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POLITICAL REPORT TO THE YSA NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

By Ginny Hildebrand

The general line of this report was adopted by the National Committee plenum on June 7, 1975

A wide layer of young workers have been picking up radical attitudes in the past couple of years. This was documented in a survey released last year by a sociologist named Daniel Yankelovich. This survey confirmed for the rulers what we already understood: that the radical social and political attitudes of campus youth would make their way into broader social layers -- and that these ideas would help stamp the character of the coming American socialist revolution.

This process continues. But something new and very important has been added. Now we're seeing not only a quantitative spreading of radical ideas among young, Black, and women workers, as documented in the Yankelovich survey -- but the beginnings of a changed outlook and attitude among workers as producers and as a class. To put it more directly, we can say that a radicalization in the working class is just getting underway.

Class consciousness develops through real life experiences. And it is the real lives of a broad section of American workers that are changing -- and will change even more dramatically in the future. I hope comrades have had a chance to read the Socialist Workers party National Committee draft political resolution, aptly titled "The Decline of American Capitalism: Prospects for a Socialist Revolution." We should take the time to study it over the summer, because it's going to be a valuable tool for the YSA's discussions.

It explains that this new situation is being brought about by the economic crisis gripping this country.

We've been seeing the finale of this boom for the past few years in inflation, recessions, and economic shocks and shortages.

The industries that were beginning to be hit with the recession a few years ago, such as auto and construction, are being hit even harder now. The continued layoffs in auto, for instance, have jacked up Detroit's unemployment rate to 23 percent. And the recession has spread to other industries.

This is dramatically seen in the so-called crisis of the cities, where in order to balance the budget without defaulting on interest payments to the banks, social services and city workers' jobs are being slashed. Just in New York City alone, 67,000 city employees are probably going to be thrown out of work. This is in a city where unemployment is already at 10.8 percent.

The objective fact of this crisis is that it's no longer just Blacks, or young, or women who are getting hurt, although they get it first and hardest. All kinds of workers face layoffs. And if it's not layoffs, it's speedup, or rent increases, or meat and oil shortages, or deteriorating medical care, or erosion of pensions through inflation, or crumbling public transportation, or unbreathable air -- or, for many, all of these things at once.

Many workers are beginning to feel that this downturn isn't just temporary. Their hopes for a decent life, a good job, some security and a better life for their children are being crushed. For instance, a Gallup Poll in February indicated that 50 percent of those interviewed think that the United States is heading toward a 1930s-type depression.

This stepped-up attack on workers as a class takes place in the context of other radicalizing forces -- the social protest movements, Watergate and all this has implied, the defeat of U. S. imperialism in Vietnam, and a sense of rising entitlements shared by a broad layer of working people.

We should remember that the new Bill of Rights for Working People is not just something that the Socialist Workers campaign printed up to match the objective needs of workers. It's a program of struggle around many of the very rights -- the entitlements -- that workers consciously identify as theirs, or think should be theirs: the right to free education, secure retirement, decent medical care, and the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Fifty years ago, these were the dreams of American workers. Now, American workers believe that they are entitled to them.

You see, the American rulers bought the labor quiescence of the past quarter of a century, but now they're going to begin to see the payoff -- but it's not the one they'd planned on.

A big sign post announced this changing consciousness. April 26 was an historic action -- the first national march on Washington for jobs. And then also the June 4 demonstration in New York. These mass workers' mobilizations are important precedents.

What perspectives do the capitalists have to extricate themselves from the objective crisis and turn back the radicalization? Their options are very limited.

We can anticipate more military adventures -- the

Mayaguez incident is the most recent example.

We will see the government continuing policies to drive down the real wages of workers and speed up production in order to maintain an edge over the government's imperialist competitors.

These economic attacks will lead to attacks on the rights of American workers not only in the economic sphere, but also in regard to their human and democratic rights.

These perspectives do not provide a long-range solution for U. S. imperialism, but that's just the point -- there is none. The capitalists might try to put on a "New Deal" image. But the big social reforms of that period -- social security, unemployment insurance -- this scale of reforms can't be repeated. Some concessions, yes, but nothing long-range or fundamental.

Instead, there will be ups and downs, shocks and shortages, instability and fluctuation -- this is different from the previous period. And it's just beginning to produce a new consciousness in the working class. The world capitalist economy has turned a corner and the American working class is right behind it. And the capitalists have no perspective for fundamentally reversing this.

If this is true, then the period ahead is one of further developing class consciousness and new struggles of the working class and its allies.

This is not to say that we should predict tremendous social upheavals in the immediate future. What we're talking about is a longer historical period -- but one that holds revolutionary potential.

If the deepening economic crisis leads to greater class consciousness, it will also eventually give rise to class polarization. Right-wing and reactionary political forces using radical-sounding rhetoric will play on the workers' and petty-bourgeoisie's fears, insecurities, and their most backward attitudes, including racism.

In the period ahead the working class must learn, as Trotsky said, to think socially and act politically. They've got to see the big social and political questions facing all the exploited and oppressed as issues of direct concern to them. And they must politically break with the capitalist parties whose stranglehold prevents them from finding the necessary political solutions.

The Socialist Workers party will be discussing this new political situation and their tasks over the summer and at the Oberlin convention.

It's an important discussion for the YSA to absorb in preparation for our own convention. We'll have a better framework for the special job ahead of us -- and that's to figure out what it all means for youth.

The Socialist Workers party resolution only briefly discusses the student movement. This is because wider arenas of the class struggle are opening up for their work. The campuses, on the other hand, are the YSA's special arena for political activity.

Our strategic orientation has always been to:

1. lead masses of young people in struggles that link up with the workers and oppressed nationalities;
2. defeat our opponents and win hegemony in the student movement; and
3. help build the revolutionary party by winning young militants to the YSA and helping to train many of them as future cadres of the Socialist Workers party.

So it's the YSA's task to assess what will be the impact of this new period on students and the youth radicalization.

We need to take a step back and take another look at the student movement, where it's come from and where it's headed, and what this new period will mean for our "Red University" strategy.

I want to look back at some of the basic points we've made about the student movement, and then suggest some of the new things we have to take into account.

Strategy for Revolutionary Youth

A good way to start might be to restate the basic points of our "Red University" strategy. This was codified in the document, The Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International, which was adopted by the YSA, and submitted for discussion to the 1969 World Congress of the Fourth International later that year under the title, A Strategy for Revolutionary Youth.

The document has eight basic points:

1. We said that the youth radicalization was rooted in the crisis of world capitalism and the crisis of the traditional Stalinist and Social Democratic working class leaderships. It was inspired by the big issues of the class struggle as they had unfolded up to that time -- particularly the colonial revolution and the struggles of the oppressed nationalities.

2. Because of this, the youth radicalization is a worldwide phenomenon, appearing in the advanced capitalist countries, colonial countries, and workers states.

3. Students do not directly reflect their class origins, but more, their special temporary position as students. This special position positively facilitates their radicalization but also negatively makes them susceptible to impressionist and empiricist political ideologies and methods of struggle, including ultra-leftism.

4. That the tremendous expansion of education due to capitalism's need for an educated work force means that students have a much greater social weight. This is true because of the explosion in the size of the student population and the increasing number of students whose origins are working class and are headed for the working class after graduation.

This greater social weight means that their actions and attitudes can serve as catalysts to more powerful social forces who do have decisive social weight.

5. As institutions of capitalist rule, the high schools and colleges reflect class contradictions and the class

struggle in society as a whole.

6. The demands being raised by students go far beyond narrow student interests. By using the transitional method we can develop a program for students which will help link their demands and struggles to broader social questions and forces off campus.

7. That all the above features of the student and youth radicalization indicate that this radicalization is a permanent feature of the class struggle and provides important opportunities for revolutionary activists.

8. Flowing from this, the document said that it is a central task of the world Trotskyist movement to fight for and win the leadership of this youth radicalization. The best way to do that is for the sections of the Fourth International to encourage the development of independent revolutionary youth organizations.

The Composition of the U. S. Student Body

This document looked at the youth radicalization and student movement internationally. To see its significance for us today and in the future, I think we want to first take a good look at the character of the high school and campus student body as it's developed here in the U. S. -- its composition, attitudes, and its role as a social force.

First, its composition. Since World War II there's been a boom in higher education. The technological sophistication of capitalism has required a certain structural change in the work force. Masses of educated and highly skilled workers are needed. This dictated a structural change in higher education. Hundreds of public two-year and four-year public schools have been built. Today there are nearly ten million college students, and the majority of them come from working class families and are headed for the work force after graduation.

Also, as a result of campus struggles in the sixties and early seventies, there has been an increase in the number of college students from the oppressed nationalities.

Along with the nearly ten million college students, there are another twenty-three million junior and senior high school students. These students are not a select group of youth like college students. The overwhelming majority of working class and youth of oppressed national minorities between the ages of twelve and eighteen go to high school. They have stronger ties than most college students have with their working class parents and communities.

All this means that students in this country have a much greater social weight than in any other period in history -- just as it was outlined in A Strategy for Revolutionary Youth.

Our generation of students is also the most radical in this country's history. The Black struggle and the Vietnam War sparked a moral revulsion against the hypocrisy and brutality of this society. Through the struggles of the past decade, this moral revulsion has evolved into a

tremendously critical outlook towards many basic institutions of capitalist society. Millions of students have developed moral and personal values that run counter to the aims and workings of capitalism.

As a social force students have been the initiators and backbone of important social movements, including the antiwar movement and women's liberation movement. Black students were instrumental in many militant civil rights struggles in the South and later on campuses across the country.

These movements have helped to spread radical ideas and legitimize independent mass action as an avenue for social struggle. Their actions and attitudes have had an impact on every social layer.

Students have demonstrated a capacity for independent struggles as students, inspired by big issues and events in the world class struggle. But they have also demonstrated the limits of their social weight -- their ultimate dependence on more powerful social forces, especially the working class.

The quiescence of American labor has been a brake on the student movement. It has contributed to frustrations, often a certain bent toward ultraleftism and cynicism.

And the pace of events in other important arenas including the Vietnam War and Black struggle were major factors in the downturn of student activism in recent years.

New Factors

So important characteristics of the high school and college student body to keep in mind as we look at new developments are its composition, its radicalization, and its strengths and limitations as a social force.

There are four new factors that are particularly important for us to take note of. First, the economic crisis; second, the step-up in racist attacks; third, the potential for the political polarization of society; and fourth, the beginnings of a working class radicalization. All these are bound closely together.

First, we're beginning to see how the economic crisis will affect youth, both as students and as young workers.

In higher education we're now faced with what some euphemistically call a "no-growth policy." In reality, it's a policy of cutbacks -- this is new. After decades of expanding college enrollments, the percentage of college-age youth attending college dropped by 10 percent between 1969 and 1974.

Today's cutbacks flow from two sources. First, the capitalist education system has somewhat overproduced college graduates, especially in certain fields. It's not unusual to find a political science Ph.D. driving a cab, or a trained teacher behind a counter at a dry cleaning store.

Second, the economic crisis forces the rulers to cut back on government spending, meaning cutbacks in social services, and this includes education funds for both

colleges and high schools.

We should be clear that we're not talking about a trend towards fundamentally reversing the size of the college student body. Capitalism can't do it. It will continue to need a highly skilled and educated work force. The colleges will never go back to what they were before the war. But the changes and cutbacks that will take place are going to have a big impact on many young people.

A couple of years ago, two bourgeois "think tanks," the Carnegie Commission and the Council on Economic Development, issued reports recommending a direction for higher education that is now being implemented to a greater or lesser degree.

For private universities, these bourgeois strategists say that there's no reason to lower tuition and homogenize education in the name of egalitarianism. For the state and city schools, they say, tuitions should be raised to approach the same level as the private universities.

The Carnegie Commission calls for the building of 230-280 new two-year occupational colleges. It says these schools should handle 35-45 percent of all undergraduates by 1980.

But these schools are not designed to meet the aspirations of many youth for a fulfilling education. What's more, graduates with two years of college receive incomes on the average of only 14 percent more than high school graduates, while four-year graduates receive up to 50 percent more.

The tuition hikes in public colleges are coming on fast. The National Student Association estimates that tuitions will increase from 5 to 10 percent this fall.

What's more, the real value of government expenditures on higher education has begun to drop.

The real value of federal student loans dropped almost by a half from 1973 to 1974. And Ford proposes another \$122 million cutback in student federal financial assistance.

These policies are a recipe for a declining percentage of youth who can go to college, and the sharpest decline will be among the youth of the oppressed nationalities.

Not only do these policies crack down hardest on Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos, but also it's their special programs that are often slashed first -- Black studies, special recruitment programs, and Black and other minority teachers.

These cuts also affect high school students -- their futures are at stake. As tuitions rise, loans and scholarships are cut back, and open admissions in New York, along with other special programs are strangled, thousands of college-bound high school students will be cut out. So the struggles on the campuses will be intrinsically linked with the aspirations of high school students and can become joint struggles in defense of the right to an education.

Dramatic cuts are also coming in the high schools

themselves. Overcrowded classrooms, fewer teachers, less supplies, cuts in extracurricular programs, and school closings are in the works. Also, tracking will be intensified to discourage many high school students from going on to four-year colleges.

These cutbacks are particularly acute in the communities of the oppressed nationalities.

In addition, resistance to desegregation keeps Black youth locked into segregated schools where they get an inferior education from racist teachers in dilapidated and overcrowded schools, and graduate without many of the basic skills necessary to get a decent job.

Jobs

And what of the job perspectives in this depression, and the future recessions and depressions?

For college graduates, fewer and fewer find jobs commensurate with their education and training -- and some join unemployment lines. A New York Times article last week reported that 18 percent fewer college graduates this year will be finding jobs immediately after graduation.

For high school youth, many of the jobs provided by government programs will not be around this summer. In New York there will be 41,000 of these jobs as compared to 67,000 last summer. This stands alongside of an estimated 550,000 applicants. In Detroit there are 25,000 jobs for 100,000 applicants, and so on in cities across the country.

For the lucky ones that do find jobs the absolute maximum weekly income of \$50.40 won't enable them to save much money for college, or anything else.

Teenage unemployment stands at 20.4 percent, and almost double for Black and other minority youth. And some estimate that when you take into account all of the ghetto youth that have given up looking for a job, the real unemployment figure for minority youth probably reaches 80 percent.

As summer approaches, this situation has some people very worried. Visions of Watts in '65 and Detroit in '67 are conjured up in the minds of people like George Meany. He nervously told the Boston Globe last month, "We're not going to riot in the street. On the other hand, I'm sure that there are elements in the society that feel that this is the method." George Meany holds no sympathy for these "elements," better known to us as Black youth frustrated and desperate because of the conditions they're forced to live in. He doesn't offer these youth a program of struggle to fight for decent jobs, housing, schools, and recreational facilities.

No, he offers racist demogogy. There could be ghetto rebellions in the future; and also more mass demonstrations for jobs. And that makes George a lot more nervous.

Class Polarization and the Right Wing

Class polarization and right-wing movements will develop around many issues: against women's liberation, labor struggles, gay rights, socialism, and around foreign policy. Racism will be particularly important, as the Boston struggle indicates.

The fact that students have connections with their families, neighborhoods, and are influenced by debates and events throughout society means that this polarization will have its reflection on the campuses and in the high schools. We've seen this in an embryonic and incipient way already.

Willie Mae Reid and Linda Jenness report some strong racist attitudes among white high school students. There's especially a lot of confusion and hostility towards school desegregation.

Huge audiences turned out to hear David Duke on a couple of campuses. This racist scum even got a standing ovation in Akron, Ohio.

Jensen, Shockley, and Harnstein are getting a certain hearing for their pseudoscientific racist ideas.

And, of course, we've seen white high school students in Boston imitating their racist parents.

The rise of a significant right-wing movement in the schools is a long-range perspective -- not immediate. But just as we go to the campuses for cadres, an incipient fascist movement will probably do the same. And they'll find adherents among students, and their ideologies among professors.

In the future we'll not only be competing for cadre with other left tendencies, we'll also be competing with the right -- maybe before there is a broader right-wing political force off campus.

This will be an entirely new experience for our membership. Even today we have to be alert to defend democratic rights unconditionally -- free expression, free speech, the right to demonstrate. We will utilize the same rights they aim to smash to organize countermobilizations against racist or incipient fascists to expose their ideas and actions to masses of students.

Student Struggles

Of course, the attacks on education and the racist offensive are having another more widespread effect. Students are beginning to fight back and in many cases Blacks are leading the way. Students are responding to cutbacks and tuition hikes.

High school students also began moving into action this spring. In San Francisco and the state of Washington, high school students initiated major struggles. Their protests were mass action-oriented to reach out and involve all those affected by the cuts, including teachers.

In fact, a striking feature of many campus and high school struggles this spring was their relationship to major

issues also facing the working class and the oppressed nationality communities.

The desegregation fight is an obvious example. The cutbacks issue is another one. For instance, the cutbacks in CUNY not only mean that 20,000 student applicants will be rejected in the fall, but also that 3,000 CUNY teaching positions will be cut as well as 14,000 elementary school positions.

This illustrates a new trend. As the economic crisis continues, important immediate concerns of masses of students overlap with the conscious concerns of a broad layer of the working class. This was not as true ten years ago or even a year ago.

Also, what's different today is that workers are beginning to move. We can be sure that a student movement that has radicalized and gone into action despite working class quiescence will be tremendously inspired by the new mood and actions of workers.

The "Red University"

This brings us back to the role of students and our "red university" strategy. Our fundamental approach at every stage of the class struggle is to aim to mobilize the masses of workers and their allies in independent political struggles. This is the only way for the working class to come to recognize its ability and the necessity of taking control of society out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and lead humanity in the reconstruction of the world.

Every other tendency rejects this strategy. The Social Democrats and Stalinists reject it because they are basically for reforming capitalism. Their strategy is class collaboration and particularly reliance on the Democratic party.

We understand that it is essential for the working class and its allies to break from the capitalist parties. The establishment of a labor party that would generalize the demands of labor and the oppressed in the political arena would be a giant step forward for the class struggle.

The ultralefts reject the independent mass action strategy because they have no confidence in the masses.

The transitional program is a program for mass mobilization that takes into account the most burning objective class issues and the present consciousness of the masses.

The "red university" strategy applies the transitional method to the situation of youth in the schools.

The Strategy for Revolutionary Youth puts it this way:

"The concept of the "red university" means that the university ought to be transformed from a factory producing robots into an organizing center for revolutionary education, an arena for mobilizing youth in a struggle for the complete transformation of society." To do this, the document pinpoints important areas of student concern within the schools and formulates demands that link these

to broader social concerns.

I think in our resolution for the convention we'll want to point to some of the key issues and demands in this program that are coming to the fore in the struggles already shaping up. The fact that we are entering a period in which the conscious needs of workers and students are coming together, gives this program and student struggles even greater force.

Because the rulers are trying to roll back the rights and opportunities of students, many of the struggles tend to be defensive. That is, students are forced to fight to retain programs, financial aid, teachers, and against further tuition hikes.

Black and other minority youth are leading and will continue to lead many of these fights, because these cuts and tuition hikes back them to the wall. As Chris Robinson, a leader of the Brown student struggle put it, "For Blacks, it's a survival struggle against these cutbacks. We have a lot to lose and we have to put ourselves on the line to keep it."

Now, we look at these attacks from the point of view of a general principle. We believe that the most privileged section of the working class must be won to unconditionally support the demands of the most oppressed, and this includes relinquishing their own special privileges. This is the only basis for uniting the oppressed nationalities and the rest of the working class. And we know there will be no socialist revolution without this unity.

As revolutionaries we champion the special demands of Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and other minority youth. Many of these demands are laid out in The Strategy for Revolutionary Youth.

In a time of contracting educational opportunities and increased competition for jobs we must emphasize our opposition to any attacks on the gains that oppressed nationalities have won.

We say, not a single cutback in the percentage of minority students on the campus, and not one cutback in the percentage of national minority teachers. This holds true for women as well.

We oppose any cuts or attempts to abolish Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and women's studies programs. Or any efforts to diminish the small degree of control that students and faculty have gained over these programs.

We view attacks on special recruitment programs and tuition hikes as tantamount to saying to the oppressed nationalities, "You do not have a right to an education -- college is a privilege for those who can afford it." We say no, everyone has a right to an education, and the oppressed nationalities have a right to preferential treatment to make up for centuries of preferential oppression.

Open admissions in New York was a tremendous victory for Black and Puerto Rican youth. We fight to maintain this policy in New York and in other cities. We should demand that every school adopt an open admissions policy

so that every Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, and working class youth can go to college.

Where the cutbacks hit oppressed nationality students first, we want to explain to white students that it's just the first step. This year the cutbacks are in Black studies, next year or the year after it will be in the English department. This fall the tuition hikes price college education out the reach of many Blacks; next fall the hikes might price college out of your reach.

The scope of tuition hikes and cutbacks are already bearing down on white working class youth and they, too, are being spurred into action.

When the university administrations claim that they don't have enough money, that something has to go, we say, "Prove it -- open the books. Let the students and faculty see where university funds are invested, which programs have priority." This demand, which has been mostly propagandistic up until recently, was a popular agitational slogan during the Brown University struggle this spring.

If the university is going bankrupt, we demand full government funding, because education should be free anyway.

At the state or city colleges, we oppose the government's budgets. We oppose our tax money and tuition going to line the pockets of wealthy bond holders. We demand an end to interest payments which deny youth the right to an education. In New York City, if the government halted its interest payments, the city budget would balance and there would be no excuse for a single cutback in high school or college programs, or teachers. As New York SCAR put it in their June 4 leaflet, "Not one penny to the banks at the expense of Black and Puerto Rican youth!"

These demands fit into our general demand for the right of all students to a free education. It's the responsibility of society as a whole to provide education. In capitalist society, we demand that those who can afford it pay the bill: 100 percent tax on all war profits! Tax the rich to pay for education! Tax Chemical Bank, Bank of American, and Lockheed!

We not only stand for free education, but also demand stipends for students who need them. SEEK, a special minority program in CUNY, provides stipends for many Black and Puerto Rican youth who otherwise could not take advantage of open admissions.

We say no cutbacks in these programs. In fact, the stipends should be extended and increased automatically with the rising cost of living.

We say that everyone has a right to a job that can earn them a decent standard of living. Our call for guaranteed jobs for students after graduation commensurate to their training takes on greater meaning in this new period of capitalist decline. The demand helps to link the immediate future of students to the workers' struggles for more jobs.

High School Students

Cuts have devastating effects on high school students and their teachers. In San Francisco, the threatened budget cuts of \$4 million would have axed all intramural sports, drama, music, and forensic courses, stopped the purchase of many supplies, cut back maintenance, and laid off 300 teachers for starters.

The theme of the protests was "Education is Our Right!" As one student told a board of education meeting, "Education is a constitutional guarantee. It's the responsibility of the government to meet our needs." During the struggle, the students involved the teachers' union in a press conference and other activities. The YSA provided important leadership in this pace-setting high school fight.

In Washington, the threatened layoff of 1,670 teachers, the closings of 24 elementary schools, and an end to accreditation for the high schools sparked protests including a demonstration of 5,000 high school students in Olympia.

Just think of the dynamic of a joint struggle of high school students, teachers, and the community in a city like New York. Here, the racist United Federation of Teachers leadership has taught teachers that their main enemy is not the government -- but the communities of the oppressed nationalities.

But the cutbacks are a two-fisted attack on the teachers and the community. This situation could force many teachers to question who their real allies are and what are the real intentions of the Shanker leadership.

Cutbacks in the high schools, like in many colleges, hit Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans the hardest. First because in many urban centers, the majority of students are members of the oppressed nationalities. But also, among the first programs to be hit will be things like bilingual programs and the first teachers to go will be those most recently hired -- the Black, Puerto Rican, and Chicano teachers and paraprofessionals.

In addition to cutbacks, the rulers offer tremendous resistance to implementing a fundamental right won by Blacks twenty-one years ago -- the right to an equal education in desegregated schools.

The Boston Black community and high school students in particular have demonstrated a courageous determination to desegregate those schools. In the latter part of the spring, high school students in Boston began to come around NSCAR and the May 17 demonstration. There's a lot of potential for high school students to become more directly and massively involved in the desegregation campaign, not only in Boston but in other cities where desegregation struggles will heat up.

Along with NSCAR's basic demands -- desegregate the schools, stop the racist violence, and keep the buses rolling -- other issues may organically arise during the struggle. One, of course, is the demand for federal troops. But others may be needed as well: demands related to the self-defense and self-organization of Black students under physical attack;

the right to have monitors and observers in the high schools selected by the Black community; demands related to opposing suspensions of Black students, the treatment of students by racist teachers, etc.

Stepped-up high school struggles will require struggles for students rights to organize in the high schools. Some important precedents were set during the high school anti-war movement, but many of these will have to be won again and extended.

Other Struggles

Along with fights against attacks on education, there are other important arenas for student activism.

We want to be alert to building student support for labor struggles. Students, of course, can't lead these, but they can popularize the demands and join in activities.

One example of the work we've done in this area is building support for the United Farm Workers. Recently several locals participated in the week of activities in support of the farm workers and the Gallo boycott. The Militant today is the only paper that is telling the truth about the recent shootings in the melon fields in Texas.

Demonstrations like April 26 and June 4 provide important opportunities to mobilize students in support of labor's demands.

Students continue to take the lead in opposing imperialist military interventions and covert activities. The teach-ins, rallies, and picket lines that we helped initiate around Vietnam and the Mayaguez incident got a good response -- even though they were called on short notice. Anywhere from 50 to 1,000 students turned out to the actions.

The sensitivity of students towards U. S. foreign policy and their protest actions will be essential for drawing broader forces into action and educating the working class towards an international perspective.

Many students are highly sensitized to the hypocrisy of American democracy and justice. For instance, 63 percent of college students polled by Yankelovich in 1973 told him that they thought the country was democratic in name only, and really run by special interests.

Many students have a tremendous distrust of the police and the courts. They've been quick to support victims like the Attica brothers, J. B. Johnson, and Joanne Little. When our suit comes to trial next winter, we can win broad interest and support for it on the campuses.

The activities of students in defense cases can lay the basis for building broad support and exposing capitalist injustice.

The scope of attacks on democratic and human rights that the rulers must carry out, means that there will be more victims.

Women, for instance -- their rights are being held back and trampled on. The Equal Rights Amendment, a constitutional amendment which would simply grant women

equal rights with men, is meeting stiff resistance or defeat in many states.

Abortion rights that were won two years ago are being rolled back. We want to mobilize students to fight these attacks, reaching out to working women and women of the oppressed nationalities.

These are only a few of the many ways that students will continue to play an important role in the struggles that are coming up.

The Fight Against Racism

I want to spend a minute talking about our antiracist work. Three other reporters will be dealing with it in depth. The report on the struggle against racism is going to go into the origins of the National Student Coalition Against Racism, how students have been so important to building the struggle, and how the universities have been used as organizing centers -- in other words, how the "red university" strategy was implemented.

But I want to talk about this work from a little broader perspective -- our general approach to the fight against racism.

We recognized in September -- even before -- that a demonstration like May 17 was absolutely necessary. But it didn't happen until May. Why not?

We say that our strategy is mass action, that's true. But that strategy can only come alive if something else is combined with it -- our united front approach.

You see, Boston comrades could have put out a leaflet last September 30, in the name of the YSA, calling on everyone to come out and protest the racist violence, and to support busing.

There's only one problem with that -- you know how many people would have come? Some groups tried to do this. They called a mass demonstration, but the masses didn't show. There was an important reason for that -- they were exclusive.

In the eyes of the masses, if the YSA called a demonstration all by itself -- even if it had the correct political line -- it would be viewed as a YSA action, not their's, somebody else's. Because masses of people do not identify with the YSA or directly follow its leadership.

The united front approach is an inclusive one. It's one of getting together, in a meeting, to democratically decide how to fight the racist offensive. It means working with the broadest forces possible.

In NSCAR, you don't have to have a fully developed political ideology. You basically just have to want to fight back, countermobilize against the racist drive.

In September, there was no united front to call a mass demonstration. NSCAR had to attempt to fill this vacuum by reaching out to broader forces in the city willing to fight for school desegregation. This was true across the country as well.

Now we have to look at NSCAR -- this united front-type

coalition -- in the context of the racist attacks in Boston, other attacks coming down in the campuses and high schools, and the tremendous vacuum of leadership among Black students and the student movement as a whole.

We can see the important position of NSCAR when we look, for instance, at who is getting involved in the coalitions. The student activists are very serious. You don't show up at 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning, march all day, then go to a meeting at night to decide what to do next unless you're pretty serious.

These students and youth are really attracted to NSCAR. Part of it is its mass action approach, but NSCAR's united front character is also an important part of the attraction.

NSCAR's approach is broad -- it wants to include all kinds of different groups and individuals. It's democratic. You go to an NSCAR conference, or a local SCAR meeting, you raise your ideas, people listen, you discuss, vote on what to do, and then do it. That's brand new in the experience of many of these students.

Everybody counts in NSCAR. You're really a participant -- it's your organization as much as anyone else's. These students see this, and they like it.

This democratic, united front approach is also reflected in the cutbacks struggles. How did many of them get organized? Groups and individuals came together in mass meetings, had discussions, took democratic votes, elected steering committees, etc.

Sound a little like May 1970? Well, it is. It was during those strikes that these forms became part of the broad experience of the student movement, and we played no small role in teaching these methods of organization and struggle.

This past spring foretells of important struggles on the campuses, and NSCAR can play a leading role in them by taking this inclusive, democratic, united front approach and projecting a mass action strategy.

By doing this, can NSCAR help fill the vacuum of leadership in the student movement? Can it be a pole of attraction to Black students? It looks that way. In collaboration with the other organizations and many activists in the student coalition, the YSA should make every effort to help NSCAR fulfill all of its potential. We want to help it develop further as a genuinely broad and democratic coalition that seeks to work with an ever wider range of organizations and individuals in common struggles related to racism.

If we can help do this, the YSA will become known as a leading force in the antiracist and student movements.

What Does It All Mean?

I don't think there's any question in comrades' minds that the struggles this spring represent a definite upturn in student activism.

While we don't want to predict the tempo or prescribe all the forms of the struggles in this upswing, we can say

that it is tied to the objective turn of the working class radicalization.

Therefore, while we know that the pace and scale of student struggles will not be smooth and consistent -- there will be future downturns and polarization -- there's a trend towards increasing student political activity, and closer links with the struggles of workers and the oppressed nationalities.

It's our aim to intensify the political consciousness and struggles of students against the class contradictions reflected in the bourgeois schools, and link this in program and action with the needs and struggles of the working class and oppressed nationalities in this country and around the world.

Perspectives for the YSA

I want to end by enumerating a few things that must be in the forefront of our minds -- things we'll want to discuss more in other reports.

1. We must step up our efforts to build strong bases on the major campuses across the country and in the city and community colleges. Important struggles are forming up on the campuses and we've got to be rooted there in numbers and as leaders in order to lead them. We want to strengthen our campus base immediately and in the future. We want to build our base from here until the socialist revolution.

2. We must intensify our work in the high schools, where we are currently very weak. In a sense, high school students are synonymous with youth. Almost an entire generation of working class and oppressed minority youth are in the high schools.

If we're going to be a mass youth organization, we've got to be an organization of masses of high school students.

The high schools are also key to our becoming more of a multinational organization in composition.

3. The Black struggle will be at the center of many struggles coming up. We've got to have an aggressive and clear approach in program and action to help advance these important struggles.

4. Our strategy for struggle is mass action, that is, demonstrations, picket lines, teach-ins, and many other activities, built through united front-type coalitions that involve the maximum numbers of people in independent political struggle.

Today, the fight against racism is key to this strategy. Building the antiracist movement and the student coalition must continue to be our central campaign.

5. Everything that we are involved in is directed towards building the YSA. We will do this by initiating and leading activities in our own name, and by participating in coalitions like the National Student Coalition Against Racism. In these struggles we want to demonstrate to youth that the YSA is the youth organization that understands the political issues of the day, and has a clear program and strategy that can link up the struggles of youth with those of the oppressed nationalities and workers.

And we want to aggressively point out to youth that the YSA's program is not only one that best understands how to fight back against racist attacks, attacks on women's rights, cutbacks, and imperialist adventures, but that our program is the one that leads to a socialist revolution that will end the basis for exploitation, racism, sexism, and the competition and wars between countries.

We want to inspire youth with our vision of a socialist society and the real potential for bringing it about. We want to do this through the Militant and Young Socialist classes, supporting the Socialist Workers campaign, and through individual discussions.

The struggles that are opening up hold tremendous potential for YSA recruitment, especially among Blacks. The move we made at our convention to throw our efforts into the antiracist movement brings the YSA into a position that we've never been in before -- we are part of the leadership of a major struggle of the Black liberation movement. We can't predict how many of the current or future antiracist activists will decide to join the YSA, or how many campaign supporters or Young Socialist readers will join. But we must be acutely aware of the potential opening up.

And we've got to take a careful look at ourselves and the way we organize to make sure that we present the YSA as the kind of open organization of revolutionary youth that we should be.

The discussion at this plenum and during the fall will be an important part of organizing ourselves for the big opportunities opening up in this new period -- a period in which the YSA can become a powerful, multinational, revolutionary youth organization.

EXCERPTS FROM THE ORGANIZATION REPORT TO THE
YSA NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

By Ilona Gersh

The general line of this report was adopted by the National Committee plenum on June 10, 1975

We have new and unmatched opportunities. Opportunities to push the mass movement forward, and educate new layers of activists -- particularly Blacks and high school students -- in the strategy of mass action; an opportunity to train our membership and for all of us to gain invaluable experience; an opportunity to recruit to the YSA from new arenas of work, opened up by the fight against racism and the impact of the economic crisis on our lives; and an opportunity to deal our opponents hard blows in the struggle to win political leadership in the student movement.

The purpose of this report is to begin the discussion of how we're going to adjust our work to fit the demands of this new political period.

We did a tremendous amount of work this spring. Our major national campaigns in the mass movement have been building the fight against racism, building USLA, defense of the Vietnamese and Cambodian revolutions, and fighting against the cutbacks in the colleges and the high schools.

The Fight Against Racism

First, we've turned the axis of our work towards the fight against racism. Building the struggle against racism is the central and most important work of the YSA. Together with the Socialist Workers campaign, it gives the YSA the greatest opportunities for growth and development.

As we have already discussed, the student coalition, as an on-going part of the fight against racism, plays an important role in mobilizing other forces in the Black community into action. The student coalition has the role of the left-wing of the struggle for desegregation. It puts forward the proletarian line of mass action against the racist mobilizations in Boston and across the country. That's NSCAR's unique contribution to the student movement and Black liberation struggle.

While the main focus of the student coalition is the fight for desegregation, it can and does take a stand on a wide range of political issues that are linked to racism in the U. S. It is this ability to relate to many issues and the united front character of NSCAR, and especially its mass action line that attracts broad layers of youth -- not only students, but young workers as well.

This work has opened up a whole new arena for

political action and an opportunity to involve new layers of activists in the fight against racism, especially Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans, and high school students.

Many of the mass action-oriented youth who are involved in this movement are potential members of the YSA.

We should think of ways to pay special attention to winning Black students to our ranks. This means directing sales to Blacks on campus, organizing sales at predominantly Black colleges and high schools, working with Black student groups as much as we can, and keeping on top of and participating in the political discussions going on within the Black student movement.

Where we have been able to work alongside Black and Chicano students in the student coalition, as we have in several cities, we have recruited Blacks.

We can expect more Black recruitment will come, and this recruitment will begin to change the YSA into more of a multinational organization with a membership composed of large numbers of the national minorities.

In addition, through the work we are doing to build the student coalition, we are gaining a reputation as an organization that stands firmly in defense of the Black community.

* * *

While we've been increasingly active in the mass movements, we've also continued to refine and increase our propaganda.

Our three major propaganda tools are the sales of our press, building the Political Rights Defense Fund, and building support for the Socialist Workers campaign. There are separate reports on all of these areas, so I won't dwell on them in my report. I want to pick out two others. But I do want to point out that we've made a lot of progress in strengthening all three areas.

Student Government Election Campaigns

First, on our campus election campaigns. In the past year, we ran a total of fifty-nine campus campaigns and four election campaigns in the high schools.

Our campaigns fit the demands of the radicalization.

They give us another way to reach more people. We run action-oriented campaigns, gearing them into whatever struggle we're participating in, as well as to the big issues on campus and in the country as a whole.

I think the example of the campaign in San Francisco is a good example. At George Washington high school in San Francisco, the center for organizing Students United Against Cutbacks, a comrade who joined the YSA recently ran a campaign for student board. His campaign supported SUAC's demands, as well as our socialist analysis of the cutbacks and layoffs. After only a few days of campaigning, he won the election.

Our experience with campus election campaigns is that the best ones are those that center on the two or three main political issues that students face -- racism, and the economic crisis -- while at the same time, offer concrete solutions to the problems that students have on campus, like cuts in Black recruitment departments or studies programs, tuition hikes, or cuts in scholarships.

Speakers Bureaus

A second area I want to take up is our speakers bureau. Not only is this activity politically valuable both in the region and to center locals, but speaking engagements also offer us a potentially big source of income.

Through organizing the YSA and campaign speaking tours, we made contact with student governments and individuals who we should follow up on in the future. They can be asked to help us in our on-going Viewpoint work, to set up another YSA meeting, and many would be interested in USLA, PRDF, or the student coalition. Some areas, like Pittsburgh and Chicago, are starting now to work on programs for the fall.

Building the YSA on the Campuses

We consciously take all of these political campaigns to the campuses and high schools because that's where we're most interested in building the YSA.

Our major goal is to transform the YSA from a relatively small, propaganda group to a mass, multinational organization with large numbers of the oppressed nationalities and deep roots in the student movement and the struggles of young people.

That's our long-term perspective. And it won't happen overnight.

We want to increase our influence both in the high schools and on the campuses. Work we do now will help us take advantage of opportunities we'll face later.

The campuses are the main arena of work for the YSA. The strength of the YSA on campus directly affects our political work, our ability to recruit new members, and our ability to integrate and develop those who join.

The campus is the YSA's main base of operation, where we take all of our political campaigns. Where we

have a campus base, it's much easier to carry out our political campaigns -- organize a broad defense for Coral, to have day-to-day contact with student coalition activists, to find contacts on campus and talk with them, to go to the student government for money, for their political endorsement, or for buses to Boston. Sales, holding classes, building public forums, are all much easier to do. Where we have large campus fractions and YSA leadership on campus, it's easier for the YSA to take on our opponents and confront them on every issue. But where we don't have large campus fractions, or adequate leadership, it's harder to take our campaigns to the campuses and have an impact with our ideas and our mass-action strategy.

Second, it's clear from the organizer report forms that locals which already have a large campus fraction and a base on campus are consistently recruiting more. Not only from that campus, but from all over the city. Some of these locals have already established a pattern of regularly bringing new people around the YSA and then recruiting them quickly. In others, it's just beginning since the campus base became more established.

What is a campus base? It means a large number of comrades on a particular campus, that can carry out a lot of work. It means leadership on that campus to help think out the work and train newer members. But it's more than that.

It means we know our way around campus. We're known on campus as socialists and activists. We're winning new members on a steady, consistent basis, and have a large periphery of people around us that we can draw on to help us in our different political campaigns. It means we're in a position to take on our opponents and compete for political leadership in struggles on campus.

So how are we going to get from here, to there? It's a big job. But we can take specific steps, I think, to make it easier, and to take us another step forward.

First, we want to continue the campaign to get comrades back on campus, especially the leadership of the YSA. And this takes time. It could take drastic steps, and a reorganization of the local's major assignments. It means talking with comrades now, who may be able to go onto campus next fall or spring. And this is a constant process. One round of meetings next week won't solve the problem forever.

Second, we've learned a lot about how to organize our work better. We want to orient all of the YSA local's work toward the campuses. Campus work is not just one area of work. It's the main arena for all of our work.

We organize through fractions, just because that's the most effective way to do it. But the campus fraction, itself, doesn't have any kind of special obligation or responsibility to decide on and carry out all of the work on their campus. The local has a responsibility to the fraction, and to build the YSA on that campus.

Orienting our work to the campus means that the organizer can't be locked up in the hall all day. The

organizer can play a valuable role in helping to organize and help carry out the YSA's work on campus. That's where they should be most of the time.

It means that working comrades can do work on the campus -- by selling the Young Socialist and Militant in the evening on campus, passing out campaign literature, helping to build forums and classes.

We can hold many of our city-wide events, like regional conferences and citywide rallies and forums on the campus.

I'm sure that every organizer and anyone who's been on campus knows what the life of a campus fraction is like. It's hard work, getting up early, setting up tables, talking to the student government, selling, building the next student coalition rally or meeting, going to classes, studying, then rushing to the hall to make some phone calls to people around the YSA and a leaflet before the evening meetings begin.

I think we can do a lot more than we have been to help out our campus fractions. It's the leadership's job to help the fraction think out, for instance, how to involve more of the local in campus work.

Besides going to campus after work, working comrades can make leaflets and banners for campus activities, so that campus comrades can spend that time on campus. Non-campus comrades can get to know activists, invite them to dinners, and to our forums. Working comrades can help by drawing up budgets for student grants, or for honoraria. To be based on the campuses means that our political work revolves around the campuses. And we can start that now.

This would free up our campus comrades to do work on the campus. They wouldn't have to run to the hall at 2:00 or 3:00, after their last class, but could hang around campus, sell the paper, or just talk to people we work with there. Become part of the campus. We don't want to look like "politicos" -- coming on campus, dashing around to build a meeting, and then running off to our headquarters. The campus is the center of most students' political and social life. And we want to identify with the students we work with.

A campus base makes it easier to integrate new campus comrades, and develop them into political leaders. The campus fraction, if it's the center of the YSA's work, is the best place to learn techniques -- like making leaflets, getting contributions from professors, and selling our press.

The campus fraction is the best place for comrades to learn how to set priorities for our work, think on their feet, establish an effective division of labor, and build a real team of activists and leadership. A campus fraction is the best place for us to discuss how to answer our opponents, how to involve them in activities we're building, take on their program, and win people away from their ideas and towards our mass-action strategy for the student movement.

We want to recruit people on the campus, not off

the campus, as we tend to say.

New Opportunities in the High Schools

There are new opportunities for the YSA in the high schools, as the political report pointed out. The growing number of high school struggles are closely tied to the main political issues in the country -- racism, and the economic crisis. Our work to build the student coalition gives us a vehicle to get involved in these struggles.

But building a base in the high schools poses different tasks than our work on the campuses. Our high school cadre is very small. High school students don't stay in high school forever. And so the many high school students who joined the YSA in the 1968-69 antiwar upsurge when we had significant high school fractions in several locals have graduated.

High schools are different from colleges. For one thing, we can't send our comrades into the high schools. We can't send our leadership back to school. We more or less have to start from scratch, and recruit by orienting our work towards the high schools.

Restrictions on high school students are greater, both in society at-large, as well as in the schools. High school students, for the most part, don't have the personal freedom that college students have -- to go to meetings until late at night, go to conferences, and actions out of town. And high school students are more restricted in their political rights.

Political rights in the schools themselves are more limited too. Students have to depend on teachers when they want to get a room for a political meeting. The rights to sell literature, pass out leaflets, hold rallies, are not clearly established.

In some places, though, high school students have waged fights for these rights, and have won. In Cincinnati, for instance, the YSA waged a fight for the right to sell the Young Socialist inside the school, and won. In Louisville, we're building a coalition with the Black students and the student coalition to gain recognition for political groups in the school.

Our long term orientation of building a base for the YSA in the high schools makes it important for us to take special steps now to participate in high school struggles that erupt, initiate political protest, and recruit from the high school movement.

We want to take every opportunity we can to penetrate the high schools through every avenue of mass movement work, and especially through our work to build the fight against racism.

Where we got involved in high school struggles this spring, we have recruited, even though modestly.

We should think out ways to maintain and step up our propaganda work in this arena to coincide with the new opportunities we have. Our sales have reached a higher number of high school students than ever before in the last

year. We can regularize this work even more, picking out the key one or two high schools we want to sell at each week on a regular basis.

We can take the Socialist Workers campaign into the high schools through setting up assemblies, like the one of 400 that Willie Mae spoke at in the Bay Area, getting speakers into classes, organizing outside campaign rallies, literature tables, and leaflet distributions.

We should pay special attention to building city-wide activities at high schools, including our forums, educational classes, and rallies.

When we find someone interested in socialism, they should be at the top of our list of people we call each week about our activities. The San Francisco local organized contact classes in a high school.

Because we consider high school work a special priority, we, as the leadership, have a particular responsibility to back up high school members in their political work at school, and help them draw their friends around YSA activities, just like we help out comrades on campus.

And just like with campus work, we want as many YSA members as possible to participate in our high school work -- whether it's by going on sales, getting to know activists in the student coalition, or calling campaign supporters about city-wide activities.

Next fall, we'll organize big registration blitzes to reach as many college students as we can during the first two or three weeks of school. And we should map out a plan to reach as many high school students as possible too.

Our Geographical Expansion

Now, I'd like to turn to our regional work.

In 1972, we established the Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley traveling teams, and since then, have fielded teams every fall and spring.

In the past year, I think we made a step forward in our approach to these teams. The teams last fall and this spring not only took our propaganda into the region -- they also helped build student coalition chapters, initiated antiwar actions, and participated in the cutbacks demonstrations that took place on many campuses in the region. They were more fully integrated into our overall perspectives for taking our campaigns into the region.

Regional work increases our geographical influence. Our regional work established solid locals and laid the basis for Socialist Workers party branches in Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, St. Louis, and soon Baltimore. These new center locals have taken on regional responsibilities themselves, which has meant a further expansion of our regional work.

There are other big cities of similar political importance to our movement where we have made recent gains, like New Orleans, which is key to the Black movement in the South; San Antonio, with a huge Chicano population and a very large number of undocumented workers; San Jose,

the third largest city in California.

Our regional spread makes everything that we do more important. In this period, significant political protest can break out anywhere. We saw that with the cutbacks protests, Vietnam actions, and the desegregation fight. And so it's to our advantage to have fifty or sixty, rather than just a few locals, involved in promoting all of our political campaigns.

The breadth of the YSA adds a national character to the fight against racism, to our support to the Socialist Workers election campaign, and to all of our other activities.

And, as comrades can see from the membership report, recruitment in the region is more rapid than in the center locals. There are fewer opponents in the region, as well as a more open and fresh outlook towards socialist ideas.

The YSA Regional Teams

The YSA regional teams continue to be a main source of regional recruitment and expansion. The teams were responsible for almost half of the recruitment in the region this spring, and set up seven new locals.

They distributed over 70,000 pieces of free campaign and YSA literature, as well as 9,000 Young Socialists, 11,500 Militants, and almost \$4,000 of Pathfinder literature.

We want the work of the teams next fall to continue to reflect our political priorities. The teams will continue to focus on sales of our press, building support for the Socialist Workers campaign, building the student coalition, and building regional conferences.

We'll want to send the teams to at-large areas where we can build locals, as well as new cities and campuses where we can build locals from scratch. We'll also want to concentrate our efforts in some cities that we know are sites for possible future expansion of the movement -- like New Orleans. The Washington, D. C. team, for example, spent two weeks last fall in Baltimore, which helped the formation of a local there this spring.

Several comrades, in the past few months, have raised the question of whether the teams should spend time, maybe a week or two, in the centers, helping the center locals build a base on the campuses.

We think that because of the big opportunities in the region and the effect that consistent regional work has on our ability to carry out our national campaigns, the teams should continue to be viewed as regional teams. We'll want to discuss and experiment with other solutions to the problem of recruiting on the campuses in the center locals. For instance, New York is fielding a team of its own next fall, in addition to the New York-New Jersey regional team, to travel the in-city campuses.

But if a center wants to consider bringing the YSA regional team into the center for a period of time for specific political reasons, whether it's just for a few days,

or for two weeks, regions should discuss this concretely with the National Office in the context of the YSA's priorities for growth in that region.

Winning New Members

In the midst of increasing activity, when we're working with new layers of activists through our mass movement work and supporting the campaign, how do we maintain and step up the pace of winning new members to the YSA?

We really have a two-point program for people who are drawn around us: socialism and mass action. More and more young people see socialism even if they don't agree with or even understand every point of our program, as a realistic alternative to capitalism. And young people want to do something to fight capitalist injustice. Our mass-action strategy is attractive to activists involved in protest movements. And it's among the most important contributions we make to the movements for social change.

Winning new members takes time, a lot of attention, and there's no doubt that conscious organization of recruitment work makes a big difference in numbers. We're on a drive to increase our size -- even if we don't have goals and charts. And it should be organized. We're going to do it through our youth support work for the Socialist Workers campaign.

Part of our work in the mass movements is to convince activists to support the Camejo-Reid ticket. And, as the campaign report pointed out, campaign supporters are all potential activists in the movements we're involved in.

We want to involve Socialist Workers campaign supporters in all areas of campaign and YSA activity, invite them to classes on socialism both on the campus and in the headquarters. All comrades should get to know the people working with us, and keep in touch with them personally on a consistent basis.

Twenty-one center locals now have recruitment directors. Fifteen have recruitment committees, some of which are already linked to campaign youth support work. These comrades are more than list-keepers for the YSA and campaign. They organize informal dinners, make sure that all the fractions keep in touch with people they're working with, organize classes, call the people about getting involved in daily campaign work in the headquarters and on the campuses, and figure out the best way to draw each individual into the YSA.

As you can see from the membership report, we have grown in the past year. Our Black cadre has grown significantly, and we have further opportunities to increase our Black membership. Our Chicano and Puerto Rican membership also increased.

And hand in hand with winning new members comes the need to educate and develop new members. We want to make it as easy as possible for new members to learn our methods of functioning and our full program once they join.

Opening Up the YSA

At every major political conjuncture, we've re-examined our norms of functioning, and changed them to meet the needs of the new political period.

We are beginning to see another new stage in the Black radicalization, and in the development of the YSA. Our reputation is changing, and has a potential to change even more through our mass movement work, especially in the Black struggle. We're bringing more high school students around us, and want to do even more. More of our contacts are Black. More are from community colleges.

We need to open up the YSA. That doesn't mean that we should change the activist orientation of our membership. But when a high school student joins, it shouldn't be taken for granted that they can come down to the headquarters every night of the week. When a community college student joins, we can't expect necessarily that they can participate in big campaign activities or mobilizations every Saturday. They may have to work.

We have to begin developing the atmosphere in the YSA -- at our meetings, in our headquarters, and on campus -- that the YSA is a team of activists, and that any contribution a member makes is worthwhile. It's the combined efforts of all of us -- both in the leadership team, and in the whole local -- that makes the YSA effective.

It might mean changing the atmosphere and method of organizing our work at business meetings. For instance, these sign-up sheets for everything we do. After a sales sign-up sheet goes around, along with a sub drive sheet, a SCAR volunteer sheet, and one for the next social, booksale, or rummage sale, and for whatever else the local is involved in -- it's easy to feel like you've signed your life away.

We want to look to the future. Not everyone that joins is going to decide right-off that they're going to change their habits and become full-time revolutionaries. Commitment takes time and experience to develop. And so the atmosphere we set in the locals -- of teamwork -- is very important to new members and to their development. We shouldn't put a single barrier in the way of people joining the YSA and making their contribution to socialism.

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Next fall, we know that activity will step up. We'll begin organizing our pre-convention discussion. The discussion here gives us a feel for the importance of our pre-convention discussion in the locals. We'll be re-examining our fundamental ideas, in addition to the conjunctural steps we have to take. So again, we have to see that the pre-convention discussion is organized so that the maximum number of comrades take an active part in it.

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Our Fifteenth Anniversary

This period of increasing political protest poses a big challenge to the YSA leadership -- we want to be in the best position to build the fight against racism through the student coalition, be on top of developments in the labor, women's liberation, Chicano, and Puerto Rican struggles, as well as international events. And at the same time, we want to step up our campaign to recruit people to socialism through building PRDF, our sales, and building youth support for the Socialist Workers 1976 election campaign.

It's been fifteen years since our founding convention, and one important theme of our work this fall, building up to our December convention, should be a celebration of our fifteenth anniversary. We'll want to carry this theme forward publicly in the Young Socialist, in speaking tours, and in all of our other work. Ours is the only socialist youth organization able to boast fifteen years of continued development and growth, in addition to the three years of discussion and experience that led to our founding convention. This is an opportunity for us to convince activists to

join the only really viable youth organization on the left that has a rich history of participating in and leading the struggles of the oppressed for over fifteen years.

Our membership, in carrying this theme forward publicly, will also have the opportunity, through the summer schools, and our pre-convention discussion next fall, to study and probe into our rich history of participation in the Black struggle, our international defense work for the Cuban, Vietnamese, and Arab revolutions, our political rights defense work, and our support to the election campaigns of Socialist Workers candidates.

At every major conjunctural stage of the radicalization, we've stopped to re-examine our work. This is our job now -- as the leadership of the YSA -- to set realistic projections for our work, learn to concentrate our resources where they are most needed and valuable, and adjust our work to fit the demands of the mass movements and the dynamics of the class struggle. In this way we can push the student movement forward, and in doing that, build the YSA.