

# YSA

# Discussion Bulletin

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## AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT

By Michael Chamberlain, Twin Cities local

The current radicalization of American youth is opening up important opportunities in the field of recruitment. YSA locals across the country have been experimenting with different methods and organizational forms to accomplish in order to best utilize these opportunities.

### The Recruitment committee

The Minneapolis YSA formed a recruitment committee this fall for this purpose. The committee consisted of; the YSA organizer, the campaign volunteer director, the campus fraction head, and the MSCAR fraction head. This body was representative of most of our contact-related areas of work.

### Tasks of the committee

A major obstacle in the way of better recruitment was the phenomenon of recruitment stars. One comrade or small number of comrades who are especially adept in the area, recruit most of the new members and develop an aura of mystical recruitment ability while most comrades have little or no confidence in their own ability to recruit. Many times other comrades will make the initial contact and even have some of the initial political discussions with good recruitment prospects. But then a recruitment star steps in and finishes the job.

Because of this we saw increasing the layer of comrades who have experience recruiting people, and are confident in their ability as an important task for our committee.

### Education

One step toward overcoming the "recruitment star" obstacle is education. An educational by a skilled recruiter can help de-mystify the process of clinching a recruit. Special recruitment reports can also be helpful. When admission of a new member is proposed the person or persons involved in bringing him or her in can say a few words on how it was accomplished; how we met the recruit, what were their questions or reservations, how these were overcome.

### Systemize, coordinate and give direction

Recruitment can be best accomplished by a one to one personal approach. We should encourage all of our members to be on the look out for prospective recruits and to give these contacts the consistent attention necessary to recruit them. But individual members with many other responsibilities are prone to neglect their contacts -- forget to inform them about important political events etc.

The recruitment committee should be informed of all good contacts that comrades have. The committee can then think out the best activities to invite contacts to and

remind comrades to involve their contacts.

Another task of the committee is to coordinate and give direction to recruitment. The committee can think out how to bring individuals or groups of people closer to the YSA. All a good MSCAR contact might need to join the YSA is to be involved in the Socialist Workers campaign. Other suggestions might be classes tailored to a certain milieu or social activities; dinners etc.

### Recruitment and the Socialist Workers campaigns

The Socialist Workers campaigns provide us with a unique recruitment tool. Our volunteer support work for the Minneapolis 1975 Socialist Workers campaign is a good example of how to apply the recruitment approach previously outlined.

It has been said that we have a two point recruitment requirement; socialism and action. That is, anyone who agrees with our basic goals and is willing to actively carry out our politics should join the YSA.

Campaign volunteer work gives us a perfect opportunity to test our contacts on these two points. We ask an interested person what they think of our platform, a popularized version of our program for a socialist America. If they agree with its basic points, we suggest that they help build the campaign. This seems totally reasonable to them, more so than if we were to suggest that they help with selling YSs or some other form of non-electoral YSA building activity.

This allows us to separate those who are simply in philosophical agreement with socialism from those who want to work to achieve it. Anyone who is willing to help with our campaign should be asked to join without hesitation. We should think out our campaigning with this in mind -- how can we best involve our supporters in active campaigning.

The key to successful volunteer involvement, as well as recruitment, is a one to one personal approach to our contacts. Our movement is not at the stage where masses are beating on our door to join, or to build our activities. Every good contact should be given the most individual, personal attention possible.

A contact first meets our movement by running into one of our activists selling papers or at a literature table etc. That comrade explains to the contact what we stand for and asks him or her to help. The concept of becoming a campaign supporter and even more so joining the YSA or SWP, is foreign to most people. We can ease the natural hesitation with a personal approach. "Why don't you meet me at the table tomorrow and help campaign. I'll be there to show you what to do, there's nothing to it."

The role of the campaign volunteer director or committee is to encourage this process and then to make sure comrades follow up on their contacts. Having one or two comrades take a list of campaign supporters, most of whom they have never met, and call them on the phone "THIS IS THE CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEER DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS CAMPAIGN" is more likely to scare off contacts than to involve them.

The task of the campaign volunteer committee should be to organize comrades to follow up the campaign supporters who they have found; call their contacts regularly to suggest political activities, invite them to dinner and so forth.

The three steps in the organization of campaign support work in Minneapolis were as follows; 1) We compiled a list of campaign activities that supporters could help with and

mimeographed copies for all comrades who had found supporters for the campaign. 2) Printed calling sheets to help comrades record the results of their calls to supporters. 3) The volunteer director would regularly call all comrades who had a list of supporters and make sure that the calling was being done and to suggest individual approaches for certain contacts.

In conclusion, our efforts to promote recruitment consciousness, our consistent and systemitized follow up of good contacts, and our use of campaign volunteer work maximized our utilization of recruitment opportunities. This has netted us six recruits this fall.

December 10, 1975

## GAMES THAT ULTRALEFTS PLAY: "I AM LEFTER THAN YOU ARE"

by Myron Eshowsky, Madison local

It has become apparent that with the widespread interest in socialism, there are real questions as to which groups are the most revolutionary. Many of our contacts in Madison have been swayed by the more "left" sounding rhetoric of our opponents and are generally confused as to how to tell who the real revolutionaries are. Most are younger and unfortunately did not experience or witness the ultraleft failures of the antiwar movement.

The question of how does one know who is doing the real revolutionary work and who is playing ultraleft games lends itself somewhat to psychological assessment. Ultraleftism is a game played by frustrated liberals (I note and recommend Comrade Camejo's Liberalism, Ultraleftism, and Mass Action) with revolutionary aspirations but who are incapable of mustering either the energy or the courage to actually engage in revolutionary work. Their game is to scream, "I am lefter than you are!"

I like to look upon these "I am lefter than you are" game players as persons who are dominated by conflicting personalities -- an extremely intolerant conscience versus a scared Child. I cite the Spartacist League which spends so much time polemicizing on what the YSA "should" do and how "unprincipled" the YSA is (intolerant conscience). At the same time they throw temper tantrums as we defeat them politically and do little work in coalitions that we are mutually involved in (scared Child). Spartacist League has a long history of abstaining from struggles.

Most often these game players get into intellectual head trips, raising the most revolutionary demands, and totally ignore the real world. They deal in the abstract and are in-

capable of reaching people's level of consciousness. When they find only a few people willing to listen to them, they get hysterical and blast away at other groups because of their incapacity to engage in positive, creative revolutionary action.

James Cannon recognized this process when he was writing about the split offs from the Trotskyist movement. In his writing, he said: "It is a terrible virus, this ultraleftism. It thrives best in an isolated movement. That's always where you find it at its worst -- a movement that is isolated from the masses, gets no corrective from the masses. You see it in these split-offs from the Trotskyist movement -- our own "lunatic fringe." The less people listen to them, the less effect their words have on the course of human events, the more extreme and unreasonable and hysterical they become in their formulations." (History of American Trotskyism, p. 12)

Cannon's understanding of this psychological process (as well as Lenin, who called it an "infantile disorder") points to the corrective -- the masses. We of the YSA have been able to avoid the mistakes of the ultralefts because of our faith in the masses.

By our continued understanding of reaching the masses where their heads are at and getting them involved in independent mass action, we can prove that our program when put to practice, leads to successful struggles. Comrade Pensack was right to cite this as the way to educate independents and win them to the YSA.

December 11, 1975

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO NEC DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION

By Kurt T. Hill, Lower East Side, New York local

I propose that the following amendment be added to Section V of the proposed political resolution offered for our consideration by the NEC. This amendment, if approved, to be injected in column 2, between the present 6th and 7th paragraphs of Section V:

Another example of the injustices upheld by the bourgeois police, court, and prison systems, is the reactionary prejudice directed against gay people. The YSA fully

supports the demands of the gay liberation movement for an end to police entrapment of gays, and the repeal of all anti-homosexual statutes. The YSA continues to support the enactment of laws, such as N. Y. C. 's **Intro. 554**, which would guarantee full civil rights to gay people, and outlaw discrimination against them based upon their sexual preferences.

December 11, 1975

## A BRIEF MOTIVATION FOR THE AMENDMENT

By Kurt T. Hill, Lower East Side, New York local

Gay people constitute a major oppressed group in capitalist society. There are over 25 million gay people in the United States -- nearly one million live in New York City alone.

Because gay men and women reject the sexual roles assigned to them by bourgeois society and its institutions, they are often singled out for persecution by those who defend the established order.

This persecution is pervasive, and assumes many different forms: reactionary thugs roam the streets, beating, robbing -- sometimes murdering -- gay people with impunity. People who are openly gay often find that landlords refuse to rent to them, or find themselves evicted when they are discovered to be gay. Landlords who do rent to gays often charge outlandishly high rents without fear of complaints. Police departments entrap gays. Most employers refuse to hire gays.

Because of the prejudices against them, gay people have few mechanisms to safeguard their rights. Often they are afraid to exercise these rights.

Young gay men and women, like many other members of their generation, have been strongly influenced by the present radicalization. Having gained valuable experience working in the civil rights and antiwar movements, gay people are putting this training to good use in developing their own movement.

The YSA was one of the first organizations on the left to lift its ban on admitting homosexuals into membership. It has played a vanguard role in supporting gay rights actions, such as the Christopher St. marches, and N. Y. C. 's Intro 554, a bill which would have guaranteed full civil rights for gays.

Because of this positive record of accomplishment, I was quite disturbed to discover that the NEC draft political resolution, "The Crises Confronting Youth," makes scant mention of the fight for gay liberation.

On the whole, I think that the NEC proposal is one of the best documents to be presented for our consideration in recent years. The resolution proceeds from a general socialist appraisal of the deepening crisis of world capitalism, and provides a basic program to meet the needs of youth in the coming period.

If adopted, I feel that the NEC document would provide us with an effective program for the mass movements. I support the general line of the resolution, I plan to vote for it, and I encourage all other comrades to do likewise.

To say that one supports the general line of a document, however, does not imply that one necessarily supports every formulation used, or that a document could not be improved by the addition of amendments which can help to clarify certain ambiguities.

It is with the view of improving -- not opposing -- the proposed political resolution, that I have submitted my pro-

posed amendment.

### What the NEC proposal says about gay rights

The NEC draft political resolution mentions gays, or the gay rights movement, four times.

The first mention occurs on page 15 of the Young Socialist, in the second paragraph of the first column:

"The student movement has helped change the political atmosphere of this country, challenging the legacy of the anticommunist hysteria of the 1950s, legitimizing protest, and inspiring women, GAYS, prisoners, and other oppressed groups to speak out to demand their human rights." (my emphasis)

Many radicalizing young people who purchased the draft political resolution (and this, undoubtedly, includes a large number of gays) would agree with the assessment that the current radicalization has had a profound impact upon the political consciousness of millions of Americans. But, they are interested in more than statements of mere fact. They purchased the proposed resolution because they are interested in the YSA's views on these questions.

The "human rights" demanded by women and prisoners, for example, are explicitly stated elsewhere in the document. Programs to achieve these rights are proposed. However, one looks in vain to discover what rights are being demanded by gay people, and the YSA's position on this question remains unclear. One is left with the impression that the YSA is in favor of gay people organizing for their rights; but, this point is implicitly made, not explicitly stated.

The second mention of gays also occurs on page 15 of the resolution, in the fifth paragraph of the second column. In referring to "some of the significant political activities on many questions," that are occurring on college campuses, the resolution states: "GAY RIGHTS GROUPS HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED".

Quite true. No one who claims to be politically conscious can ignore this empirical fact -- with the possible exception of the Healyites, who detest "vulgar facts" almost as much as they detest gays.

The statement, however, does not specify exactly what demands the gay movement is organizing around. What is the YSA's attitude toward these issues and demands? The resolution is mute.

The third mention of gays occurs in a section devoted to an analysis of racist and right-wing groups. On page 17, third column, third paragraph, the proposed resolution states: "Students and young workers, faced with bleak prospects but eager to cling to what they do have, can sometimes fall prey to movements that offer seeming-

ly simple solutions, and easily recognizable scapegoats -- Blacks, gays, women, 'reds,' etc."

In my opinion, this sentence is a statement of simple fact, and as such, it does not need further clarification.

The final mention of gays occurs in Section X, "Fight for a Socialist World," on page 19, first column, 4th paragraph. This section presents a thumbnail sketch of what life will be like in the communist future:

"A new era of enlightened attitudes will sweep away the medieval sexual stereotypes that have not only oppressed women for centuries, BUT HAVE PERPETUATED AN ESPECIALLY CRUEL AND SUPERSTITIOUS BIGOTRY TOWARD GAYS." (my emphasis)

It is certainly true that a healthy American workers state will not tolerate any form of oppression or bigotry against gays, women, members of the oppressed nationalities, or any other group presently held down by capitalism.

However, because the YSA's support for gay rights is not enumerated, this formulation itself does little to clarify our present attitude toward the gay rights movement and its demands.

There are many groups on the left which counterpose a golden, socialist future to the class struggle as it is presently being fought.

The "Revolutionary Communist" Party (formerly the RU), for example, paints a glowing picture of the future rights of Black people in the socialist commonwealth; racism will be eliminated, exploitation and privilege will be swept away, etc., etc., while they tail after the racists in Boston and elsewhere, opposing the present concrete struggles of the Black community.

Gay people, like every other oppressed group in bourgeois society, have had their fill of promises for the future. They want to see where a political group stands now regarding their struggle for democratic rights.

#### Some further considerations

When I presented my proposed amendment to the Lower East Side YSA local, a very interesting, and hot, debate occurred. I would like to briefly present some of the arguments leveled against my proposal (as I understand them), and comment on them.

#### Anti-amendment argument number 1

"The proposed amendment would revise our present orientation in the gay movement, and would substitute a more 'activist' orientation which would compel us to take organizational responsibility for gay rights actions."

#### Response:

Untrue. The amendment does not propose any change in our present orientation to the gay movement. It simply makes

our present policy explicit in the resolution.

#### Anti-amendment argument number 2

"The gay movement is fairly dealt with in the proposed draft political resolution. There are other struggles, such as the Native American movement, which are as important -- or more important -- which received even less attention. The resolution is adequate as it presently exists."

#### Response

Such a crude content analysis is often made by our sectarian opponents. They measure the proletarian character of a document by the number of times certain words such as "working class," or "revolution" are used.

What is crucial is not that the document mentions gay liberation X more times than the Native American movement, or Y fewer times than the Puerto Rican movement, but rather, what the document says about our support for these movements. As we have seen, the document mentions gays or gay liberation, but very little is said about our support for specific demands being advanced by the gay movement.

#### Anti-amendment argument number 3

"To propose this amendment means, in effect, that one is questioning the general sufficiency of the document itself. If there is no disagreement with the general line of a resolution, amendments should not be submitted."

#### Response

Nonsense! The YSA is a revolutionary communist youth organization, not a religious denomination. We understand that resolutions are not handed down from Mount Sinai on stone tablets, but rather are products of individual or collective effort to deal with economic and social realities.

The YSA NEC must certainly scoff at the idea that the products of their pens are holy writ. Amendments which do not run counter to the general line of the document cannot be said to challenge its sufficiency. This organization belongs to the rank-and-file as much as it belongs to the NEC. To say in effect, as argument number three does, that any document handed down by the NEC cannot possibly be improved upon is to inject an alien conception into the Trotskyist movement. Even when there is general agreement on our tasks and perspectives, as is the case today, it does not mean that the ranks do not have positive suggestions to make to improve a basically fine document.

December 11, 1975

## THE SELECTION OF DELEGATES

By Betsey Soares, Upper West Side, and Ilona Gersh, Lower East Side, New York locals

The YSA's organizational procedures flow from the political needs and purpose of our organization. They are determined by both the long-term goal of the YSA to become a campus and high school-based socialist youth organization, as well as our current stage in moving toward that goal.

The way we organize our national conventions, including the election of delegates, is designed to ensure the most democratic discussion possible, leading to collective decision-making on our political analysis, our program, and our action-campaigns.

Three contributions in the YSA Discussion Bulletin have proposed alternate methods for the selection of delegates. These are At-large Voting Rights, by Dave Brandt; A Reply to the Most Common Arguments Against At-large Voting Rights, by Jeffrey Kegler; and A Proposal to the Convention on At-large Voting Rights, by Jeffrey Kegler and Bernie Krawczyk.

They all propose that a system be designed to allow for the election of voting delegates by at-large members of the YSA.

We disagree with several of the concepts raised in these discussion contributions.

### At-large membership

The ability of the YSA to win new members where we do not yet have locals is essential to our continued expansion and political growth.

At-large members are responsible, along with the efforts of the YSA regional teams and other comrades in locals, for the rapid development of tens of new locals. It should be the goal of every at-large member to recruit enough members to form a local unit of the YSA.

Because of the importance of continuing to build new locals and expanding our geographical influence, the YSA decided in 1973 to revise the method of delegate selection for our conventions. As a result, our convention call states that "Three or more at-large members in one locality, who carry out joint activities in building the YSA, are entitled to elect one fraternal delegate / that is, with voice but not vote /, subject to approval by the National Executive Committee."

This allows at-large members who are functioning together in building the YSA to contribute towards the fullest possible discussion at YSA conventions.

In addition, at-large members, like every other member, are encouraged to participate in the preconvention discussion through writing articles for the YSA Discussion Bulletin. At-large members are also guaranteed the right to initiate or join political tendencies.

### YSA locals

However, because of the centrality of the local in the life of the YSA, delegates with both voice and voting rights

are elected by YSA locals. This is at present the most democratic way of electing delegates, as it allows for the most accurate representation of the thinking and experience of the YSA as a whole.

Locals are the basic unit of the YSA. As a group of individuals who work together to build the YSA, local members share many collective political experiences -- including selling our press, supporting socialist election campaigns, building various struggles against racism, cut-backs, or for women's rights, and winning new people to our movement. Members of locals not only carry out these activities together and gain collective experiences from them, but also collaborate on planning them out.

Local teamwork promotes the political and leadership development of all the individual members.

Locals bear the primary responsibility for carrying out the decisions of the YSA conventions. In addition it is through the experience of all the locals that the YSA can arrive at decisions that are made at our national conventions. Decisions, for example, concerning our political analysis of developments in the student movement, as well as on our campaigns for the next year.

### An undemocratic proposal

In At-large Voting Rights, Dave Brandt proposes that at-large members elect delegates to the convention on the same numerical basis as locals do.

With our present system, locals are allowed one delegate for every nine (or major fraction thereof) members in good standing. This ratio is necessary to ensure that the number of delegates at the convention is not too large to prevent a truly full and democratic discussion. A lower ratio would mean so many delegates that the speakers' time limit would be extremely short, or that many delegates could not take the floor even once during the convention.

It is true, as Brandt points out, that a local of less than nine members is overrepresented, receiving one delegate even though they are small in size. This fact demonstrates that no mathematically perfect solution has been found yet to this important question.

### Decision-making based on experience

We arrive at political decisions as a result of our experience in struggles.

Letter-writing and phone-calling between at-large members in a big geographic area cannot substitute for the necessary give-and-take of opinions that must precede the election of the delegates for the convention. This is because delegates are elected on the basis of their political positions.



Only collaborative activity can ensure a full, meaningful discussion of our political analysis and upcoming campaigns. This is why delegates are elected on the basis of locals, rather than at-large areas. This also accounts for the 1973 decision to allow at-large areas of three or more members (that is, the minimal number of comrades necessary to jointly carry out YSA-building activity) to elect fraternal delegates. They are fraternal delegates with voice but no vote because their vote at a one-to-three ratio would mean that the representation of at-large members, as opposed to that of locals, would be unbalanced.

Concrete suggestions on how to improve our functioning and organizational practices are always welcome in the YSA. At this time, however, the present system is the most democratic way we have found to select delegates.

As we develop into a mass organization, many of our organizational procedures will change. But these changes and new methods must develop from the actual needs and experience of the YSA.

December 13, 1975

By Robb Wright, Upper West Side, New York local

In "The Fight Against Racism" (YSA Discussion Bulletin No. 6) the February First Movement (FFM) is mentioned as "The February First Movement (formerly the Youth Organization for Black Unity) operates on the campus but has been disoriented by a sectarian Maoist strategy."

Besides NSCAR, the FFM is probably the best organized political tendency in the Black student movement and is the major proponent of ultraleftism and sectarianism in the growing struggles against campus cutbacks and in the defense of the civil rights of the Black community. Comrades are probably most familiar with the organization in regard to their participation in the attempted disruption of the February 14 founding conference of NSCAR. It has consistently opposed the school desegregation efforts by the Boston Black community through its newspaper the "African World" and nationally has attempted to red-bait NSCAR as YSA-dominated and white-controlled.

Most recently YSAers and NSCAR activists involved in anti-cutback struggles particularly in New York and New England have been forced to confront the FFM, which has worked in league with sectarian Maoist forces such as the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO). This struggle has taken place around the question of the political strategy needed to organize students to fight the cuts and the right of the YSA and NSCAR to actively participate in these struggles.

As the struggle against racist oppression and cutbacks begins to intensify and draw in larger numbers of Black students and other oppressed nationalities we should expect to see the FFM and FFM-type formations, which may develop in the Black student movement, attempting to play a more influential role. The key question facing Black students, in the coming fight against growing right-wing attacks on the democratic rights of Blacks and in the struggle against campus cuts, is what is the most effective strategy to win.

Our outlook, the strategy of mass action aimed at bringing into motion the broadest possible united front of all organizations and individuals interested in fighting racism, is the only strategy which has the potential to win.

As "The Fight Against Racism" resolution puts it: "United action coalitions involved in fights to defend busing, school desegregation and other issues can help to lead the struggle. These coalitions can involve every person and group willing to fight racist conditions, no matter what their opinions or disagreements on other political issues."

However, most of our political opponents on the left including the FFM do not share this view.

The FFM in its "Statement of Unity" puts forth this view of the outlook and character which the reemerging Black Student movement must take on:

"In order to accelerate the defeat of imperialism and to aid the struggle against the problems confronting the

Black community on a daily basis, the Black student movement must develop an anti-imperialist posture."

It emphatically states further on, "The principle task facing Black student movements today is the unification of the movement and the placing of the Black student movement on a firm anti-imperialist foundation."

The FFM feels that the prerequisite for uniting Black students and building an effective movement against cuts is first, for all Black students to develop anti-imperialist consciousness -- however in the abstract. In the real world particularly in the defense of the Boston Black community's right to bus into South Boston and in the struggle against the cuts in CUNY in New York, this narrow view has led the FFM to attempt to stop efforts aimed at organizing Black students in defense of school busing in Boston and to attempt to prevent them from joining broader cutback coalitions which do not have a conscious anti-imperialist posture. At Brooklyn College for example, the FFM in league with various Maoist forces in an organization called the "Anti-Imperialist Coalition", blocked with the Zionists on the student government to vote against funds being appropriated to take students to the May 17 National March Against Racism in Boston. And in the anti-cutback struggle being waged in CUNY, this movement until recently has abstained from organizing Black students to participate in the movement. For example, the FFM did not play a role in organizing the November 19 National March on Washington, organized by the New York Professional Staff Congress, the University Student Senate and the NY Student Coalition Against Racism.

The FFM which was formed in 1969 originally as the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) is a post-Jim Crow Student Organization. Formerly describing itself as a "Pan-Africanist" student organization, it grew out of the growing Black student opposition to Southern school desegregation which in many cases took place at the expense of the Black community and to attempts by Southern state governments to phase out predominately Black colleges.

In an article which appeared in the October 1974 International Socialist Review entitled, "Black Liberation Today," Derrick Morrisson explains the development of SOBU's opposition to school desegregation in the South.

"In the 'new' South the white racist governments and school boards, the ones responsible for maintaining Jim Crow, were given the task of desegregation. When the racist school boards merged the dual or segregated Black and white school systems, hundreds of Black principals and school teachers lost their jobs and in many cases Black students entered predominantly white schools where the school song was "Dixie" and the school flag that of the slaveholding confederacy. On the public college level, state governments began plans to phase out Black colleges."

This correct opposition by SOBU to the racist implementation of court-ordered school desegregation orders, however, has carried over into their incorrect analysis of school desegregation in Boston. The FFM goes completely wrong on this question and refuses to support busing to achieve school desegregation.

According to a November 30, 1974 article which appeared in the "African World" during the height of racist violence in Boston entitled "Boston Busing Battle", "Most Black people in this country, do not believe that being in schools with white children means an automatic quality education and they are not anxious to send their children across town on buses racist mobs or not ... The schools in the white ghetto of South Boston are not quality schools. Only one percent of their graduates finish college. Thus both sides are being had by Hicks, the capitalists and other demagogues."

It goes on:

"Busing and racist violence will not solve the problems in Boston. A demand for quality education in all schools must be made and the right to attend any quality school must be upheld, especially the right to attend a quality school in one's own neighborhood."

This sounds very similar to the line put forth by our Maoist opponents on the left particularly that of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and their youth group the Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB), both of whom are anti-busing.

The anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist stance of the FFM has developed steadily over the past few years. Heavily influenced by the anti-capitalist rhetoric of many of the African liberation movements and the pseudo-socialist verbiage of African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, former head of Ghana and Julius Nyere of Tanzania, the FFM has increasingly sought to learn more about socialism and Marxism and how it can be applied to the Afro-American struggle here in the U.S. However, in the course of this generally positive development, they have mistaken many pseudo-socialist currents such as Chinese Stalinism and Nkrumahism as authentic Marxism and are openly anti-YSA if not totally anti-Trotskyist.

In addition, they are in the process of repeating many of the same mistakes made by the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in its later stages and the Black Panther Party (BPP).

In beginning to recognize that the roots of racial oppression and exploitation are within capitalism and in seeing the validity of Marxism as a political outlook that explains this and projects a course of action for totally eliminating both racism and capitalism, they attempt to artificially impose their consciousness on the majority of Black students and in failing, attempt to find a short cut to this end. FFM fails to understand that concrete mobilization against the

manifestations of imperialism such as cutbacks and racist violence is anti-imperialist in the concrete and lays the basis for developing real anti-imperialist consciousness among Black students.

They have not learned the real lessons of the civil rights movement and its strategy of mass action or from the serious errors made by SNCC and the BPP in the late 60s. These are very important lessons for Black students in this period to grasp including the FFM.

Both the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) which played a central role in the civil rights movement and later the Black Panther Party made serious mistakes. Both organizations tried to find shortcuts to win Black liberation, rather than building a massive action-oriented movement to struggle for the rights of Blacks... Both SNCC and the Panthers correctly saw that the defeat of Jim Crow brought into focus the fundamental racist nature of capitalist society. They recognized that the defeat of Jim Crow had not changed the exploitative nature of the system. They also realized that something more had to be done to alleviate the oppression and exploitation of Black people in this country.

But having gained a certain anticapitalist outlook, SNCC and the Panthers failed to link this to the immediate needs of Blacks. Instead of developing a program based on continued mass action around specific issues they developed an abstract, romantic conception of how the Black struggle should develop. The FFM has begun to repeat this same error.

The leadership of the Black liberation struggle will be forged out of the developing anti-cutback struggle on the campus and the struggles in defense of Black rights. Many of these emerging militants are participating in the activities of NSCAR and some are joining the YSA.

In the course of these struggles the YSA will be vying for leadership with groups such as the FFM and other formations which may arise with incorrect political programs. We want to be aggressive in our approach to the Black student movement both through our SCAR work and through whatever other formations may arise such as Black student unions and other nationalist formations in confronting these incorrect perspectives. Our ideas and strategy for action are the only valid perspectives for defending the gains of the Black community and Black students. Many of these students will be grappling with many of the questions which the FFM has failed to understand and will be seeking correct answers both from us and the FFM or other Black organizations with FFM's incorrect perspectives. We have to be there to provide the leadership and direction needed and to aggressively counter the distorted views of groups like the FFM and put the Black student movement firmly on the correct path.

December 12, 1975

## ANTIRACIST WORK AND THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

by Bruce Farnsworth, Denver local

In Denver, the single most significant step forward for our antiracist work has been our work with Chicanos, both on the campuses and in the community. Some of the lessons to be drawn from our success in this area could be helpful to comrades throughout the Southwest particularly.

Of central importance to this success was our ability to tap the prevailing sentiment among Chicanos against attempts to strip them of their cultural identity, and to work to translate this sentiment into concrete struggle against racism.

The suppression of the history and especially the language of the Chicano people are only two forms of the oppression that Chicanos face, but they both play a critical role in maintaining all the other forms of oppression that exist.

Because the overwhelming majority of Chicano youth enter the schools speaking Spanish (in fact, 50 percent list Spanish as their first language), any struggle for equal education that takes place in areas with large Chicano populations must incorporate the demand for bilingual education. The banning of the use of Spanish in the classroom and the resulting linguistic handicap for Chicanos, combined with other aspects of the racist educational system, has caused a functional illiteracy rate among Chicanos of seven times that among whites.

A generalized problem among leaders of the Chicano community has been their tendency to counterpose desegregation to community control of the schools. Key to our ability to work with Chicanos was our focusing in on the more general racist attack against the rights of minorities to an equal education, not just desegregation. By taking this flexible approach, not demanding agreement with SCAR on each and every position as a prerequisite for working together, we were able to involve Chicanos in SCAR activity. This approach also laid the basis for political discussions in which we strove to convince the activists we worked with of the necessity for desegregation as a step towards equal education.

In last spring's municipal elections, the Citizens' Association for Neighborhood Schools (CANS), which was organized around racist opposition to the 1972 federal court order calling for desegregation of the schools, bilingual-bicultural education and affirmative action hiring, ran two candidates for School Board. CANS (which is Denver's counterpart to ROAR in Boston and has, in fact, formally affiliated with ROAR) campaigned on a platform which promised to smash the busing plan and to "save white students from being forced to learn in Spanish."

The Socialist Workers party also ran a candidate for School Board, demanding implementation of all three prongs of the court order, and gave critical support to the campaign of Everett Chavez, an independent Chicano candidate also in the School Board race. The tactic of critical support to

his campaign gave the SWP a chance to work closely with Chavez who, at the beginning of the campaign, would tend to counterpose bilingual-bicultural education and community control to busing. The YSA, through support work for both the Socialist Workers and Chavez campaigns, came into contact with many of Chavez's campaign supporters, many of whom were activists in campus Chicano organizations.

The School Board campaign did not afford any immediate breakthroughs for the antiracist struggle, but through the relationship established with Chavez and his supporters, the groundwork was laid for future activity.

Following the campaign, an aggressive effort to reach out and establish contact with leaders of the Chicano community was begun. We wanted to sit down and talk to as many Chicano activists as possible to see what they were thinking and what their feelings about the court order and other issues were.

In the latter part of July, CANS, through its one newly elected School Board member, launched an attack on bilingual-bicultural education and called for the censorship of a number of textbooks which they characterized as "racism in reverse" because they dealt with the oppression of Chicanos. The Rocky Mountain Student Coalition Against Racism responded, in conjunction with Chavez, by organizing an extremely broad news conference which involved NAACP leaders, elected Chicano officials, and which drew in many supporters from the Chicano community.

Following the news conference, the School Board held public hearings on the censorship of textbooks and on bilingual-bicultural education. RMSCAR, again working with Chavez and others, organized a picket line and a large intervention into the hearings.

The debate at the hearings was quite sharp and the demagogical "we're-not-racists-we're-just-against-forced-busing" cloak that CANS had been wearing was stripped away by speaker after speaker. RMSCAR speakers drew the connection between these latest attacks on equal education and CANS' earlier protestations against desegregation. Out of these hearings a meeting was called to give organized expression to the angry sentiment that was evidenced by Chicanos during these proceedings.

This meeting, which took place shortly after the public hearings, represented an extremely important step in the process which began during the School Board elections. About half of the 25 people attending the meeting were Chicanos representing virtually every sector of the Chicano community, including representatives of the Congress of Hispanic Educators (CHE), as well as the only Chicana plaintiff in the original suit for desegregation. A member of the executive board of the Denver Federation of Teachers also came and

has continued to play an important role in all the activities. This grouping decided to call itself the Concerned Citizens for Equal Education (CCEE).

In this initial meeting, the confusion concerning desegregation that exists in the Chicano community was in evidence. The discussion centered on the fight for bilingual-bicultural education and affirmative action. RMSCAR's role was not to force the issue of desegregation, but to attempt to demonstrate the connection between bilingual-bicultural education, affirmative action and busing. Many of the Chicanos present were not immediately convinced, but by remaining open on this question and continually discussing, we did convince a number of them.

CCEE decided to cosponsor an upcoming RMSCAR conference and to organize a speakout on the Friday evening prior to the weekend conference.

The speakout and the conference were both successful. Over 100 people came to the speakout and over half were Chicanos. At the conference the next day, workshops were held on many different issues facing the Chicano community including victimizations of Chicano activists, affirmative action, etc.

This important conference, which served to involve not only Chicanos but also Blacks, Indians and gays in the fight against racism, called a demonstration for Nov. 22 in Denver. Again, CCEE cosponsored the action with RMSCAR.

During the fall quarter at Metropolitan State College in Denver, RMSCAR began working with members of MECHA. Together with MECHA and other campus organizations, RMSCAR and the YSA formed a coalition to oppose an administrative decision to cut off funds for student clubs and organizations. While planning activities directed against various educational cutbacks, we were able to have extended political discussions with key members of MECHA. These discussions ranged from questions of tactics for linking up with and involving organizations on other Denver campuses around the cutbacks, to questions about the relationship of desegregation to community control.

A large part of the respect that RMSCAR has among Chicano students is due to the fact that these discussions seldom remained abstract, but instead became initial steps toward concrete activity. For example, a series of meetings was called by Metro SCAR and MECHA and were attended by a broad representation of organizations from all three Denver campuses. Out of these meetings were organized a picket line and teach-in to protest the cutbacks on Nov. 20. The picket and teach-in were seen as actions to build support for the Nov. 22 demonstration. Over 50 people participated in

the Nov. 20 activities -- nearly all Chicano students.

Another result of this work is that the president of MECHA is now one of the four RMSCAR coordinators.

The specific aspects of this entire process in Denver are not presented here as a schema to be duplicated exactly throughout the Southwest. I have attempted to illustrate that the success experienced in Denver was due primarily to the conscious and consistent work that was done in the following three areas:

1) Staying closely on top of all local events that could afford an opportunity for involving the activists who we worked with. The two best examples of this were (a) utilizing the School Board hearings on bilingual-bicultural education as a public platform to speak out against and expose the racist nature of CANS and to issue a call for mass actions to oppose their attempts to stifle the implementation of the court order and (b) being able to link up the campus cutbacks struggle with the broader struggle for equal education, first through political discussions and later through organized activities;

2) Broadening our base of support. This we did not only through the activities of RMSCAR, but also through the local Socialist Workers campaign and through painstaking and often long hours of discussion with key activists in the Chicano movement. This procedure can involve a great deal of time, but the gains that were made in this case were extremely crucial in terms of our ability to make further contacts, sink deeper roots in the Chicano community, and emerge as a primary force in the fight against racism;

3) Follow-up. Beginning with the School Board campaign, each subsequent event that RMSCAR either participated in or initiated was followed up by a proposal for future activity. This was of special importance in maintaining a momentum of activity.

The main lessons to be drawn from this work underline two points. The first is that the fight against racism and for equal education can take different forms or have different emphases. Bilingual-bicultural education and affirmative action are as much a part of this struggle as desegregation in certain areas.

Secondly, our movement must be searching out local issues around which to mobilize those interested in fighting racism, whether it be a local busing issue, bilingual-bicultural education, cutbacks, racist frame-ups, or whatever. It is through these local fights, and through our tying them into the racist offensive nationally, that our movement will sink its roots into the cities and on the campuses where we are.

December 12, 1975

By Fred Murphy, Boston local

An important question that has been posed for our movement by the events in Portugal is that of centrism: what its role is and how Trotskyists should relate to it.

"Centrism" is a term that covers a very broad range of petty-bourgeois tendencies in the working class movement, whose common characteristic is that of oscillation between revolutionary socialist positions and reformist positions.

Lack of clarity on how to deal with centrist groups that have a certain amount of influence among the working class led the bulk of the Spanish Trotskyists in 1935 into an unprincipled fusion with the opportunist Catalan Federation led by Maurin, thus forming the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista - Workers Party of Marxist Unification). The POUM then entered a popular front and became a big obstacle to the development of working-class independence under the Spanish Republic, ultimately contributing to one of the most severe defeats for the socialist revolution in the twentieth century.

A similar fuzziness with respect to centrism among the Portuguese Trotskyists of the Liga Comunista Internacionista (LCI) has led to errors of principle that have already seriously delayed the achievement of the necessary clarity among the advanced workers and radical youth in Portugal.

In Portugal a number of centrist groups have emerged that command a certain amount of weight and influence. This is the result of a number of factors: the anarchist traditions on the Iberian peninsula, the impact of European radicalism, the depth of the radicalization in Portugal, the absence of a strong Trotskyist party at the outset, and the fact that the retrograde role of the Stalinists and the social democrats became clear to a layer of workers and youth fairly early.

Among the centrist groups are the Partido Revolucionario do Proletariado/Brigadas Revolucionarias (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat/Revolutionary Brigades, PRP/BR), the Movimento da Esquerda Socialista (Movement of the Socialist Left, MES), the Frente Socialista Popular (Popular Socialist Front, FSP), the Liga de Unidade e Acciao Revolucionaria (League of Revolutionary Unity and Action, LUAR), and the semi-Maoist Uniao Democratica Popular (Peoples Democratic Union, UDP).

In the year between the April 25, 1974 coup and the elections to the Constituent Assembly, many aspects of these groups' activity were fairly positive. They participated in the leadership of the postal workers' and airline workers' strikes, they demanded that Portugal get out of NATO and withdraw from the African colonies, and they defended the Maoist MRPP against government repression. They tried to oppose the military regime with varying degrees of clarity, and they sought to expose the limitations of the CP and SP's popular front project. The groups that ran candidates in the elections to the Constituent Assembly refused to sign the

MFA's anti-democratic "Pact-Program." They grew and gained influence among radicalized soldiers and workers.

Clearly, the opportunity existed for many of the best militants of these groups, and perhaps some of the groups themselves, to be won to the banner of Trotskyism and the Fourth International. For this to happen, however, required that the Portuguese Trotskyists of the LCI and the Partido Revolucionario dos Trabalhadores (Revolutionary Workers Party, PRT) maintain the utmost clarity on the bourgeois character of the MFA and its government, and polemicize with the centrists on all of their various shortcomings, hammering away at the need to build a Leninist combat party with mass influence. Most importantly, the Trotskyists had to seek to demonstrate in practice the way in which to apply the transitional method and the united front tactic around key issues such as withdrawal from the colonies, struggles against the "battle for production," the fight for democratic rights, etc. Common work with the centrists in such campaigns would have demonstrated to the best of them the superiority of our program in practice.

But, most unfortunately, this was not the approach of the larger and more influential of the Portuguese groups that support the Fourth International. The LCI, following the example of the European sections of the International Majority Tendency, carried out the line of the European Perspectives Document approved at the tenth World Congress. The LCI oriented itself not to the objective needs of the class struggle of the masses, but to the "concerns of the vanguard," and locked itself into the milieu and methods of operation of the centrist currents. With such an orientation, it was inevitable that these young and inexperienced comrades would find themselves making political adaptations to the moods and muddled politics of the centrists, anarchists, and Maoists.

Trotsky wrote: "It is precisely in a decisive moment that the inconsistency of left centrism must be revealed in the most striking and tragic fashion." Such a "decisive moment" came in Portugal after the March 1975 mass upsurge and the elections to the Constituent Assembly. The Armed Forces Movement (MFA), seeking to co-opt the centrists and liquidate the independent base of the Socialist Party, launched a demagogic campaign against "bourgeois democracy," that is, against the democratic rights of the SP, the largest workers' party in Portugal. The ultraleft centrists without exception fell into the MFA's trap. The LCI, orienting to the centrists' "concerns", joined them, and in so doing turned their back on the concerns of literally millions of Portuguese workers who would have been more open than ever before to a clear Trotskyist explanation of the nature of the MFA, the roots of the Communist Party's strikebreaking, and the limitations of the pro-capitalist leadership of the Socialist Party.

A correct orientation would have necessitated swimming against the stream of the so-called "vanguard," and some very sharp denunciations of the infantile leftists. But this would have been more than compensated by the respect and influence the LCI could have gained among the real "vanguard" of June and July -- the best of the Socialist workers who wanted to struggle for their democratic rights.

Instead the LCI chose to peddle a slightly more "Trotskyist" version of the slogans of the ultralefts, Stalinists, and military demagogues: "Dissolve the Constituent Assembly! Down with Social Democracy! Long live the occupation of Republica!"

The process of adaptation to the centrists culminated when the LCI added its signature to the manifesto of the Front for Popular Unity (FUP) on August 25, 1975. The manifesto states: "The document drawn up by COPCON, and the document entitled 'Lines of Programmatic Action and Tasks of Transition' constitute a valid working basis for the elaboration of a revolutionary political program. . . . The creation of a front encompassing the revolutionary parties and other revolutionary political organizations, revolutionary militants, the MFA, and the autonomous organs of peoples power the guide document of the MFA-People Alliance refers to, constitute a way forward for the revolutionary process." (Intercontinental Press, September 15, 1975, page 1206, emphasis added).

The "COPCON document" referred to has the following to say: "The first measure that must be assured, and the first keystone of power to be built, is the genuine achievement of the MFA-People Alliance. This power will be the political leadership in the transitional period until the establishment of the National Peoples Assembly . . . . Long live the indestructible alliance between the workers and the Armed Forces! Long live the MFA-People Alliance! Long live Portugal!" (Intercontinental Press, September 15, 1975, page 1212)

The FUP manifesto was signed by the Communist Party and its petty-bourgeois front group, the MDP; by the PRP/BR, the MES, the LUAR, and the FSP; by a group called the "First of May," and by the LCI. It was signed "in the presence of representatives of the MFA." Politically, the signatures of the centrist tendencies and of the LCI represented a capitulation to the bourgeois MFA government and to the popular front policies of the Stalinists. The capitulation these groups had refused to make when approached with the Pact-Program in April had now been consummated.

When the CP, for tactical reasons, pulled out of the FUP, it was rechristened the Front for Revolutionary Unity (FUR). If anything, its manifesto was even worse than that of the FUP. It reiterated all the centrist muddle, but with the addition of a number of sectarian, "third-period" - type formulations equating social democracy with fascism. Again, the LCI added its signature. Up to the present time, although the United Secretariat made some criticism of the FUP in its September 2 resolution, not one word of explicit dissociation of the world Trotskyist movement from the LCI's presence in this POUM-like front has been forthcoming from any of the

leading bodies of the International. Only such dissociation, coupled with sharp, principled criticism could help the Portuguese comrades draw back from their dangerous course.

To their credit, the comrades of the PRT, though they have made their share of errors, did make such a criticism. Addressing the LCI, they wrote: "The PRT believes that those organizations that had not signed the Pact-Program and thus capitulated to the military government in April, have now capitulated to the bourgeois government, supporting the anti-labor 'battle for production' and the neo-colonialist maneuvers evident in Angola and Timor . . . . We think now, that impelled by a sound desire to fight against a reactionary coup, your organization has committed a terrible error, an error that tragically endangers your chances of helping to accomplish the tasks of Portuguese Trotskyists, building a Leninist combat party with mass influence in order to assure the victory of the socialist revolution . . . . So we call on you, comrades, to denounce this popular front yourselves. We appeal to you to continue to combine forces with us in the task of unifying the revolutionary Marxist forces in a solid Revolutionary Workers party." (Intercontinental Press, October 6, 1975, pages 1343-44).

For three months this fall, the Communist Party utilized the FUR in its project of using ultraleft tactics to force the MFA to take Stalinist ministers back into the government. The CP created an atmosphere conducive to an ultraleft putsch attempt, letting the FUR kid itself into the belief that masses of workers and soldiers were behind it. When paratroopers under the influence of the FUR moved to carry out in practice the logic of the FUR's orientation, the CP washed its hands of the FUR parties, denouncing them for "sectarian adventurism."

Now these groups, that one year ago perhaps had the potential to develop, through the fusion of their best elements, into a revolutionary socialist leadership, are now confused, demoralized, and driven partially underground by repression. Meanwhile a new popular front agreement is in the works between the CP, the SP, the PPD (Popular Democrats -- the main bourgeois party in Portugal), and the military. The bourgeoisie has its best opportunity in seventeen months to regain a level of stability and discipline in the armed forces and the state apparatus, and is in a position to use the army against workers' and peasants' struggles.

The centrists in whose wake the LCI has trailed committed the classical ultraleft error: confusing the taking of state power with the winning of the masses. A good example of this can be found in the press of the International Socialists in this country. IS has made a project over the past few months of leading an uncritical cheer-leading campaign for the PRP/BR, the most ultra of the Portuguese ultralefts and the erstwhile admirers of General Carvalho. In the November 28 issue of Workers Power we read: "The first shots in the Portuguese civil war have been fired. The lines have been drawn and there can be

no turning back. It is only a matter of time.

"There is just one question left -- who will win, the workers or their exploiters.

"Right now, in the working class quarters of Lisbon, Oporto, and Setubal, arms are being distributed. The revolutionaries are taking their places beside the people." Clearly, wishful thinking such as this is no substitute for correct politics.

Lenin demanded absolute clarity when it came to the question of winning the masses to the revolutionary party, and he hammered home a definition of "masses" that has nothing in common with the ultraleft mythology of the PRP/BR and the other Portuguese centrists. "When the revolution has been sufficiently prepared the concept of masses becomes different. Several thousand workers no longer constitute the masses. The concept of masses undergoes a change, so that it implies the majority, and not simply a majority of the workers alone but also of all the exploited. Any other kind of interpretation is impermissible for a revolutionary and any other sense of the word becomes incomprehensible." (Collected Works, Volume 32, page 476. Emphasis in original).

Winning a majority, in Lenin's sense of the term, requires that our comrades in Portugal start not from the "concerns of the vanguard," but from the real consciousness of the masses of workers, soldiers and peasants. Great opportunities remain, despite the setbacks of recent weeks. In 1931 Trotsky had some advice for his followers in Spain, who faced a situation not too different from that in Portugal today.

Following the elections to the Constituent Cortes, or assembly, he wrote: "The Socialists appear to have won a great

victory. This is the crux of the parliamentary situation: the Socialist leaders consider themselves lucky because they do not have a majority in the Cortes, and because their coalition with the bourgeoisie is thus justified by parliamentary statistics . . . .

"We must begin immediately to expose the plan of the Socialists, unmasking them on each particular question . . . . But exposing them alone is not enough: We need a clear political slogan, corresponding to the character of the present stage of the Spanish revolution. The results of the election make that slogan absolutely clear: the workers must break the coalition with the bourgeoisie, and force the Socialists to take power . . . .

"If the communists, at this stage, turn their backs on the Cortes, opposing to it the slogan of soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat, they would only demonstrate that they cannot be taken seriously . . . . Under these conditions, to speak of the overthrow of bourgeois parliamentarism by the dictatorship of the proletariat would simply mean to play the part of imbeciles and babblers. The task is to gather strength for the party on the basis of the parliamentary stage of the revolution, and to rally the masses to us. That is the only way that parliamentarism can be overcome. But precisely for that purpose it is indispensable to develop a fierce agitation under the most decisive and extreme democratic slogans."

How much more so is this the task in Portugal today, when the masses harbor illusions not only in bourgeois parliamentarism, but even to a large degree in a military dictatorship, illusions that have only been strengthened by the anti-democratic putschism of the ultralefts and centrists.

December 12, 1975



## YSA TO COMBAT RACIST ATTACK ON CHICANO CULTURE

By Dorothy Taylor, San Antonio local

There is an attempt underway by conservative white racist forces in collaboration with certain elements of the Chicano community to "demexicanize" the Spanish-speaking population of the Southwest. This is nothing new. It began in the 1820s and 1830s when American settlers, with their hired mercenaries from Missouri and Tennessee and with full support of the U. S. government, invented the imperialist doctrine of "manifest destiny." Under this banner, they were able to rob the Mexican Republic of half of its national territory. There's a lot that's not printed in American text books about this epoch of our history. The person who wants to find the truth must spend long hours digging through the back rows in public and college libraries, so that piece by piece he or she can put together a fragmented picture of what really happened. For example it is seldom mentioned in American history books that one of the main reasons for the racist-imperialist offensive against Mexico was the Mexican government's opposition to slavery. Many of the white Texas immigrants were slave owners! Also it is not mentioned that during that period of time the imperialist dreamers longed to conquer all of Canada, the remaining half of Mexico, and all of Central and South America. They longed to see the American flag flying over the entire Western hemisphere. Such imperialistic notions are totally repulsive and alien to the most elementary concepts of human dignity and democracy.

But thus began the Chicano-Anglo conflict. Unfortunately there are those within the Mexican-American community who are oblivious to these historical truths. They seem content to accept the position assigned to them as "second class citizens." In their efforts to identify with their white exploiters they reject the beauty of their own culture. It is a tragic scene indeed, for the very desire of the exploiters is to wipe out the Spanish-American culture. For years Mexican-Americans were forbidden to speak Spanish in the elementary and high schools of the Southwest. Chicano children who came into the first grade not knowing English were often put in with retarded children. After such humiliating treatment, it is no wonder that the average Chicano has only an eighth grade education. Also, the white racists who so strongly oppose busing for Blacks would be perfectly happy to see a citywide busing program for Chicano students since this

would serve to disrupt bilingual educational programs which the Chicanos have fought for, for so long.

The major attack now being waged on the Chicano community is the attack against undocumented workers. Propagandists of the immigration department would have people

to believe that these people are taking work away from American citizens, mainly Chicanos. This is a lie, because what person born in this country is going to work for ten hours a day for forty cents an hour. The undocumented workers are not taking work away from anyone, they are being used as slave laborers. With unemployment running at forty percent in Mexico, what else can they do? Yet they are blamed for the ills of our capitalist society. The victims of capitalism in their efforts to survive all of a sudden become the culprits! If the U. S. government would stop spending one hundred billion dollars a year on the military machine, jobs could be created for every person in this society, and there would be a place for the thousands of undocumented workers where they could make a decent living.

But this isn't what the racists want. The continual flow of Mexican nationals into this country serves as a cultural stimulus to the Chicano community. It stimulates the use of the Spanish language, and the furthering of Mexican thought and cultural trends. All this is very frightening to the conservative white oppressors. Their desire is to divide Mexicans against Chicanos and Chicanos against Mexicans, this is the mass psychology technique which they wish to employ in order to stay on top.

As members of the YSA we should intensify our efforts to assist the Chicano movement. We should find ways to help the undocumented workers in their struggle for survival. In the words of Jose Angel Rodriguez, "La raza es una sola raza." We should expose and denounce all efforts made by the racists to divide the Chicano community. United we stand, but divided we fall.

VIVA LA CAUSA Y VIVA EL SOCIALISMO

December 13, 1975

## RELIGION, THE OPIATE OF THE MASSES

By Dorothy Taylor, San Antonio local

From the most primitive times, man has sought mystical ways to escape from the problems and ailments which occur as part of the natural course of life. Witchdoctors were the forerunners of modern theologians and psychologists, offering tantalizing suggestions to the receptive mind. Today, mental suggestion is administered through meditation cults, evangelistic crusades, positive thinking techniques, etc. The one thing that all these things have in common is that they produce a certain chemical state within the brain. This chemical state is the result of emotional stimuli, and the response is a more positive feeling, a release from psychosomatic pressures and nervous tensions. It is strictly a scientific process, involving electro-neural chemical impulses.

As the pressures of the decaying bourgeois society mount up, there are those who refuse to hear logical solutions. They escape from the external conflicts by indulging in "the opiate." Once the individual is high on religion, he will believe anything that comes forth in the name of a higher power. There is no more room for logic, nor for rational thinking. It is at this point that the reactionary forces take up the banner of religion... their purpose is to deradicalize and neutralize the people. They teach that one should not worry about the present world condition, that Christ is coming to set up a perfect government... But then Christians have been waiting for that for two thousand years, not to mention the Jews who have been waiting for six thousand years.

It is through Christianity and Judaism that the doctrines of Zionism are able to exist. The Jews are pictured as being the "Chosen people." And Israel is pictured as being the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. It is not mentioned however that a prophecy can be self fulfilling through the power of mass suggestion.

But the working class will not be deceived forever by the proclamations of the religionists. The process of coming off the opiate may be difficult, due to long term addiction, but in the end the eyes of the blind will be opened! There can be no answer until there is a question. The question begins in the mind of the individual as he no longer can ignore the inconsistencies of bourgeois religious teachings.

There will come a day when evangelists no longer will tour the countryside robbing the poor of their welfare checks and leaving them with unfulfilled promises of healings and blessings to come. Why are these men allowed to drive around in Cadillacs and yet they do not pay one penny in taxes. They are allowed to do this because the opiate which they administer deactivates the radicalizing mind. Little do they know that increased interest in religion is simply one of the manifestations of a sick and dying capitalist society.

December 13, 1975

## NEW YORK CUTBACKS FIGHT

By Sam Manuel & Mark Friedman, Lower East Side, New York local

The City University of New York (CUNY) consists of ten four-year colleges, eight two-year colleges, a graduate center and an affiliated medical school. It has 275,000 students, 15,000 faculty and over 1,000 administrators. Financed through public (city and state) taxes, CUNY has an annual budget of \$600 million. Since 1847, CUNY has been tuition free and since the mass struggle in 1968-69 led by Blacks and Puerto Ricans for open admissions, guarantees admission to all graduates of the City's High schools.

Within the CUNY system there are also programs, won through open admissions, for the preparation of educationally deprived students to prepare them for college. The two major programs are College Discovery and SEEK (Search for Elevation thru Education and Knowledge). Prior to the victory of open admissions there were 175,000 students in CUNY, approximately 50,000 of them Black, Puerto Rican, Asian and other oppressed nationalities. Today, out of 275,000 80,000 are from the oppressed nationalities. However, most of the oppressed nationalities are "tracked" into the two community colleges which gear students into vocational and other non-academic programs and careers. The number of students who complete their education in the two year community colleges and then move on to the 4 year schools or graduate programs are few. This has left the 4 year schools overwhelmingly white in composition and the community colleges Black, Puerto Rican and Asian.

The ruling class of NY and the US as a whole is not particularly happy with the increased college enrollment of Blacks and Puerto Ricans. While they have needed more highly skilled workers for heavily industrialized production, the graduation of hundreds of thousands of students, especially Blacks and Puerto Ricans with liberal arts degrees pose them with more problems. The capitalist class does not want many more teachers, sociologists, or philosophers -- people who think they have a right to such an education -- especially when these people think they are needed in society and society says it doesn't need them.

Over the past couple of years several reports by various commissions (Keppel, Carnegie, Yankelovich) have been prepared for ruling class consumption. These reports clearly spell out the need to begin to cut back on the number of liberal arts graduates and to move to strengthen those community colleges that can develop more secretaries, computer programmers, and the like. These reports, especially aimed at the CUNY system in NY, have laid the basis for the current wave of cutbacks threatening CUNY. The pretext used for the cuts is the economic crisis in New York.

The economic crisis of NYC is completely phony. The city and its rulers are richer than ever. The banks are making millions from increased taxes, higher subway fares, wage

cuts of municipal workers, generalized inflation, interest on Big MAC bonds, and now federal government loans to the NYC banks with working people paying the interest. The city is trying to say that CUNY, which only uses 3% of the city's budget, is at the root of all the problems.

The city administration has been most careful when dealing with the proposed cuts in CUNY. Even the plans that they have proposed to bring CUNY back to pre-1968 size and composition have been "delicate."

The cuts in CUNY have been small in comparison to other sections of the working class. Over 50,000 NYC workers have already been laid off, social services drastically cut, day care centers closed, and on and on.

Throughout the course of several years the Board of Higher Education has discussed various proposed cutbacks and special plans for altering CUNY. It is only this year, however, that they have seriously considered them because of the current fiscal crisis. These plans have proposed the institution of tuition (State Commissioner of Education Nyquist Plan), the shutting down of six colleges (City College President Marshak Plan), and the most serious plan proposed by Chancellor Kibbee. His plan would make drastic cuts in staff and correspondingly students, force the faculty onto a four week payless furlough, and establish new requirements for admission to CUNY -- thus effectively eliminating open admissions which was won in 1969. It is these plans that are the focal point of the anger of the students -- and to date, because of the mass mobilizations, none of them has been implemented.

In late September, State Education Commissioner Nyquist proposed the institution of tuition in CUNY at the rate of \$650-800 per year. This was met with teach-ins and demonstrations on many of the CUNY campuses that built toward a city-wide demonstration at Governor Carey's office of 7,000 students and faculty. This demonstration, the first mass city-wide action, was initiated by the University Student Senate (USS), all the CUNY student governments, and the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the union of CUNY faculty members.

With the initial call for this action the YSA mobilized its forces on all the campuses to build the demonstration, to organize marches from the various schools to the demonstration, to help organize marshalls, and along with the New York Student Coalition Against Racism (NYSCAR), we built broad coalitions on the campuses where possible to build the demonstration. We went around to classrooms educating students and faculty about the cutbacks, wrote articles for the campus press, and spoke to other campus organizations about getting involved.

The most important aspect of building this demonstra-

tion and the subsequent others was the united front approach. That meant building the broadest possible support for each demonstration through getting common agreement on the need for action and unity around the demands: No Cuts, No Tuition, Defend Open Admissions.

Although somewhat disorganized because of lack of leadership from the USS and the PSC, the September 18 action of 7,000 marked the opening battle and showed the potential that existed for mobilizing thousands of students in mass action in the streets demanding that education is our right.

It has proven absolutely crucial to have an open and non-sectarian approach to building the actions -- whether that be toward the student governments or our opponents on the left. It was our quest for unity in action against the cuts that placed the YSA in the forefront of the cutbacks fight. Under the pressure of the mobilization of students, the student governments have been forced more and more to take radical actions in defense of their students' education. It has meant that the student governments, which as little as 3 months ago refused to take part in cutbacks activity, has been forced to endorse, support and even lead, with the YSA and other organizations, the demonstrations, pickets, teach-ins, etc. In many cases the student governments, have adapted our concept of using the student government and the university as a whole to fight for the needs and interests of students -- in this case in the fight against the cutbacks. Student government presidents and members (especially from the community colleges) have stepped forward as cutbacks activists -- leading at times thousands of students from their campus to demonstrations. The student governments were forced into allocating funds -- tens of thousands of dollars for cutbacks activities. On a majority of the campuses the student government offices became the coordinating centers for campus activities against the cuts.

Close to a dozen major demonstrations have taken place over the past three months on a city wide level. In addition there have been scores of campus meetings, teach-ins and informational pickets.

It is especially important to take up the role of the University Student Senate. This body was originally created by the Board of Higher Education to act as a buffer between the students and the city administration. It consists of elected representatives from each of the student governments in all the CUNY schools. Prior to this year it has not played an active part in the life of CUNY but has primarily been a lobbying instrument in Albany for CUNY. But it too, like the local student governments, has been forced to initiate cutbacks demonstrations -- knowing that if they did not organize them and control them bureaucratically, someone else would start organizing them and circumvent the USS authority. Although they initiated actions, they consciously kept students from participating in the decision making process up to and including the action. There was little consultation with other student governments, and in fact

some student governments didn't even know about the demonstrations until after they were over because the demonstrations were called and run bureaucratically from one USS office.

The USS has been a training ground for student government leaders to begin to make their way into the Democratic and Republican party. The current leadership is perhaps one of the best examples. Throughout the entire struggle it has sought to shackle the power of the students. For it the mass demonstrations have been merely a means to get a better bargaining position with the Board of Higher Education. After calling demonstrations, more often than not, the USS leadership would consciously try to prevent them from being built -- whether by stalling on leaflet production, sound or parade permits, not telling anyone what was going on, trying to play one student government off against another, behind the scenes red-baiting, or inciting disunity. Our response to this sabotage was to let all the student governments know exactly what was going on behind the scenes so that the blame for the problems would be directed against the USS leadership -- the real cause of disaffection. We were extremely careful not to get ourselves isolated so that USS leadership could red bait us. In fact, because the USS was actually opposed to involving student governments and activists in the decision making, we assumed that responsibility. This was the only contact that most of the 20 campuses had with the cutbacks struggle. We began to develop a rapport with them, educating them about the need for mass action, explaining the role that they and the USS should be playing, helping them in organizing demonstrations, marshalling, and teach-ins on their respective campuses. Through this conscious plan of helping the campuses, providing city-wide direction and unity, the YSA and SCAR were with the USS the central leadership of the cutbacks fight. In fact, as the disaffection with the USS leadership grew, we were viewed as the leadership of the cutbacks fight on a citywide level.

Campus situations differed widely. They ranged from there being one central cutbacks group on campus or the student government assuming the leadership, to the existence of three or four cutbacks coalitions on a campus -- each vying for the leadership. The approach of all of our opponents (from Revolutionary Student Brigade to the Young Workers Liberation League) was to form their own little sectarian city-wide and campus cutbacks coalition. They all said that they were the real and honestly city-wide group and everyone should just affiliate with them.

The YSA was the only group that did not fall into this trap. We called for the unity of all groups in action and not necessarily in an organization. This enabled us to be the only students making a real call for unity -- a non-sectarian appeal. All the other left groups were indeed sectarian in their call. This enabled us to take the lead citywide. We made a conscious decision to use our strength to pressure the USS into calling the actions

-- thus uniting all of the student governments in action. We knew that this would tend to force unity on the campuses -- everybody would have to relate to the USS's proposals. The affect on the campuses was excellent. It gave our members and supporters a focus for action and a basis upon which to call for unity on the campus. It gave us a handle by which we could approach our student governments and force them to start allocating resources and lend their endorsement to USS initiated actions. It put our opponents on the spot. Are you for or against Unity in reality? Are you for or against Mass action on a city-wide basis? Are you non-sectarian and willing to work with anyone fighting the cuts like the YSA is? Our opponents failed. For all purposes they drove themselves out of the student movement. They ended up as little groups of do-nothing whining brats standing on the edge of the demonstrations of 6,000 people chanting "YSA protects the bourgeoisie" or "We will not accept defeat, the ruling class we must defeat." They were despised by the masses and in some cases literally driven off campus by the cutbacks activists.

The role that the YSA played in city-wide communication between the campuses, thus laying the basis for unity, was the way in which we began to directly assume the leadership of the student movement. We were viewed as the people who did everything after we had forced the USS to initiate action. We organized the details of everything and through that provided the day to day political leadership. From early September we recognized the need for a big city-wide meeting to discuss perspectives but were unable to call and organize it ourselves in isolation from the student governments which were not as yet involved. Our opening came with the USS call for an open steering committee meeting of the USS. We built that meeting on all the campuses -- this was the first contact we had with about 16 of the campuses. This meeting of 125 people then called for another city-wide meeting a week later which drew 200 people and called the March on Washington, as well as a number of local actions. The Washington demonstration was of national importance in the student movement for the example it set. For further information on it see the Militant of November 14.

Through the call and building of these meetings and demonstrations, students began to realize that they were the ones who should be making the decisions from now on and should have been consulted all along. This set the whole process of democratization in motion that the USS has been unable to stop and that is leading towards a real transformation of the USS. We have been in the forefront of this whole process, working hand in hand with student governments and activists who want to change the purpose of the USS. This was only made possible because of our super nonsectarian attitude towards all and our seriousness about building mass action.

#### State of the student movement

Bourgeois writers and burned out radicals have proclaimed the death of the student movement for some time, but it is

not the students on their deathbed but capitalism itself. The cutbacks actions in NYC have confirmed this view, the YSA's view.

As the radicalization of students continues the actions and demands of students reflect more and more their understanding of capitalism and the economic crisis. In NYC this has been more clearly reflected in the demands of the demonstrations. Some of these are: "No Cuts, No layoffs"

They say Cutback, We say Fightback; No Cuts, No way, Open admissions is here to say." But even beyond these demands we heard: "Education is our Right, we will fight with all our might," "The City's got the money, we're no fools, take it from the banks and give it to the schools." An entire contingent of over 1,500 Kingsborough students marched under a banner in Washington November 19 that said "We will not be political pawns. People before profits."

There is an increasing consciousness that students are no longer a privileged group in society -- students identify more and more with the struggles of the working class, knowing that they will be full-time workers soon.

These students demonstrating now are not going to forget the demonstrations of today when they enter the factories tomorrow. Even now the students ask: Why aren't the workers demonstrating? Why are they letting themselves be laid off and cutback? They should stand up and fight like us.

It is this sentiment in the student movement that enabled us to get a call passed by the USS for a mass city-wide meeting of students, faculty, trade unionists, and members of community groups to discuss united action of all in fighting the cutbacks. As socialists we have seen the need for such a meeting for 6 months, and have primarily called for it through our socialist election campaigns. Now, however, with the actions of thousands of students, and being in a position of strength in the student movement, we have been able to get the student movement to take this initiative and call for such a meeting.

The union bureaucracy is opposed to such a meeting. They instead call for cuts in other unions to protect their own. The union bureaucrats do the job of the ruling class in pitting one union against another.

The student movement has been able to avoid the pitfall by calling for No Cuts No Layoffs at all, although there have been some attempts to pit faculty against students (tuition vs. layoffs) and whites against the oppressed nationalities (over the question of open admissions).

The student movement in NYC can teach the union a thing or two about defending one's gains -- about proletarian forms of struggle like mass action and not backroom deals, about unity against a common enemy and not divide and conquer.

Such a city-wide meeting can begin the process of reaching out to the ranks of the unions being hit by the cuts and urging them to join with students in the fight. Through this strategy we can begin to talk with rank and file trade union militants about our perspective of a class-struggle left-wing in the union movement as an answer to the en-

trenched bureaucracy.

There is a tendency in our movement (that we have been trying to correct) for our socialist intervention to "get lost" when we are in the midst of a mass struggle. It is sometimes difficult to work out the best balance between what we consider "mass work" and "our work." This a false dichotomy that must be avoided. It places us in a position where we have to "choose" between the two -- and ultimately "our socialist intervention" gets cut short. At times this cannot be helped -- like when we have a defense problem. But we should plan out our intervention so that the socialist intervention can have its maximum affect.

In the NYC cutbacks fight we strived to keep the public face of the YSA as visible as possible, not letting ourselves get lost in the marshalling, or being just the "best leafletters, etc." By planning out Militant and Young Socialist sales assignments, YSA button sales, YSA statement distribution, YSA speakers, and campaign distribution well in advance of an action we tended to minimize the problem of "losing" the YSA. We tried to maintain the norm of literature tables on the campuses and made sure they were up at city-wide activities.

With campuses across the city exploding in cutbacks activity we realized that we would have to get our socialist ideas onto those campuses where we had no members. At the beginning of the fall we had members on 4 CUNY campuses and as of this writing we have members and supporters on 12 CUNY campuses. Briefly, this was done through the establishment of an in-city YSA team and by taking any and all available comrades and having them go onto these new campuses and begin doing YSA work. The Socialist Workers campaign committees decided to put 3 people on full time to go onto the campuses to help get the YSA going. Through our leadership role in the cutbacks fight we have drawn around us scores of activists, recruited about 30 of them to the YSA and have laid the basis for the expansion of the Trotskyist movement in New York through the formation of new YSA locals and SWP branches. We are now on more campuses in NYC than ever before in the history of our movement in this city and are laying the basis for the YSA becoming the mass socialist student organization that we must become.

#### The antiracist aspect of the fight

The YSA holds that the fight against the superexploitation of national oppression faced by Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Asians, and other oppressed nationalities will be central to the success of the socialist revolution in America. All of our opponents on the left either try to disregard the need to place special emphasis on the demands of the most oppressed or outrightly opposed, as does the YWLL, the independent thrust of these struggles as bourgeois nationalism and dividing the working class.

The thrust of the cuts in CUNY have been aimed sharpest at the most oppressed. The central aim of the Board of Higher Education (BHE) and the city administration at this time is to destroy Open Admission, SEEK, and College Discovery,

programs won by Black, Puerto Rican, and Asian students and their allies.

Last spring the BHE announced its intention to phase out the SEEK and College Discovery programs. At that time the National Student Coalition Against Racism had just been founded and was building, in conjunction with the NAACP, for the May 17 march on Boston.

In the spring the movement was saddled with a maoist and sectarian leadership, primarily the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO). They sought to narrow the struggle through ultraleft demands and red-baiting the YSA, NSCAR, and those who supported the right of the YSA to work in the coalition to fight the cuts. Despite the weaknesses of the leadership we were able to get several mass action called and win some allies for our ideas. A victory was won when the BHE announced that it would rescind the cuts proposed in SEEK and College Discovery.

Over the summer the BHE sent a letter to students in the SEEK residence informing them that they would have to evacuate the dorm within two weeks. Dormitory space is provided for SEEK students who need living accommodations while attending CUNY, some of the students had been leaders in the fight to save SEEK in the spring. In addition many had attended the founding conference of NSCAR or attended the May 17 March on Boston and respected SCAR and the YSA as fighters against racism.

They called upon NYSCAR to join them in their struggle and looked to it for leadership. Because of the summer break the scope of what could be done was limited. Along with SCAR the students organized a meeting with the head of the SEEK program for the BHE. He refused to meet so the students decided to wait in the central SEEK office until the director of the program for the BHE arrived. The BHE then decided to meet with the students but gave no concessions. The students decided to remain in the central SEEK office overnight until their demand to save the residence was met. The BHE made the concession of allowing the present number of students to remain but to begin to phase out the dorm. The SEEK students accepted this offer with the understanding that they would continue to fight to keep and expand the dorm.

The last convention of the Student Coalition Against Racism passed a resolution against educational cutbacks -- especially those in NYC -- pointing out the racist character of the attacks on Black, Puerto Rican and Asian studies, SEEK, College Discovery, and cuts in financial aid. SCAR pledged its support in helping to build a mass movement in NYC and around the country to stop the cuts.

It is with this resolution that SCAR jumped with all its energy into the NYC cutbacks fight.

While the central focus of SCAR on a national and local level is first and foremost in defense of busing and school desegregation, it can have additional foci. Because SCAR is an organization that fights racism wherever it exists, there is a flexibility to it that we cannot overlook. SCAR can take on projects that vary tremendously -- from com-

munity control struggles to the defense of political prisoners, from affirmative action fights to cutbacks struggles. It would be a grave error to view SCAR in a rigid or narrow way.

The YSA works with SCAR and is part of its leadership. SCAR is an organization through which the YSA can be more actively involved in the fight against racism. SCAR's perspective of fighting racism through mass action is the same perspective that the YSA has. We must recognize though that the socialist program of the YSA for ending racism is a position that SCAR does not hold. SCAR as an organization does not have a position on how we will ultimately end racism -- only that it must be fought. The YSA maintains that racism will only end when the material basis for racism, capitalism, is ended. SCAR, then, is a valuable organization by which the YSA, while participating in it, can help lead the fight against racism.

It has been primarily through our work in SCAR that the YSA has been able to take the initiative in leading the NY cutbacks fight. SCAR has played the main leadership role of any organization in fighting the cuts -- however it is not a cutbacks coalition. It is an antiracist organization that is very actively fighting the cuts because we view them as racist. We point out the disproportionate attacks on the oppressed nationalities' right to an education, the special attack on the community colleges, and the need to defend SEEK and college discovery which are under attack primarily because of their role in enabling the oppressed nationalities to get an education.

We do not attempt to project SCAR as the cutbacks coalition -- or as a cutbacks coalition at all. We are an organization of activists in the fight against racism that sees the need to point out and educate people about the racist character of the cuts. We seek to mobilize people in mass action against the cuts because they are racist.

In order to do this we have had teach-ins, SCAR statements on SEEK, college discovery, and the cuts, distributed the Student Mobilizer, and produced a button that says: "Defend SEEK, No Cuts - No Tuition at Cuny." Our primary means of exposing the racist nature of the cuts has been through SCAR speakers on campuses, at demonstrations, and setting up SCAR chapters on CUNY campuses.

We have won tremendous respect for SCAR because of these activities -- especially among Blacks and Puerto Ricans. Only SCAR has stood up and made this point clearly.

The USS and our "left wing" opponents have bent to the pressure from the racists in CUNY and have refused to label the cuts as racist. They refuse to focus the defense on the most hard hit. They have even said that the cuts are not racist but affect all and that SCAR is dividing the movement by labelling the cuts racist. Our answer is that unity in the movement is crucial, but it must be based on unity around the demands of the most oppressed and the recognition that Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Asians are the most hard hit in the cutbacks. White students have begun to understand why the cuts are racist, and this has only

been made possible because of the work that SCAR has done. The massive recognition by students that the cuts are racist has also tended to keep the more right-wing and racist students in the movement from bringing out their filth in any attempt to organize white students against the demands of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Asians.

SCAR members and supporters around the city on and off campus have been involved in defending CUNY because the NYC cutbacks fight is the main fight against racism taking place in the city today. NYC SCAR sought the support of SCAR chapters across the country in building for the March on Washington, thus pointing out that the fight against racism in NYC is of national importance.

### Conclusion

The cutbacks fight in NYC is merely a precursor for the student struggles that will develop in city after city across the country and thus teaches us valuable lessons about the "defensive" struggles that are being waged to maintain those gains that we have previously won.

Our movement must "take the lead" in the student movement. We must be aggressive and not wait for some other group to take the initiative. We must constantly search for what might appear to be small openings -- like making a few phone calls for a meeting -- but which will give us input in the political direction of a struggle.

Second, we must be non-sectarian. We must always call the loudest for unity and provide a means for that unity to come about. This will expose our sectarian opponents (which includes all of our opponents) and show students that we are the serious organization wanting to build a movement to defend our rights.

Third, we must apply our strategy of the united front in building a movement to gain use of the universities' facilities for our struggles, that is, organizing everyone we can in action around demands that everyone can agree with and using this force to begin to transform our student governments and institutions into fighting organizations.

Fourth, we must build a democratic mass movement. We know that mass action is what the government and their agents fear the most and what they respond to, and we know that the only way such a mass movement can be built is through the involvement of large numbers in open democratic, decision making processes.

Fifth, we must recruit to the YSA. Ultimately it will only be the growth of the YSA into a mass organization of socialist students that will be able to lead the student movement to victory in its struggles and be able to link the struggles of students to those of other sectors of the population fighting their oppression. Only such unity that will be forged in struggle will in the long run bring real social change and a socialist revolution.

December 13, 1975

FOR THE DISCUSSION OF AN ASPECT OF THE 'RED UNIVERSITY' STRATEGY: STUDENT GOVERNMENT  
AND THE YSA

By David Maybury, Boston local

1. The "Red University:" a general strategy

In discussing the pluses and minuses of the YSA's participation in Student Government apparatus, comrades will undoubtedly refer to the 'Red University' strategy. The 'Red University' of course is the code word for a program of revolutionary change based upon the transitional approach to the struggles of youth on and off the campuses. The 'Red University' strategy is the guiding program that we in the YSA (as revolutionary socialists) follow in order to mobilize students around the important struggles of the day: the fight against racism and the defense of the Black community in Boston's demand for school desegregation, the anticutback struggles as they arise, defense campaigns of victims of repression, etc.

The YSA has never hesitated when it came to using any of the institutional resources of the University, because we hold the perspective of transforming these resources of the bourgeois university into tools of struggle against the old masters. Student Government is of course not different from any of the other resources of the University. In normal times, it is a stronghold of student bureaucracy and the ruling elite's training ground for future message runners and petty executioners, perhaps even future rulers. However, under the impulse of the mass youth radicalization of the sixties, the Student Government apparatus resisted transformation no better than other parts of the University. It too became prone to playing an active role in the antiwar struggle for example.

The YSA alone of the socialist and radical organizations understood this process of transformation and sought to develop it in the context of the transitional approach of the 'Red University.

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In this contribution to the discussion of Student Government and the YSA, I would like to bring out the important need to develop an understanding among all comrades of the dangerous contradictions and pitfalls revolutionary socialists' face upon entering the teapot tempest atmosphere of Student Government. This certainly is not meant as an argument against the YSA running electoral campaigns for, or serving in, Student Government. To the contrary! Members of the YSA will increasingly find themselves playing a leadership role on campuses as radicalization further deepens and conflict sharpens with the agonizing capitalist class. We will also be preparing for the rapidly-approaching day when revolutionary socialists will be seated in Congress and in

State Assemblies, City Councils, etc. We are determined not to follow the road of senile cooption and collaboration pioneered by the reformist brands of socialists around the world.

It is therefore imperative that all comrades develop a close understanding of the transitional approach and exactly how it should be applied to our campus work in Student Government. I insist upon the word all, because it is not enough that only comrades actually serving in parliamentary bodies be thinking and working in this area. More than any other field of work, in fact, Student Government work requires very conscious coordination with all other facets of YSA activity, and with all comrades involved in these other areas of activity. It is when a layer of 'parliamentary comrades' ever develops that we would know there is trouble in the YSA. If Student Government work is being correctly carried out in the context of our mass work and our propaganda work, then we will never see the waste and suffer the damage of comrades disappearing into the morass of Student Government bureaucracy or Robert's Rules of Insanity.

2. U Mass Boston: one experience

At this point, I want to develop some of these problems in a more concrete way.

At the University of Massachusetts at Boston, the YSA has always had a very active fraction, and for the past few years we have had comrades serving on the University Assembly. The U. A. is a peculiar form of University Governance in which students, faculty, staff and administration are represented in doses inherited from the Corporate Trustees' Cookbook of Social Medicine. The dosage of course has the property of artificially opposing student and faculty blocs in discussion of policy decisions handed down by the Board of Trustees and administration, often as fait-accompli.

Of course the inherent limitations of this sort of system for the purpose of propaganda and mass work are obvious. Nevertheless, the YSA considered the advantages of using the election campaign, and beyond that, those possibilities the U. A. could represent for our work.

This discussion of course referred to the 'Red University strategy. Unfortunately there was never an attempt to define in the minds of comrades what the pitfalls of parliamentarism might look like, and how we might avoid them. (Throughout this discussion, I consider parliament and



Student Government almost interchangeable. I am obviously not considering a 'real' parliament, but rather a campus variation of University Government.)

I am intentionally minimizing discussion of election campaigns for the simple reason that it appears from reading our press and from first-hand experience that the YSA has a tradition of running exemplary campaigns. Of course it is true that the American revolutionary socialist movement has had a great deal of experience in running excellent campaigns. The science of formulating the correct transitional demands to correspond to the objective needs of the moment is necessarily in the bones of most comrades. In April of 1975 at U Mass/Boston, the YSA campaigned on these issues: Support School Desegregation; Keep the Buses Rolling; End Racist Attacks on Black Students. We also raised other demands: No Cutbacks and No Tuition Hikes, and as part of a defense campaign we were participating in No Political Firings, etc. Finally we linked our campaign to the Boston municipal campaign of the SWP and also to the larger national context of the capitalist crisis and attacks on education, particularly on the right of minorities to an equal education.

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All three YSA comrades in the UMB fraction were elected in these elections. But nearly 90% of students did not even vote, and the YSA slate was elected by default, along with a handful of other activists and some notorious bureaucrat-types. In evaluating the election campaign, we balanced our propaganda gains for the YSA and the agitational effort around our mass work against this intense student apathy concerning the University Assembly. We also understood that the apathy was a sign of healthy skepticism. However, comrades failed to discuss the problem created by this narrow base of popular support for our serving in the Assembly.

One comrade was already an incumbent assemblyperson. In May 1975, he was elected student co-chairperson by the entire assembly. Once again comrades failed to discuss the implications of the sudden emergence into leadership of the assembly of this comrade. More precisely, what discussion did take place referred to the 'Red University' strategy, i.e. the comrade could now use the authority of his position in agitating and in mobilizing students around the current struggles. Of course we all had reason to be excited by this development but had we really shown a total understanding of the 'Red University' strategy?

In September 1975, the YSA's relation to the Student Government was further complicated. One comrade left Boston, leaving two comrades on the Assembly, while four new comrades eventually joined the UMB fraction during the fall. These four comrades were not assembly members.

Once again, we failed to discuss the problem this posed to the fraction. As late as November 1975, the fraction head could still ask just what was happening in the Assembly.

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I posed the problem in a theoretical way in the first part of this discussion piece: How does the YSA participate in Student Government in line with the 'Red University' strategy? So far in this second part, I have defined the variables of the problem we have faced concretely at U Mass/Boston from April 1975 to the present. I have placed special emphasis on the lack of thorough discussion within the fraction, or elsewhere in the local to the extent of my knowledge. A criticism is of course explicit; it is directed at the failure of all comrades in the YSA to understand the need for a good deal of education to guide those comrades entering Student Government apparatus on the special problems they will face and on the special problems posed by parliamentary-type work for the organization as a whole. The criticism then is meant as a contribution to what I hope will become a generalized discussion in the YSA, in the best spirit of democratic centralism. I would like to close by illustrating this discussion with specific examples of problems that arose at U Mass/Boston because of the lack of understanding among all comrades, including those doing Assembly work, of how to integrate that area of activity into everything else we are doing.

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Our failure in the U Mass/Boston fraction to adequately carry out educational discussions of Student Government prior to our election campaign created an unstable basis from which to understand subsequent events. References to the 'Red University' became a catch-word for saying that our Assembly work was mostly a means to an end: that of having certain credible spokespeople to help to mobilize support for the struggles we were involved in. (It shouldn't be forgotten that the YSA in Boston has been under extreme pressure because anti-racist work has been a central focus while no real mass movement has existed to support our SCAR work.) This was also the underlying assumption in discussing our electoral victory and in forgetting the apathy surrounding it. Our main campaign issue was support of desegregation as an integral part of the fight against all attacks on education. At the same time, we admit to the SCAR office that a busing referendum would probably lose at U Mass/Boston.

When one of our comrades was chosen by the U.A. to become its student co-chairperson, it clearly was not because of a massive upsurge of socialist sentiment at U Mass/Boston, nor even a sudden swing in support of our position on desegregation. Rather, he was a serious Assembly member and seen as a leading student member and thus elected (by a liberal

faculty-radical student bloc). However, the comrade owed his position to the workings and accord of a body with little political sympathy to the ideas he would be advocating. The end goal -- using the position of leadership to mobilize students -- was realized, but the means was totally alienated from any mass sentiment. Hadn't the YSA taken a dangerous shortcut? Or should not the dangers be discussed at least, and understood by all comrades?

I would like to discuss one more aspect of this parliamentary leadership problem. Sometimes I wonder if the only reason we weren't accused by opponents of 'crossing class lines' is that the U.A., as an institutional body, is in a political vacuum, or at least a well-insulated sand-box. This also makes the U. A., a good 'testing ground' for us to make our mistakes. Clearly, for a minority like the YSA to succeed so well in a parliamentary body, we must know the rules very well. This is good, as long as it is knowledge shared by all comrades, again -- even those not on the Assembly. Working relations must be developed in the parliamentary body. I think that even when there is no mass support for a YSAer being in an assembly, the comrade can frequent bureaucrats in a 'friendly' way if all the comrades are supportive and understood what problems arise, both politically and subjectively, from rubbing shoulders with bureaucrats and egomaniacs we meet in Student Government. The taint of 'politician' can easily pollute an individual comrade who is too often seen by the independent student as traveling the closed circles of student hacks. Only by the participation of the entire revolutionary organization in integrating Student Government work into its other activity will comrades retain their sterling shine.

In the fall of 1975, the UMB fraction grew to include new comrades. Here another aspect of the Student Government problem came into focus. Since no clear understanding existed on the whole matter of bringing in an integrated understanding of our activities in the Assembly, a gulf developed and widened between Assembly comrades and others on the fraction concerning Assembly work. This is especially true for the co-chairperson comrade whose work as a mobilizing figure increasingly cut him off from the rest of the fraction. This may have hurt our mass work around cutbacks since the delegation of responsibility for this work fell upon his shoulders without it in fact being possible for him to work too closely with other comrades in this area of activity.

I hope these examples of problems are of some help to comrades in understanding the deleterious effects of incomplete use of the Red University strategy. Obviously it would be desirable for discussion of Student Government work to occur among all comrades, even if the discussion at first begins among only those comrades attending the specialized workshops. The importance of education on the theory and practice of Student Government and 'parliamentary-type' work in the perspective of our transitional approach to revolutionary change is of utmost importance, even if it may sometimes appear remote. However, history does not easily forgive the large errors which can occur when revolutionaries are unprepared or unclear as to their strategic line of march.

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