



# YSA

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 8 No. 3  
December, 1964

## CONTENTS

1. "Theoretical and Practical Problems Facing the YSA", a minority resolution on the Negro struggle submitted by George Carlton
2. Amendments to the Political Resolution submitted by George Carlton

20 ¢

# Young Socialist Alliance

P.O. Box 471, Cooper Station, New York 3, New York



# YSA

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 8 No. 3  
December, 1964

## CONTENTS

1. "Theoretical and Practical Problems Facing the YSA", a minority resolution on the Negro struggle submitted by George Carlton
2. Amendments to the Political Resolution submitted by George Carlton

20 ¢

# Young Socialist Alliance

P.O. Box 471, Cooper Station, New York 3, New York

**NOTE:** Because of the time factor, a separate document in resolution form was not written. Under the circumstances, the basic line of the following article is being proposed to be voted on as the line of the YSA as counterposed to the present Draft Resolution on the Negro Struggle which is being presented by the National Committee.

Further, a series of amendments is being presented to the Political Resolution. They are listed at the end of this article.

George Carlton, Dec. 11, 1964

### Theoretical and Practical Problems Facing the YSA

by George Carlton, Detroit

The YSA is, politically, Trotskyist in its outlook. In its hands today is placed the preparation of much of the future leadership of the entire movement, as well as many of its cadres. It is therefore necessary to look very closely at the educational and practical training which must prepare us for the role of leading the struggle of the workers to power.

#### Draft Resolution on the Negro Struggle

The Draft Resolution on the Negro Struggle presents the basic theoretical framework from which we can view the development of the YSA. Firstly, the resolution correctly identifies the mass of the Negro people as working class. They face the dual oppression as a national minority and as part of the working class. Their class and the nature of the system which exploits them shows that the only solution to their problems lies in the seizure of state power by the working class, with the Negro people playing the role of advance guard.

(Draft Resolution, p. 4) "When the black workers of the ghettos North and South, the most concentrated proletarian mass in the U.S., become determined to control their own destiny they will be equally determined to create a system that makes it possible for them to do so." (p.9) "Black workers because of their position in society are both the most oppressed section of the urban working class and as an oppressed minority, will play a leading role in the coming American revolution."

Our analysis of the black masses as proletarian and of the solution to the Negro problem as socialist shows that certain qualities and directions of the black leaderships are necessary for the success of the struggle. Black nationalism is projected by the document as essentially a left-wing proletarian tendency, thus automatically filling many of the requirements for the new black leaderships which call themselves black nationalist.

(Continuation of above quote from p. 4) "Thus, black nationalism is the most progressive and revolutionary mass tendency on the American scene."

Black nationalism has been broadly characterized in inprevious documents as a mood encompassing both separatists and integrationists (Vol.7, No. 6, p. 5, "Youth and the Black Revolt"). It is a broad blanket spread out to cover all the nice militant things. Yet there exists one important hole in this large, warm blanket.

(Draft Resolution, p.7) "In addition to the tendency of some activists to counterpose direct action to political action...there is an ultra-left avoidance of both by some black nationalist intellectuals. These intellectuals reject the perspective of the American revolution and see victory coming only through the struggle of the non-white people



outside the United States."

We are now given a black nationalist tendency, by this same document, which is not proletarian, but petty-bourgeois, and not progressive but ultra-left. The nice catch-all concept of "progressive and revolutionary" black nationalism falls apart at the first step. On the West coast we even find a reactionary nationalist grouping, wedded to black individual initiative and taking the form before the election of the "Afro-Americans for Goldwater." Instead of accepting all those who consider themselves black nationalists as either progressive or revolutionary (in the proletarian sense), we are forced to examine the ideology of each group as it is put forward and analyze the group's relative progressiveness by its program and composition rather than by its label.

Let us first take a look at how the majority viewed the Black Muslims in the 1963 resolution, "Youth and the Black Revolt":

"The Muslims are a well disciplined cadre organization deeply rooted in the slums of the Northern cities, potentially revolutionary in both leadership and rank-and-file. Their religion is more political than obscurantist. They are not primarily oriented towards nor rooted in the Southern Negro struggle.

"The fierce and intransigent rejection of American society and values, the urge to separate, geographically or otherwise, from that society, and the orientation toward building a black power base independent of white (capitalist) society spell serious trouble ahead for the status quo in America, and cast a revolutionary shadow on future events.

"...The Muslims themselves are grappling with, and have not yet solved, the problem of combining their long-range view of breaking free from U.S. domination and contributing to the downfall of U.S. power with the immediate struggles which more clearly occupy the attention of the black masses."

Today but a year after this analysis was written about an organization, "potentially revolutionary in both leadership and rank-and-file" whose orientation "cast a revolutionary shadow on future events," not a word is heard from the majority about them. The only reference we hear today is an indirect one stating that Malcolm X split from Elijah Muhammed. Everything was not quite as smooth and sweet in the Muslims as last year's resolution would have had us believe; this year's complete ignoring of them is proof of that. When the majority's prophetic analysis of the Muslims was being written the lines of division were already deeply drawn in the Muslims. The "black power base independent of white (capitalist) society" was and is anything but independent of capitalist society. The perspective of such a concept is the establishment of a black ruling class. Their orientation towards separation was, as a leadership, a left wing cover to turn their backs on the necessity of struggle. It was the other side of the philosophical coin, rationalizing their attempts to establish themselves as part of a black ruling class. The contradictory nature of the Muslims lay in the fact that the ability of the leadership to establish itself as part of the black ruling class was dependent upon its ability to gather a mass support. Its ability to gain a mass support depended upon its independence and opposition to the white power structure. Herein lies the contradiction of the oppressed middle class: their hatred of their oppressors and their simultaneous struggle to rise above the working class.

The Muslims were divided by their own self-contradictions, because militants opposed to the system and desiring to really fight it were attracted to their banner by the all-sided verbal attacks against white domination. The hierarchical structure that Elijah Muhammed and his immediate coterie set up to protect themselves did not make the Muslims a viable organization to promote the struggle. Thus came the split with Malcolm X.

This is what the present Draft Resolution says of Malcolm X:

"The failure of the capitalist class to give any real concessions has led such leaders as Malcolm X to conclude that the present system cannot and will not grant equality. Since his break with Elijah Muhammed, Malcolm X has developed more explicitly revolutionary ideas and is attempting to project a translation of these ideas into action. He has uncompromisingly exposed the hypocrisy and bankruptcy of the ruling class, and has attacked its political parties. He has stressed the need for self defense, for solidarity with the colonial revolution, and for struggle against the entire American white power structure. His recognition of the successes of revolution abroad has led him to express an interest in socialism and to state explicitly that under capitalism equality cannot be achieved. His analysis leads him to see the limits of actions to reform the system, but his ideas are still developing and he has not yet formulated a clear program of struggle to change the system."

If one compared this analysis with the analysis of the Muslims one would think that Malcolm's new development is really a step backward because the Black Muslims' orientation "cast a revolutionary shadow on future events" while there's no similar casting for Malcolm X. In reality these are not analyses at all, but simply a compilation of radical superlatives. However, with basic common sense comrades generally understand that the split with Elijah Muhammed was a positive move.

Let us briefly look at the other parts of the "analysis" of Malcolm X. Malcolm X "has uncompromisingly exposed the hypocrisy and bankruptcy of the ruling class." How does this differ from the Black Muslims who carry on a "fierce and intransigent rejection of American society and values." Malcolm X is expressing many revolutionary and socialist ideas, supports self-defense, and defends the colonial revolutions. How does this differentiate him from many of those ultra-left black nationalists who consider themselves revolutionists and socialists, also support self-defense and also support the colonial revolution but who are not interested in intervening in the struggle in this country. Now we have hit the key to the question.

The key is how do Malcolm X's actions compare with his words. What forces does he represent? How and to what extent are they working and organizing in the struggle? In order to understand his real potential (which may be very great) we must cut through the phrasemongering which is repeated in one variation or another every time there is a positive development in the Negro struggle and we must receive some balanced appraisals of what is going on.

Should we be critical? Yes. Should we be careful? Yes. One has a tendency to lose one's sense of direction continually jumping on and off band wagons. A political resolution is not supposed to be a resumé of all the nice ideas that we hope are developing, but a weapon by which we can understand developments in the struggle as they take place.

It is essential to bring our political conceptions as close to reality as possible and we must dispose of these glittering, all-encompassing, vague generalities.

During the September, 1962 Plenum SNCC occupied all the time devoted to the Negro struggle. The majority advanced the image of SNCC as being an incipient revolutionary leadership driven forward by the logic of the struggle towards revolutionary conclusions. (And revolutionary conclusions for those devoted towards organizing the masses for change is qualitatively different than for those who expound revolutionary theory from their armchair.) The people involved in SNCC were and are pulled by many forces of society, the power of the Federal government, pacifism, realignment, personal stakes in this society as well as the desire to work for a change. The masses have not risen to the extent and shown their power to the extent that a mass type leadership like SNCC can easily and as a grouping break away from illusions in the system. This does not in the least take away from the important groundwork that they are laying, but it certainly does not make SNCC ripe to be recruited to revolutionary socialism. The majority's infatuation with SNCC ended rather rapidly as more verbose (if less effective) black radicals came to the fore without SNCC blossoming forth into the carrier of the revolutionary banner.

Why has SNCC been relegated from such a position of prime importance as an incipient revolutionary leadership to a short sentence placed alongside of the NAACP, CORE and SCLC? For conscious revolutionaries there must be an explanation for this development. What has happened to SNCC? What new factors have intervened? What are SNCC's limitations and why? If it didn't live up to the expectations of the majority what have we learned that can be applied to other organizations so we don't make similar errors? Once again the questions go unanswered.

It should be clear by now that a grouping having the label nationalist or revolutionary or socialist is not automatically sufficient to meet the need for a leadership by the black masses. The proletarian nature of the black masses demands a leadership which is rooted in and understands the problems of these masses; it demands a conscious black working class leadership. This certainly does not mean the Negro middle class cannot play a significant role in the leadership. But because of the essentially proletarian nature of the Negro people in this country and because of the nature of the system which is oppressing the Negro people as a whole, the middle class elements must tie their destiny to the black working class in order to become part of the revolutionary struggle. The nature of the oppression against the Negro people as a whole forces the middle class Negro to totter always close to the edge of plunging into the working class. Even on his side of the economic line, the middle class Negro more often than not is forced to live in the ghetto side by side with his working class brother. All of this makes it much easier for sections of the black middle class to join with the black working class in the struggle against exploitation. There is, however, no guarantee that the black petty-bourgeois will not shift under various pressures (pro-capitalist, anti-working class) which are continually battering the middle class in its peculiar position between the two great classes of modern society. It must be clearly understood that the existence of the middle class is tied to a struggle to get away from the working class to a better material existence. The petty-bourgeois therefore often brings contradictory concepts and attitudes into the struggle with him. These contradictions must be taken into account by Marxist revolutionaries

in evaluating the struggle.

In their own consistent manner, the majority leadership discusses, in the Draft Resolution on the Negro Struggle, potentially one of the most important new organizations in the Negro struggle, the Freedom Now Party in Michigan. To understand this force, it would seem necessary to dissect it politically and attempt to see, from this, its direction.

The Draft Resolution contends with this task thusly: (p. 5) "To realize this potential (of making Labor support of the Democrats untenable and providing a powerful example to the entire working class) is a task of great proportions and will require the development of a convincing program and a mass following."

What is a "convincing program" and what are the forces in the FNP which can develop it? Obviously, the comrades of the majority leadership feel that the FNP doesn't quite as yet have a "convincing program." Where does it lack and why? These basic questions go unanswered.

The following brief review is not meant to be a total picture, but rather it is meant to give some idea of the forces and problems of the FNP.

The main base of the FNP is among the black middle class, that is among various professionals, teachers, artists, writers, doctors, lawyers and students. There is also a working class section, containing within it a number of auto workers. The base of the organization numbers probably within 50 and 100 with an immediate periphery extending to possibly 300.

At the time of the November election there was a dispute in the FNP between those who had moved more clearly away from the two-party structure and those who had not. This dispute expressed itself with the FNP not endorsing a presidential candidate, but with a number of individuals putting out a leaflet for Johnson and another section of the FNP, notably Rev. Cleage and Milton Henry, coming out in support of DeBerry. The contradiction in the FNP expressed itself earlier by the FNP not running a candidate in the 13th Congressional District against Diggs, an entrenched Negro Democratic party hack.

Cleage's taking up of the banner of DeBerry in this election does not mean that he has taken up the cudgel for revolutionary socialism. Cleage expressed the other side of his contradictions earlier this year.

(Illustrated News, May 4, 1964) "Will the Negro ever be assimilated in America and racial conflict ended? The answer is an unequivocal 'NO': THE NEGRO WILL NEVER BE ASSIMILATED AND RACIAL CONFLICT END! (emphasis original)

"When the Negro realizes that his assimilation into American life is completely impossible, and that he will be involved in racial conflict forever, he can then clearly define the goals and methods in his continuing struggle...The Negro must seek to develop a separate racial economy and social existence within the established political framework of American life...

"When the Negro has realistically re-stated his goals in objective terms, and no longer seeks to lose his physical identity through 'assimilation,' nor his psycho-social identity through either Christian brotherhood or revolutionary marxian economics, only then will he be in a

position to TAKE THE NEXT STEP (emphasis original) by undertaking a comprehensive program of independent black political action and independent black cooperative economic action."

Rev. Cleage is expressing here the common trait of seeing history and judging history by the apparent relation of forces today. He does not see class conflict as the basic motive force nor does he see the Negro people as the vanguard of a larger struggle, the class struggle. This non-class and anti-class approach gives rise to dangerous and disorienting positions.

Towards the beginning of this year the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) and the Detroit Educational Association (DEA) were vying for sole bargaining rights for Detroit teachers. The DEA presented itself as a "professional association" and the DFT presented itself as a union defending the right of teachers to strike.

The May 4, 1964 issue of the Illustrated News contained an editorial written by Doris Cleage, a teacher, entitled "Negro Teachers cannot support either Union." In it she states: "It just looks like the Board is fighting the DEA and DFT. That fight is on the surface only. The real fight will begin when Negroes stand up and insist upon their rightful share of the education offered in this community for which we pay."

Neither the DFT nor the DEA have an adequate program for dealing with the problems of Negro education, therefore she comes to the conclusion that Negro teachers should oppose the union. The importance and difficulty of bringing teachers to the point of union organization was not considered. The possible reprisals by the Board of Education if the union should be defeated were not considered. The establishing of an important power base by which teachers themselves could affect conditions in the schools was not considered. The importance of the protection of an official union in the organization of a militant black caucus was not considered. The only consideration given was the pseudo-radical "they're all white and we're black and that's the beginning and end." Not only did the Illustrated News oppose the teachers union, but in an earlier editorial during a period when the DFT threatened a strike, Doris Cleage proposed that Negro teachers scab against the union.

(Illustrated News, April 13, 1964) "Negro teachers should draw up a list of demands for the DFT just as the DFT draws them up for the Board. We should withdraw support from the DFT and cross their picket lines on the day of the strike. If we help the DFT to the power position of sole bargaining agent, they will have even less reason to listen to us than they have now. They need us now but most of us are acting like we need them. Let's stop crawling on our bellies and asking for favors! Nobody ever got freedom and equality by acting like a slave. We should vote for no union at all and see if they can figure out what they can do about Negroes problems in Detroit schools before its time for another election."

Instead of attempting to make the union into a real vehicle for the needs of the teachers of Detroit, for the needs of Negro education, Doris Cleage writes off unions as "white" organizations, as enemy organizations. And what would the penalty of such a program, generalized, be for the Negro struggle? By putting the interest of the Negro in opposition to the interests of the rest of the working class, it would turn the most exploited section of the working class, in its desperate attempt to pull itself out of its super-exploited position, from the advance guard of the



struggle into the shock troops of attacks on the class organizations of the proletariat, the trade unions. The interests of the Negro people would be dangerously and gravely damaged as would the interests of the entire working class in such a conflict. The program which Cleage presented is anti-working class and all its pseudo-radical cover does not change this.

These contradictory tendencies, anti-union, pro-union (auto workers), anti-Johnson, pro-Johnson exist in the FNP. It is still a moving, viable organization with no clear, even line of development formed. There is, however, no guarantee that "the logic of the struggle" will counteract the many anti-working class prejudices and petty-bourgeois aspirations that exist in the FNP. That will depend on the ability of the conscious working class forces (including our black comrades) to work effectively and it will depend on the ups and downs of the class struggle which cause individuals to become optimistic or pessimistic towards the working class.

### The Civil Rights Movement and a Program

Today the civil rights movement has reached a temporary impasse. In the North the guerilla-type tactics which once characterized the method of operations of action oriented groups has pretty much outplayed its role, though in some areas such tactics still can play a role in beginning an organization. The real problems of the Negro community cannot be solved by attacks on discrimination in this or that restaurant or employment practices in this or that business by a handful of people. This has become apparent. There has been, in most areas, a decline in those organizations oriented solely to these guerilla type tactics. The massive demonstrations around education (boycotts and civil disobedience) and the rent strikes in various major cities were the beginnings of the new stage in the North. There were no organizations which were capable of sustaining or advancing mass participation on a broader program. The result of the frustration of the black masses was expressed in the riots which swept eight or nine cities in the United States. The old direct action organizations such as CORE are trying to orient to the fact that the old tactics are completely inadequate. Though there is still usage of these tactics in some areas, organizations such as CORE are generally either declining because of this problem or trying to reorient towards mass organization. For example, the New York Times of November 24, 1964 carried an interview with James Farmer, executive secretary of CORE. In this article Farmer made quite clear an important shift in CORE policy to try to organize mass organizations based in the day-to-day life of the Negro Community.

Corresponding to this decline of the old style direct action organizations who demanded much individual activity without gaining important results is the decline of the ultra-left black nationalist student organizations. Comrade Barnes on his national tour reported that most of the student black nationalist organizations had either disappeared or dropped into relative inactivity. This too is caused by a lack of a program which could sustain and build a movement for struggle. We will undoubtedly see from time to time more of these organizations developing, and they too will be faced with the problem: adapt to a program of realistic struggle or die.

What kind of program is needed? What kind of program should we project for the Negro struggle? Firstly, we must propose and push, in both

our general propaganda and in our intervention, for the unification of the various militant civil rights groups around a civil rights-class struggle program. The civil rights organizations must absorb, in the economic interest of the Negro people, a basic class program into the general civil rights program. Besides dealing with and organizing around the issues of police brutality, housing conditions and rents, and discrimination in public establishments, the civil rights movement must integrate class question into its program. This should include such points as 30 hour week for 40 hours pay, end to speed-up, unemployment compensation at union wages for the duration of unemployment, public works projects at union wages and opposition to such legislation as the right to work laws. We must propose the development of black unemployed organizations affiliated with the civil rights movement. We must propose propaganda along class lines aimed at the trade union movement, including challenges to it to organize its own unemployed ranks. We must propose unemployed demonstrations organized by the civil rights movement aimed at the union movement regarding discrimination, 30 for 40, overtime work, and a slow-down regarding work standards in the factories. Such an approach carries with it the strategic concept of the basic identity of interests between the white rank and file worker and the Negro struggle. It singles out the bureaucracy as a common enemy, and cuts across a certain dangerous tendency to identify the trade unions with the leadership, a tendency which could lead to a union-busting attitude. We must propose demonstrations by the civil rights movement aimed at the government which include besides the basic civil rights demands such questions as 30 for 40, compensation for the duration of unemployment, public works projects, etc. Lastly, and extremely importantly, we must propose propagandistical-ly and where we have contact with the movement that black political action integrate this class approach and that it should aim consciously and programatically at the subsequent development of a labor party.

This program is a general program and is not meant to be applied everywhere to the same degree and in the same manner. This depends upon the degree of organization and consciousness in any one area. However, this is the general direction our program for civil rights must take, for it is on the basis of such a program that the Negro struggle will play its historic role as the advance guard of the working class.

### Practical Problems

The first part of this article shows the completely inadequate picture of the Negro struggle that is presented by the document. The majority did not even cover the direct action organizations in its analysis. What is the cause of these striking inadequacies? The errors that are made are consistent. They are not accidental quirks.

The development of cadres and leaders to fill the ranks of the Trotskyist movement is the immediate task of the YSA. The program of the Trotskyist movement is the product of the victories and defeats of the world working class as developed by the most conscious of those who participated in and led those struggles. The practical problem we face is to train comrades to be able to link up past experience of the working class with reality today. The YSA is made up primarily of youth who have been won to the socialist banner through a conflict of ideas. Those who have been recruited by ideas without having deep previous experience in the mass movement are easily influenced by words and startling deeds. For instance, the majority could at first see no wrong in SNCC (until

the more vociferous of the radical black nationalists came to the fore, criticizing SNCC on the way) because the majority, bolstered by only a thin structure of ideas unsupported by the firm reality of immersion in the struggle, felt naked and awed before the courageous work of SNCC. Then the majority leadership fell over itself in supporting and defending everything that the Muslims were because of the radical criticism of society that they made. The majority was unable to see the importance of the contradictions in the Muslims because of the blinding glare of radical words. The majority did not have the filter of reality through which to view the glare of radical words from the Muslims, and consequently were blinded. However, to the Negro struggle itself, to the ~~mass~~ of the Negro people, the inadequacies and incorrectnesses in the program of the leadership means defeats or serious hindrances to the struggle, defeats that words do not change. The Trotskyist movement must build mass leaders, revolutionary leaders whose lives and whose understanding is a reflex of the needs of the masses. A leadership must be built which is able to integrate in concrete fashion the lessons of yesterday with the concrete problems of today, including the problem of evaluating new leaderships and programs in the struggle. Those who do not have deep experience and roots directly in the mass movement are incapable of understanding the needs of the movement and the failings of its present leaderships, nor their strengths.

The most essential and basic demands of understanding the struggle pose the need to aim at intervention in the mass movement. It is impossible for young comrades to understand the relationship of past experience to concrete action today without intervening. The older, more experienced comrades cannot transfer their experience to the newer comrades, but they can guide, work with and educate newer comrades as these new comrades go through their own experience in the mass movement.

The ability to understand and analyze the struggle is but one part of the development of a revolutionary leadership. The other part, inextricably bound up with the first part, is the ability to relate to and gain the respect of militants in the Negro and trade union struggles. The process of intervening to learn is the very same process of establishing ourselves as dedicated militants. The process of becoming able to understand is the process of taking our rightful place in the heart of the struggle of the masses. In order to see the struggle from the eyes of the masses one must feel the struggle from the place of the masses. Comrades who feel and know the trade union movement are primarily those who are the trade unionists. The same is essentially true of the civil rights movement: those who understand are those who are involved. We must learn to weigh new problems and adversaries of the struggle with an instinct that can never come from books. We must learn to win over the masses, and to learn means to intervene, and to intervene means to begin to establish ourselves among the masses. We must be able to win over those who have been hardened by the struggle and who demand "cash on the line." The working masses are not intellectuals to be won over by theories and abstractions. They will be won over by a revolutionary leadership which they have seen in action and learned to trust. We must be able to answer those who say: "What have you done? Talk is cheap. Put up or shut up." These attitudes by workers come out of hard experience. Those who have not been involved, those who don't know the details of the people they are fighting with or the enemies they are fighting against are completely incompetent to lead the struggle. Students who come into our ranks must learn our theory and connect it with today's reality through personal experience. To orient idealistic youth towards the sole

task of reading books and selling militants is to take potential mass leaders and turn them into pedagogues.

The following is how the Trotskyist movement approached the problem in 1938 in a resolution. The general approach is applicable to the civil rights movement as well as trade union work.

"The party must select from its younger members those qualified, talented and promising elements who can be trained for leadership. The road of student youth to the party leadership must not and cannot be from the classroom and college directly into the leading committees. They must be sent without high-sounding titles into working class districts for day-to-day work among the proletariat. The young student must serve an apprenticeship in the workers' movement before he can be considered a candidate for the National Committee.

"...To achieve power, the revolutionary party must be deeply rooted among the workers, it must be composed predominantly of workers and enjoy the respect and confidence of the workers.

"Without such a composition it is impossible to build a programmatically firm and disciplined organization which can accomplish these grandiose tasks...

"...Above all the student and unemployed youth must be sent into industry and involved in the life and struggles of the workers. Systematic exceptional and persistent efforts must be made to assist the integration of our unemployed youth into industry despite the restricted field of employment.

"Lacking connection with the workers' movement through failure or inability to get jobs in industry or membership in unions, the student and unemployed youth are subject to terrific pressure from the petty-bourgeois world...

"These student elements can transform the program of the Fourth International from the pages of books and pamphlets into living reality for themselves and for the party only by integrating themselves into the workers' movement and breaking irrevocably with their previous environment...."

### Repercussions of Our Practical Problems

The inability to integrate the experiences and program of the Trotskyist movement with today's concrete reality has a number of affects on the attitudes and actions of comrades. Without a clear understanding of the role of the working class and our role there arises a tendency to substitute various forces in the struggle for the conscious proletarian vanguard. This is, in essence, what the Draft Resolution does in its uncritical appraisals of the new forces in the Negro struggle. The most general expression of this tendency is through a variant of the concept that the logic of the struggle pushes various rising militant groupings automatically towards revolutionary (implying conscious proletarian revolutionary) conclusions. Further, this theory leads to the concept that these various groupings and leaderships can arrive at proletarian revolutionary conclusions simply through the pressures of the objective logic of the struggle. There is a very real contradiction between this approach and the Leninist conception of the necessity for a conscious revolutionary vanguard. If the struggle itself automatically throws up conscious proletarian revolutionary leaderships, what is the real need for a separate party?

This developing contradiction has two apparently opposite repercussions among our ranks. The first and most important today is the de-

velopment of an extremely rigid internal discipline. In a revolutionary organization discipline is tied to the objective needs of the situation, to our fractions which operate in mass work, to public discussion of the program and policies of the organization, and to general tasks necessary to maintain the organization. However because of a growing tendency not to consider our intervention as vital ("The logic of the struggle" is driving the most militant sections of the civil rights movement to revolutionary conclusions anyway) there is an extreme internalizing of our development. Because comrades believe in the need for a party as well as tending towards the theory of "the logic of the struggle" one finds at least a temporary resolution of the contradiction through an intense and rigid internal life isolated from outside organizations. The YSA tends to become the complete world and existence for comrades who have little or no contact with the direct struggle. Small matters of internal functioning such as lateness to meetings (which is, of course, not to be condoned) is blown completely out of proportion because the details of internal functioning assume such an immense proportion of political life. At times this development reaches the point where outside work is considered the selling of our newspaper and the passing out of our leaflets.

The second repercussion develops as comrades who in a healthy manner feel it necessary to intervene in the civil rights movement are faced with this contradiction between the theory of the need for a vanguard party and the theory of "the logic of the struggle." Because they tend to see an automatic development of a revolutionary leadership from the objective development of the struggle also, these comrades tend to feel that a separate organization of the character of the YSA is unnecessary. These comrades shy away from presenting our program or recruiting to the YSA. They feel our task is to merge with the up and coming revolutionary leaderships as they develop instead of trying to win these new forces to our banner. Under these circumstances one finds instead of overdeveloped rigidity in discipline, an undermining of discipline, because the maintenance of a firm, independent disciplined organization seems unimportant or even sectarian. No matter what its theoretical and apparent organizational form, the concept of the automatic development of a revolutionary leadership through the "logic of the struggle" ultimately denies the role for which we are indispensable, i.e., the constant introduction of transitional demands into the struggle, the organization around these demands, the natural introduction of consistently revolutionary ideas into the struggle, and the building of a consistently revolutionary leadership.

The basis upon which intervention in the mass struggle extends our understanding and ability to lead is Marxist theory. On one hand, comrades cannot learn to understand the struggle without intervention, and on the other hand, we cannot understand the struggle without theory. The process of becoming a conscious revolutionary is the process of combining serious intervention in the struggle with a growing understanding of the vanguard role of the revolutionary party and its program. The theory of "the logic of the struggle" leads to the conclusion that it is not important that we begin to intervene, that the movement is automatically throwing up a revolutionary leadership; or, as the other side of the coin, that when we do intervene we simply latch on to those forces which are moving leftward and do not attempt to build the conscious revolutionary movement, the Trotskyist movement.



### Immediate Tasks

(The numbered sections that follow are being proposed as amendments to the Political Resolution. What is already written in that resolution is not incorrect, but the document as a whole is inadequate for a correct perspective.)

There is a great discontent today in the Negro community, in the direct action organizations and in the black political organizations. There is a continuing search for new ways and new programs of struggle. In the trade union movement there exist important signs of a turmoil of unorganized opposition among the ranks. However, in neither of these arenas is there any approximation of the recruiting potential that exists among students. This is a fact that no one interested in building the movement can ignore. We must win as many youth as we can to revolutionary socialism. This arena must continue to be our tactical center for the present.

I. Taking into account the need for campus work, we must orient as many of our Negro comrades as possible to do long term work in civil rights. They must become intimately familiar and involved with direct action organizations and the various political groupings on the black left. They must develop deep roots in the civil rights movement, building their own and the YSA's reputation as dedicated, serious participants in the struggle.

White comrades who are not immersed in other aspects of our work should also attempt to do serious work in civil rights. Though this is not of the priority of having our Negro comrades involved, we have found that white comrades can also do fruitful, if more limited, work. For example, in Ann Arbor white U. of M. comrades worked quite closely with and in the nationalist oriented organization DAC (Direct Action Committee) In Detroit, white comrades from the party played a positive role in helping the FNP to form and many white as well as Negro comrades have helped, to a limited extent, with the FNP's election campaign. White comrades have been able to function quite freely in many direct action groupings. All of this points to the fact that there is no pre-determined reason why white comrades cannot do fruitful civil rights work. A perspective of the complete severing of relations between white and black militants which would make fruitful work impossible for white comrades is an unnecessarily pessimistic view of the development of the class struggle. At any rate, it does not affect the fact that white comrades today are in a position to intervene fruitfully, gaining good experience and contacts and building the YSA as a serious organization in the eyes of civil rights militants.

In doing this type of work, white comrades must be extremely careful of pushing themselves and their ideas too fast. They must learn that there are times Negroes can speak while whites should be silent. The apprenticeship of a white is much more arduous than for a Negro comrade, and in a sense never ends, for the white must always be very sensitive of his position.

II. In intervening in the civil rights organizations (or in the trade union movement or any mass movement), we must rid ourselves of the concept that we go in simply in order to recruit. This kind of attitude is fine for some student groups, discussion groups and for doing opponents work in hostile political organizations. However, because of this manner of operations in civil rights the YSA has in some areas developed a reputation for mercenary intervention and a lack of real interest in

building the civil rights movement. In order to win the best militants, to spread as much sympathy for our ideas as possible and to build our reputation as a legitimate part of the movement we must establish our functioning in the civil rights movement (or any other movement where we intervene) as a dependable, consistent force. Comrades who intervene must become among the best and most dedicated militants. To go into such organizations with the sole purpose of injecting our ideas artificially into the functioning of a group, creates a hostile sentiment towards us from the best of the militants who are serious about building a mass civil rights movement. Operating as a part of the movement will allow the YSA to gain many fruitful contacts and will establish us as brothers in the struggle.

III. There has been a disturbing attitude arising to one extent or another among many YSA'ers. There is a kind of intellectual snobbery, a looking down on those "who don't have the higher understanding we have." This attitude must be thoroughly educated against. We speak to those in the civil rights movement, or the trade union movement or any movement, as equals. We have a lot to learn from these people, and we never stop learning. The ideas, the feelings, the needs of the masses are never stagnant or stationary. In working in a movement we must listen closely to the ideas of those militants with whom we are working, evaluating their ideas without haughty airs. Comrades' intellectual snobbery stems from the relative isolation of the YSA from the struggle, and it can be assured that this attitude will come to a quick halt as comrades enter the struggle and their simplistic conceptions are ground down in the complexities of reality.

IV. In our intervention in the civil rights movement (and in any mass movement) we must always be conscious of our special role. In our work in the struggle, we must in an unforced fashion present our ideas. As legitimate and dedicated participants in the struggle our ideas will receive an important hearing in the civil rights movement. We must through our consciousness of the past experiences of the class struggle organize militants around concrete programs of action, transitional programs of action. It is in this way that we as an organization can and must recruit militants to our ideas, and build the YSA as a force to contend with in the civil rights movement.

V. As comrades graduate or leave school they must be consciously confronted with the need to develop serious roots in the mass movement. Those comrades who are not in school and are involved in marginal employment should be directed towards jobs where trade union work is possible, preferably in the mass production industry. More or less permanent floating around in the student milieu, the development of the "professional student," creates unserious habits with regard to building roots in the mass movement. There arises a petty-bourgeois fear of being tied down. Comrades who are constantly exposed to this milieu tend to become comfortable in the insulated world of ideas. Often they become so comfortable that they balk at entering the cold harsh world to work with ordinary people in struggle, a task which demands constant attention and no respite. We must be conscious of this problem and must orient those comrades not involved at school into trade union work where they can lay important bases for influence among the ranks.

VI. The YSA should have periodic discussion bulletins in which comrades in various areas share lessons and information regarding their work in the mass movement. There should be regular reports at local meetings

from those comrades involved in mass work in order to try to bring comrades outside their arena into as close a contact as possible with developments and the immediate lessons that can be drawn from them.

### Postscript

1) At times when the question of our intervening in the civil rights or trade union movements is raised, some comrades reply: "But we are doing civil rights and trade union work. In our propaganda, in the dissemination of our ideas we are educating about the Negro struggle and the working class." Indeed this is true; we are doing civil rights work and trade union work through our propaganda. This however is not the question. The question is whether this is sufficient, whether we must do serious work in the mass movement now. It is unnecessary to recapitulate the ideas presented in the main body of this document, but it should be clear that what is proposed is on a qualitatively different level than general propaganda, performing an entirely different function. Mass work is intended to root us as part of the direct struggle; propaganda is intended to win recruits from the direct struggle and from general contacts. Neither one can substitute for the other. Both are necessary.

2) When the question of intervening in the trade union movement is raised, a frequent objection has been that it is difficult or impossible to obtain jobs or hold them in mass industry. On the face of it this objection is not valid. Thousands of youth have gotten into factories; there are many young workers with one, two or more years seniority with new workers coming into the plants all the time. During periods when hiring is not being done on a large scale, an organized effort to find opportunities can succeed. What is necessary first however, is conviction of the necessity of such a move. All else follows from that. The question of course is not simply getting comrades jobs in mass industry but of making trade union work and contact with workers into political work. There are numbers of comrades who are working in mass industry and trade union situations today, but on the whole they are involved on a personal basis without any organizational or political direction. All of this must be changed along the lines of the amendments to the political resolution.

In the same 1938 resolution: "Systematic, exceptional and persistent efforts must be made to assist the integration of our unemployed youth into industry despite the restricted field of employment." (emphasis added)