

Report to the NEC on the Election Campaign, August 4, 1967

by Charlie

Within the next few weeks the Socialist Workers party plans to initiate its 1968 presidential campaign, with Fred Halstead as the candidate for president and Paul Boutelle for vice-president. Buttons, brochures, pamphlets, and posters are already in preparation.

A recent NEC report on YSA perspectives for this campaign outlined it as the "central focus of all forms of YSA activity in the coming year and a half." The function of this report is to outline our plans for this campaign more concretely.

Increased recruitment, rising YS sales, more people writing in to join, more applications for at-large membership, and the increased size of our periphery are all manifestations of the growing number of youth interested in our ideas and activities. Our primary aim in our campaign activity is to increase the recruitment from this layer of people. We want to draw them into socialist activity around the campaign, recruit them to the YSA, and educate them to become revolutionary socialists.

In order to begin to accomplish these tasks the NEC projects the early formation of a youth campaign committee, Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle, which will be a primary arena of activity during the next 14 months.

We want to see a loose formation that is relatively closely identified with the YSA. We want the formation to be seen by politically serious youth as an organization through which they can carry out socialist activity by supporting socialist candidates. There are many youth in this country who agree with most of the basic planks of the SWP platform --black power, support for the Cuban revolution, immediate withdrawal of troops, socialist candidates, and socialism. These youth are in fact young socialists, and most think of themselves as socialists, as opposed to capitalist supporters. Our aim, and the function of the YSHB, is to involve them in socialist electoral activity. The YSHB will be a stepping stone to the YSA, and our job is to make these formations attractive to militant youth, just as we are trying to do with the YSA.

The development of the Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle will be a fourteen month process. How many young people can be drawn around us in the course of the campaign, and how many will be with us at the end, depends on many factors which we cannot predict. At the minimum we will have recruited an important number of new members. At the maximum we could have around us a significant layer of contacts and young socialists, and be faced with the happy prospect of integrating all of them into the YSA. We may be able to establish new locals in areas where we now have sympathizers who are thinking of joining the YSA. We will want to be flexible

in our approach to building Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle, and use imagination and experimentation in our activities, keeping in mind that our goal is to recruit as many of the campaign supporters as we can.

We want to launch the YSHB in the beginning of the school year, both in areas where there are no YSA chapters and in areas where we have locals. There are several cities where there are a number of youth who are friendly to the YSA and respect our work in the antiwar movement, but are not members of the YSA. Through our national contact work we can involve these youth in campaign activity. We will urge them to set up local YSHB committees and carry out campaign activities as they desire. Through this activity they will be drawn closer to our ideas and organization.

In areas where there are YSA locals, we should initiate YSHB activity this fall on as many campuses and high schools as possible. We do not want to consider the YSHB to be a membership organization that holds regular meetings, educationals, etc. We want an organization with a minimum commitment that involves youth in campaign activity. Anyone who shows interest in the campaign is a young socialist supporting Halstead and Boutelle. As such he should go on a mailing list, be notified of meetings as they occur, be sent literature, and asked to come out for campaigning activities -- passing out literature, putting up posters, building rallies and meetings, etc. Campaign supporters shouldn't feel that they have to join Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle, they are young socialists for Halstead and Boutelle.

It is important to make distinctions between gathering support for the campaign itself and the way we want to use the Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle to build the YSA. We can expect that there will be individuals who will not want to be identified with Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle, but who will still support the campaign for various reasons. We want to do everything we can to utilize their support for the campaign. It can be publicized in campaign mailings, newspaper ads, and by having them speak at meetings, rallies, etc.

The SWP election campaign committee is also discussing the feasibility of a campaign support committee along the lines of an Afro-Americans for Halstead and Boutelle.

The SWP will be announcing its candidates at a big press conference some time during the NCNP convention. The announcement of the candidates at this convention will allow us to take advantage of the news media expected at the convention and kick off the campaign with a big propaganda impact. It will also give us a good chance to reach whatever potential supporters are present at the convention. The SWP and the

YSHB will have campaign literature, buttons and posters at the convention. The YSHB will have at least one brochure ready for the convention explaining what YSHB is and why young people should support the SWP candidates. Plans include having one poster and one button ready for the convention also.

The October 21 march on Washington gives the YSA an excellent chance to make the SWP campaign known to antiwar activists from all over the country. The SWP and YSHB will have a campaign headquarters set up in Washington D.C. for the October 21 action. An SWP campaign rally is tentatively planned for the evening of October 21 in Washington. The candidates, a spokesman for the YSHB, and other campaign supporters will give enthusiastic speeches to cap off the October 21st action.

We are also considering the possibility of a conference to be called by YSHB on October 22, to formally launch the youth committee. This will depend, among other factors, on the feasibility of YSAers and other campaign supporters remaining in Washington until Sunday afternoon.

The role that the YS magazine can play in all these events and our general campaign work cannot be underestimated. Every issue of the magazine from now until next November will cover one or another aspect of the '68 elections. Ideas and material from the field will be needed all along in order to make this aspect of the YS lively, interesting and timely.

This campaign report is being sent our prior to the YSA plenum to give NCers a chance to think about our campaign, discuss it, and come to the plenum with ideas and suggestions on our campaign perspective. Since the NCNP conference will be held the week before the YSA plenum, we will have to put out the initial buttons, brochures, and posters by the end of August. Any comments or suggestions that comrades have on the immediate plans would be helpful to the NEC in outlining our intervention at the NCNP conference.