

REPORT ON REGIONAL WORK

There are two main points I would like to cover in this report. First, I want to clarify and attempt to pinpoint more precisely the present stage of the YSA's regional work, the essence of the proposals adopted by the YSA to adjust to this new stage, and why we feel these proposals are the best at this time.

Secondly, I want to outline what considerations are involved in moving beyond the adopted proposals, i.e., towards formalizing the regional structure, why we believe this is incorrect at this time, and finally, what are the necessary ingredients for the success of this new stage of our regional work.

* * *

At YSA plenums, conventions, and in our internal communications over the past ten years, trailblazing was cited as a task which should be carried out by as many ~~locals~~ locals as possible. In fact, I found a short report in a 1962 issue of the YSA Builder which pointed to the benefits we could gain by sending teams of comrades to campuses outside of the center locals. So the concept of attempting in a conscious manner to facilitate our geographic expansion is nothing recently initiated.

The first really qualitative step forward, however, in the development of our regional work occurred during the 1968 Presidential campaign. Through the Halstead-Boutelle

campaign and the Young Socialists for Halstead and Boutelle we were able to reach radicalizing youth on hundreds of campuses where there had been no YSAers. It was to a large extent due to the success of breaking into new areas and building YSA locals across the country during this period that we doubled our size in 1968.

Since 1968 the YSA has continued regional work--although unevenly across the country--and as a result our organization has become one with a geographic breadth far beyond that of any other radical youth tendency.

Following the 1968 Presidential campaign, two developments occurred which laid the basis for the proposals we eventually arrived at and adopted at the August, 1970, YSA plenum in Cleveland. First, we experienced a significant geographic expansion by the recruitment of many new locals and at-large members who had little or no experience in the revolutionary socialist movement. And secondly, because of our growth, the decline of SDS, and the increasingly favorable objective political situation in this country, our politics began to play a much more central role in the current youth radicalization.

The problem was then posed: How could we maximize the opportunities available to us to recruit and build YSA locals on campuses all over the country, while at the same time assimilating these new comrades who were very often isolated?

A two-pronged solution to this dilemma was initially projected. First, we clearly established regional work as a top priority. Secondly, we began carrying out national field

work. We bought a Volkswagen bus and sent comrades with proven ability at regional work--and a good deal of experience in our movement--out on the road. In a sense, it was during this period, between late 1968 and late 1970, that we really began to look seriously at regional work as a major activity, and develop the understanding that it was absolutely necessary to devote proper attention and resources to it.

It was also during this period that we absorbed a very important lesson. We saw that the key to the success of new locals and the growth of locals from at-large areas was direct, frequent and extended contact with experienced cadre from established locals. By the time of the YSA plenum last August, it was reported that we had grown geographically to the point where there were only six states in the continental United States in which there were no YSAers. That was a fantastic accomplishment for us, but at the same time it meant that a much greater amount of conscious and consistent work had to be done to develop politically and organizationally strong locals of the YSA in this vast stretch of land.

Our ability to reach out beyond the major locals, to recruit to our movement and build YSA locals, has greatly strengthened our movement as a whole. Today, slightly under half of our membership is active in either at-large areas or locals where there is no branch of the Socialist Workers Party. This section of our membership not only plays a vital role in building the mass movements, but is also an invaluable source of developing leadership for our movement.

In going over the list of the present National Committee

members, for example, I found almost twenty comrades who were originally recruited as either at-large members or members of locals where no branch of the SWP existed. We can see in very concrete terms the importance of developing new locals and at-large members and ensuring their assimilation into our movement. But this also points to the importance of continually breaking into new areas and building new YSA locals as well.

Another factor prompted our need to project a further step in the development of our regional work. It became clear, as the number of locals multiplied, that it was increasingly difficult for the national center to remain in close contact with all of the YSA locals. This resulted in a situation which made it more difficult to gear in the YSA nationally to campaigns we were waging, especially during periods when it was crucial that we move rapidly as a national organization, such as during the postal strike in April 1970, the May upsurge, the Middle East events last fall, and so forth.

With all of these related factors taken together--our significant geographic expansion, the more favorable position we found ourselves in in relation to the general youth radicalization, and the necessity of constructing an efficient means of coordination and collaboration on a regional scale in order to facilitate the carrying out of our national campaigns--it became clear that we had to initiate a new stage in the development of our regional work.

The Organization Report to the August, 1970, YSA plenum dealt extensively with the situation which we faced. I want to quote directly from that report concerning the proposal which was adopted at the plenum to continue the development of our regional work. It stated in part:

What is necessary now in the current stage of the YSA's growth, is some intermediate means of regularizing regional functioning which can be implemented immediately by all of the locals without any formal changes in the organizational structure of the YSA. The function of a region at this time should not be to in any way cut across the lines of authority and responsibility between the individual local unit and the center. On the contrary, its function should be viewed as one of helping all of the locals and at-large members within the region fulfill their national responsibilities--to coordinate work in the election campaigns and in the mass movements, to cooperate in internal education and on public programs, to contribute experience in functioning within the locals according to the norms and traditions of our movement--in short, to form a real, working leadership team.

The report went on to propose holding regional committee meetings to facilitate this coordination and consultation in carrying out our national campaigns in the regions. Here I want to clarify a formulation used in that report which caused some confusion. We stated that "elected representatives" from each local in the region should attend regional committee meetings. This formulation was included in the report to ensure that at least one person, preferably someone discussed and chosen by the local, would be sure to attend regional committee meetings from every local in the region, and then report back to his or her local. We did not imply in any way that because "elected representatives" would be in attendance at regional committee meetings, that then these bodies could assume any formal or executive powers. In fact, the report made it very clear that

we were not prepared to move towards formalizing regional bodies.

Concerning this it stated:

At some stage, as the number of locals multiplies, it will become impossible for the center to maintain a direct relation with all of the locals. At that stage--which is not way off in the distant future by any means--it will become necessary to implement some formal, structural changes in the YSA's method of organization with formal bodies serving as intermediaries between the center and the locals in a region.

While this trend is obvious, it is also in our judgement premature to propose taking any formal step at this time.

The Organization Report to the December YSA convention reiterated the point of what this advanced regional structure was and was not. It stated:

At the August plenum of the YSA's National Committee we initiated an ambitious new stage in our approach to regional work. We felt that because of the tremendous growth we had experienced it was necessary to consciously and regularly draw together the locals and at-largers on a regional basis. We wanted to begin to develop a functioning collective leadership on a regional as well as local scale. We proposed that each region establish a committee of representatives from all of the locals and at-large areas. These regional committees were to function as consultative bodies rather than being formal structures. Their main purpose would be to coordinate our activities on a regionwide scale and to discuss the progress of all our national campaigns from our fund drives and sub drives to our antiwar and women's liberation work.

The essence of the proposal was that this new stage of regional work projected was designed to help locals and at-large members fulfill their national responsibilities and thus to help assimilate them into our movement.

As this regional work developed, we projected that a functioning collective leadership would begin to emerge on a regional basis. It would be a leadership in the sense that regular interaction among comrades, exchanging ideas and experiences and discussing the problems of building the YSA,

would aid the work of all the at-large areas and the locals.

What was proposed, then, was an informal structure, a body to help coordinate and facilitate the many tasks which we set for ourselves at plenums and national conventions. These informal regional structures were simply meant to aid in carrying out these tasks and thus facilitate the growth and expansion of our movement in the various regions.

We have already seen the beneficial results of this new stage of regional organization. Last fall, and especially this spring, we have been successful in organizing many of our campaigns on a regional basis for the first time. The large fund drive and national campaign we launched to professionalize our finances would have been impossible to carry out without the advance of our regional organization. The success of the spring subscription drive for The Militant and the ISR is another example. Our all out effort in building April 24 would not have been possible on the scale it was carried out, or at least much more difficult, without the regional organization we have developed since last summer.

The necessity and potential of this new regional structure to organize our work more efficiently throughout the regions will be made crystal clear as the 1972 Presidential campaign unfolds. Our increasing political influence and strength, combined with the solid organization of our movement on a local and regional level, will help ensure far greater gains for us than any previous election campaign we have waged.

I want to spend some time discussing why we consider it incorrect at this time to move towards a formalized regional structure, and what questions will be involved when we begin to discuss establishing such a formal regional organization for the YSA.

There are two main reasons why moving towards a formalized regional structure at this time would be incorrect. The first is simply that the objective basis for such a regional structure does not exist within any region in the country. There is not one region where there are the necessary number of stable locals to maintain a formalized regional executive body and structure, or where an experienced political leadership team of comrades who are not only leaders of their locals but are part of the leadership of the entire region has emerged. There must be a series of stable locals within the region, as well as a regionwide political leadership, because if we were to make such a structural change in our organization, we would want it to be lasting and not called into question as comrades transfer from the smaller locals into the regional center, etc. It is far better to move slower on these questions and very carefully think out and analyze all the problems such a change might entail, than to make any premature moves.

Furthermore, the vast size of the present regions poses a severe challenge even to the establishment and functioning of informal regional organizations. The comrades in the Texas-Oklahoma-Louisiana region are struggling to carry out the national projections regarding regional work in an area larger than most countries of the world and whose regional center (Houston) and

farthest local (El Paso) are at a distance equivalent to that between New York and Chicago.

In the 1968 YSA pre-convention discussion, the question of formalizing the regions was taken up. Mary-Alice Waters, in an article entitled, "The Organizational Concepts of the YSA," (reprinted in Organizing the YSA), wrote, "To move too fast in the direction of establishing formal regions might, rather than help maximize recruitment and growth, turn out to be an organizational albatross, draining so many resources that it hindered our expansion, and if done prematurely, hindered the normal development of local leadership."

The second reason why formalizing the regional structure at this time would be a mistake, and the most important reason, is that any such move would violate the principle of democratic centralism, and miseducate comrades about our organizational norms. Fundamental to the Leninist concept of democratic centralism is the principle of majority rule. Any formal leadership body, whether local or national, is elected to implement the democratically arrived at decisions of the membership. Thus, the elected leadership is always under the control of the ranks. That is the case with every executive body in our movement. This basic concept will, and must, apply to executive bodies on a regional level as well when we reach the point of structuring a formal regional organization.

Formalizing our regional structure, in addition to requiring a change in the YSA constitution, would require ensuring the organizational principle of democratic centralism. We would have to hold regional conventions which would be the

highest bodies in the regions. These regional conventions would in turn then decide upon the most effective way to implement national convention and plenum decisions, and would elect a regional executive body which would be responsible for implementing these decisions and leading the work of the region in between regional conventions.

This formal structure would be the highest decision-making body in the regions. It would be similar, in many respects, to the way a citywide apparatus is organized when a large local such as Boston, or most recently New York, divides.

The present regional committees, whether composed of all the NC members in the region, comrades involved in regional work, organizers and at-large members; or whether composed of all the executive committee members in the region, may make a good body to help facilitate regional coordination, but is totally inadequate as an executive body in the region. Unless we decide to structurally change the YSA and institute formal regional organization, ensuring that it is done in line with our organizational principles and norms, any other regional structure which is established cannot, and must not, cut across the authority of any of the locals in the region or their properly elected leadership.

This then raises the question: If it is out of order for the present regional bodies to assume executive powers in order to make decisions affecting the region as a whole, how are differences to be settled if they arise? This leads to another and more basic question: How do we expect regions to function under the provisions of an informal regional structure and what

are the ingredients for the success of this type of functioning?

The essential ingredients for maximizing the effectiveness of the present regional organization must include the stepped-up collaboration and consultation between the leaderships of the various locals and at-large areas within the region. The leadership of the regional center has special responsibility in that it must also be able to inspire the entire region to carry out our campaigns by educating and developing the comrades.

The present regional structure is designed foremost to bring comrades from all around the region together on a fairly regular basis to exchange ideas, evaluate the progress of the national campaigns in the region, coordinate regional actions such as antiwar conferences, tours, etc., give comrades a chance to discuss the many problems of building the revolutionary movement in their areas, and so forth. We have found by attending many regional committee meetings that in those regions where regular efforts are made to informally discuss questions facing the region with as many comrades as possible, there is also the most cooperation and the greatest collective effort to build the YSA throughout the region. Working through these transitional, informal regional structures which we now have, is essential for the progress of our regional work in this period because our current stage of regional organization adequately meets the needs I outlined earlier in the report while at the same time preparing the groundwork for the further development of our regional structure.

Attempting to settle differences which may arise in the region by submitting questions for decision and formal vote at regional committee meetings changes the character and purpose of our present regional organization. Instead of moving towards formalizing the regional organization in order to facilitate decision-making or to settle differences within the region, a conscious effort is required on the part of the leaderships of the locals in the region, and especially the leadership of the center locals, to collaboratively work out those questions which must be decided in order to carry our regional work forward.

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P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, New York 10003

July 23, 1971

To All NC Members, Local Organizers, and Regional Organizers

Dear Comrades,

Many regional centers have begun to set up speakers bureaus in preparation for the fall. Initial material has been published and mailed out in some areas already.

The YSA National Office would like to request that copies of all the material published by the speakers bureaus be sent not only to the N.O. but to the YSA locals listed in The Militant's "Socialist Directory" as well. This will help acquaint comrades around the country with the many ideas and techniques which will arise in the process of establishing and developing the various speakers bureaus.

In conjunction with articles published in The Young Socialist Organizer and national mailings, this additional step will help maximize the effectiveness of our efforts in establishing authoritative and professional speakers bureaus for this fall.

Comradely,

Terry Hardy

Terry Hardy
YSA National Office

P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, New York 10003

July 23, 1971

TO ALL COMRADES

Dear Comrades,

The Socialist Activists and Educational Conference which will be held in Oberlin, Ohio, August 8-15, is the most important upcoming event for the YSA. All comrades should make every effort possible to be able to attend and participate in this historic conference which will discuss all aspects of our program and the major campaigns before the YSA this fall. At-large YSAers, in particular, should be sure to contact the regional centers to coordinate plans for transportation.

Because of the large expenses involved in organizing such a conference, an \$8.00 registration fee will be required for all participants. YSAers who have not yet sent in their registration fees should do so prior to the conference if at all possible. Any guests who have been invited to the conference by a YSA local should also be informed of this registration fee. All registration payments should be sent to the Socialist Workers Party National Office, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014.

Local and at-large areas should in addition understand that all fund raising projects for the conference are being organized nationally. Because of this, no local or at-large area should plan any fund raising projects for the Oberlin conference.

Comradely,



Norman Oliver
YSA National Organization Secretary

P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, New York 10003

July 23, 1971

TO ALL NC MEMBERS, LOCAL ORGANIZERS, AND REGIONAL ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

The 24th National Student Association (NSA) Congress will take place in Fort Collins, Colorado (70 miles north of Denver), August 20 - 29. Approximately 600 delegates and observers are expected to attend the nine day congress. In addition to plenary and workshop sessions, there will be a number of speeches by such figures as Daniel Ellsberg, Sen. George McGovern and other presidential aspirants, Dave Dellinger, Cora Weiss, George Wiley, and a number of other speakers.

According to the folded information leaflet prepared by the NSA, there are three categories of congress participants: 1. Delegate - "Any regularly elected delegate from an NSA member school. A delegate has voting privileges in all plenary sessions." In actuality, the "delegates" to the congress are not elected by NSA member schools but rather are selected by student government officers. 2. Alternate - "A student from a member school, selected to vote in place of a delegate in his [sic] absence." 3. Observer - "Any student from a non-member school, organizational representative, administrator, or other congress participant without voting privileges."

The fee for all congress participants, which includes registration, room and board, insurance, and admission fees, is \$155 for NSA members. For non-members, the fee is \$185. (A \$5 processing charge will be added to all fees received after July 26, 1971.) The folded leaflet goes on to state that for those who cannot attend the entire nine days, there will be a per diem refund rate. It also makes explicit that no one will be admitted without "appropriate credentials."

A chart explaining the delegate system for different-size member schools indicates the following:

<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Delegates</u>	<u>Alternates</u>
1000 or less	1	1
1001 - 2000	2	2
2001 - 3500	3	3
3501 - 5500	4	4
5501 - 8500	5	5
8501 - 13,500	6	6
13,501 - 21,500	7	7
21,501 and up	8	8

Because the cost of this congress is prohibitive for observers, we are requesting that comrades who hold student government positions and other comrades who attend colleges or universities, attempt to gain either delegate or alternate credentials from their schools. This can be arranged by approaching student government officers and explaining that as a student activist you feel it is important that you attend the NSA congress because a number of political questions dealing with the women's liberation movement, the antiwar movement, the Chicano and Black struggle, etc., will be discussed. It is likely that most delegations are not full, so that if student government officers can be approached at this time it is very likely that comrades can gain delegate's credentials and have their

expenses paid. Non-member schools, that is, those not affiliated to the NSA in the last three years, may obtain trial memberships at the congress by simply paying the \$5 trial membership fee. This procedure can be followed at schools which are not affiliated, and thus delegate status can be obtained.

There is a good possibility this year that the NSA congress will vote favorably on proposals to support the fall antiwar offensive (including the November 3 national student strike), and the November 20 mass action demanding the repeal of all abortion laws, no forced sterilization. Because of this, and because the proceedings of this conference are an important event in the student movement, we would like to gain delegate or alternate credentials for as many YSAers as possible.

In addition to ensuring that these proposals reach the floor and are acted upon, we want to fully observe the congress proceedings and attempt to set up an SWP '72 campaign table. Linda Jenness will also attend a portion of the conference which at this point is scheduled as a presidential "candidates debate."

All comrades who can possibly make the arrangements through their student governments to attend the NSA congress should contact the YSA National Office immediately. If any more information is needed on the congress, please contact the N.O.

Comradely,

Frank Boehm
Frank Boehm
YSA National Chairman

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 29, 1971

No. 13

NEC Present: Frank, Dave, Rich, Cindy, Mirta

NEC Excused: Steve, Laura, Ruthann, Norman, Andy, Debby W.

NC Present: Geoff

NC Alt. Present: Terry, Andrew, Delpfine, Ruth, Debbie N., Linda, Byron

Guest: Louise

Convened: 3:10 p.m.

Chairperson: Cindy

Agenda: 1. National Office Report
2. Publications Report
3. National Abortion Conference Report

1. National Office Report - Frank

a. Membership

Motion: To accept the following applications for membership at-large:

1. Earl C. in North Andover, Mass.
2. David D. in Louisa, Ky.
3. Michael O. in Pittsfield, Mass.
4. Rob G. in Mobile, Ala.
5. Jeanne B. in Pittsburgh, Pa.
6. Nancy H. in Greenville, O.
7. Rich M. in St. Bernard, O.
8. Robert R. in Hopewell, Va.
9. Diane C. in Knoxville, Tenn.
10. Sharon B. in Knoxville, Tenn.
11. Keith H. in Knoxville, Tenn.
12. David S. in Kingsport, Tenn.

Motion Carried

Motion: To constitute a local of the YSA in Knoxville, Tenn.

Motion Carried

Motion: To readmit Dutch M. into the YSA in the Los Angeles local.

Motion Carried

Motion: To readmit Pat G. into the YSA in the N. Boston local.

Discussion: Cindy

Motion Carried

Motion: To transfer the following comrades from at-large areas to locals:

1. Carol B. from Monroe, Wisc., to the Madison local.
2. Rob L. from Pullman, Wash., to the Seattle local.
3. Barry S. from Geneseo, N.Y., to the Upper Manhattan local.
4. Mike C. from Murfreesboro, Tenn., to the Atlanta local.
5. Liz L. from Nashville, Tenn., to the Atlanta local.
6. Connie A. from Sedalia, Mo., to the Denver local.
7. Tony A. from Dallas, Tex., to the Houston local.

Discussion: Rich

Motion Carried

Motion: To transfer the following comrades from locals to at-large areas:

1. Bruce K. from N. Boston to Portland, Me.
2. Brent F. from Worcester to Liberty, N.Y.

Motion Carried

Motion: To grant Ann M., an at-large member in Ellensburg, Wash., a leave of absence until November, 1971.

Motion Carried

Motion: To grant Claire C., an at-large member in Tallahassee, Fla., a leave of absence until September, 1971.

Motion Carried

Motion: To approve the graduation of Nat L., an at-large member in Newark, N.J.

Motion Carried

Motion: That LaCrosse be dropped as a local and reconstituted as an at-large area because it does not have the required number of members for local status due to transfers.

Motion Carried

b. National Committee

Motion: To transfer NC member Geoff M. from the Chicago local to the Brooklyn local.

Motion Carried

Motion: To transfer NC Alt. Delpfine W. from the North Boston local to the Brooklyn local.

Motion Carried

c. National Office

Motion: That NC Alt. Delpfine W. from Brooklyn be assigned to work in the National Office.

Motion Carried

d. Financial Director

Motion: That Terry Ha. be assigned as Financial Director for the YSA.

Motion Carried

e. Youth Report

Motion: That Cindy be assigned to prepare the Youth Report to the SWP Convention

Motion Carried

f. Informational Point on the SWP Convention

2. Publications Report - Rich

Motion: To approve the report.

Motion Carried

3. National Abortion Conference Report - Ruth

Report to appear in The Young Socialist Organizer.

Motion: To approve the report.

Motion Carried

Adjourned: 4:00 p.m.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 5, 1971

No. 14

NEC Present: Frank, Rich, Cindy, Laura, Norman, Dave, Andy, Mirta

NEC Excused: Ruthann, Debby W., Steve

NC Present: Terry Hi., Geoff

NC Alt. Present: Terry Ha., Debbie N., Delpfine, Andrew, Byron,
Ruth, Bobby, Linda

Guest: Nancy

Convened: 3:15 p.m.

Chairperson: Norman

Agenda: 1. National Office Report
2. Age Limit
3. Youth Report

1. National Office Report - Delpfine

a. Membership

Motion: To accept the following applications for membership at-large:

1. Michael De B. in Youngstown, Ohio
2. Robert Q. in East Granby, Conn.

Motion Carried

Motion: To transfer the following comrades from locals to at-large areas:

1. Larry M. from Logan to Big Bear Lake, Cal.
2. Mark J. from North Boston to Grand Rapids, Mich.

Motion Carried

Motion: To transfer Ollie B. from at-large status in Flint, Mich., to at-large status in Nashville, Tenn.

Motion Carried

b. National Committee

Motion: To transfer NC member Stu S. from the North Boston local to the Chicago local.

Motion Carried

c. Riverside Local Report - Norman

Motion: That Riverside, Cal., be dropped as a local and reconstituted as an at-large area because it does not have the required number of members for local status due to transfers, etc.

Discussion: Ruth, Norman, Andrew, Norman, Ruth, Geoff, Norman, Bobby, Norman, Frank, Linda, Dave, Laura, Andrew, Bobby, Rich, Ruth, Frank, Mirta, Laura, Linda

Motion Carried

2. Age Limit - Frank

Informational report on P.C. motion to lower the age limit for SWP members in the YSA from 27 to 25.

3. Youth Report to the SWP National Convention - Cindy

Motion: To approve the general line of the report.

Discussion: Rich, Laura, Rich

Motion Carried

Adjourned: 4:35 p.m.