cadre education involving the entire membership.

This three-week period is advantageous from several points of view. The sub drive and the antiwar and abortion demonstrations will be over. The Thanksgiving educational conferences will stimulate interest in education and can be used to kick off the classes. The preparatory work for the YSA convention can be tied in -- close contacts invited to attend the classes may be inspired to attend the YSA convention. (But, of course, the political level of the classes should be addressed to the cadre, rather than contacts, just as the summer schools are.)

To maximize attendance, the classes might be held on the same evening as the SWP or YSA meeting, just prior to a one-hour business meeting. If this procedure is used, a minimum of one-and-a-half hours should be set aside for the class, and during this three-week period the classes should not be postponed in order to present long political reports.

Another important feature of this proposal is the need for the regional centers to assume responsibility for ensuring that all the YSA members in a given region participate in the three-week period of intensive education. The most effective procedure would be for the YSA members in the outlying YSA locals to come into the regional centers for the classes that will be held there. This might be possible if the classes were held over the weekends of December 11-12 and December 18-19 (two sessions per weekend). If long distances make this impossible in a given region, then the regional center could consider sending one of its educators on a brief tour of the outlying YSA locals to teach classes there. At a minimum, the regional centers should be in close consultation with the outlying YSA locals, helping them prepare the best possible educational program.

Large branches may find it best to hold two or three different classes simultaneously, enabling comrades to choose between them. In that way, comrades can choose new topics to study, rather than repeating old ones. Holding several classes will also enable different classes to be pitched to the new and experienced comrades.

The topics to be covered in the classes should be designed to meet the basic educational needs of the given party branch or YSA local, and can vary from area to area. There are four topics, however, which are particularly important to study at this time. They are:

- 1) a Marxist analysis of the economic situation and our approach toward the labor movement;
- 2) the revolutionary socialist attitude toward electoral action;
- 3) the character of the revolutionary party;
- 4) the dynamics of the current radicalization, studying the resolutions of the last two SWP conventions and the book, Towards an American Socialist Revolution.

Each area should hold at least one class series on at least one of these topics. To facilitate planning these class series, the National Education Department of the SWP will send out syllabi on each of these four topics. These will be guides for the educational directors to use in planning the classes. They are being prepared now and will be mailed out shortly.

The National Education Department is interested in hearing the response of the educational directors to these proposals. Please inform us of your plans as soon as you have made them. Suggestions for improving the proposal are welcome.

Comradely,

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SWP National Education Department

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# young socialist the organizer

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## FALL SOCIALIST EDUCATION CONFERENCES

All of the YSA's activities this fall are being carried out in the context of the campaign to recruit new members and build the YSA. Our work in building the mass movements constantly brings us in contact with radicalizing activists in the high schools and on the campuses. By selling *Militants*, *ISRs*, and subs to these activists, by getting out *YSJP* and other campaign literature to them, by urging them to attend forums, campaign meetings, and the YSA convention, by discussing our program with them, we are winning young militants to revolutionary socialist politics and to the YSA.

The regionwide socialist educational conferences held this fall will be one of our most valuable tools for presenting our views on a wide range of topics to the people we seek to recruit. These conferences will incorporate lectures and discussions, campaign rallies, sales, "Join the YSA" meetings, YSA regional committee meetings, and a variety of other activities. Several regions are already planning conferences, and every region that has not yet done so should begin right away to work out a program and schedule and start publicizing their conference.

The weekend of November 27-28 is probably the best time to schedule the conferences, since it follows the November 6 and 20 demonstrations and since many students will find it easier to attend during the Thanksgiving holidays.

### CAMPAIGN '72

The 1972 SWP election campaigns will figure prominently in all the socialist educational conferences. Not only will candidates be featured speakers, but virtually every speech will serve to spell out the campaign's position on the issue it deals with and will urge support for the

SWP campaign. Having the Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley as a cosponsor of the conference will further point up the connection between the conference and the campaign.

In building the conferences we will want to make a special effort to get everyone who has expressed interest in the campaign to attend. At the same time, the conference will serve to win new supporters for the campaign.

Most regions will probably want to hold one session that is especially billed as a campaign rally and that will be a focus for publicizing the conference. In some areas such a rally could be used to officially launch a local campaign.

### INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW

We want to tie the *International Socialist Review* in with the conferences so as to expand its influence and circulation. Many of the speakers at the conferences will be contributors to the *ISR*, and it is possible that the *ISR* may publish some of the talks. The conferences should be advertised either as being sponsored by "the YSA and *YSJP* in cooperation with the *International Socialist Review*" or with the *ISR* listed as a cosponsor.

The November issue of the *ISR* will carry a full page ad for the conferences, giving a general picture of what they will be like and listing the addresses of all the YSA regional centers. Thus sales of the *ISR* will be another important way to publicize the conferences.

### FACILITIES

We should make every effort to obtain free use of the facilities of a major campus to hold and

continued on the following page