

YOUNG WORKERS LIBERATION LEAGUE
2nd National Convention
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INDUSTRIAL CONCENTRATION REPORT
by Judy Edelman

Part I: Achievements of the League Since Founding

The YWLL, since its founding a little over two years ago, has undertaken many struggles that affect the lives of working-class youth. We have begun to develop roots in shops and industries across the country, and have influenced the direction of some struggles at the point of production and in the trade unions. While our work has had some weaknesses, we have a record that we can be proud of! Jarvis, in his very excellent main report, mentioned some of our achievements since our founding. I would like to mention a number of others that relate directly to workers.

Only a few months after our Founding Convention, in February 1970, we began working to help build the rank-and-file conference held in June 1970, which led to the establishing of the NCCTUAD (TUAD). Of the nearly 1,000 rank-and-file workers and others who came together to found that movement, nearly 175 were youth. The League was in large part responsible for this large youth turnout. Since that time we have done some good work in trying to help build TUAD, and to help give it a more militant, fighting posture--although we have not always been as consistent as we should be.

A second achievement of the League was our work around the big G.M. strike of over 700,000 auto workers in the U.S. and Canada in the winter of 1970. We played an important role inside the shops where we have members, and also provided much support from the outside--through consistent sale and distribution of the Daily World and Peoples World, and through the distribution of leaflets in working class communities and shopping centers. Special mention should be made of the outstanding work of League members in a 5,000 worker G.M. plant in Tarrytown New York, who helped to spark a mass movement to demand a better contract offer and to demand democratic conduct of the strike by union officials.

In Southern California, in Eastern and Western Pennsylvania, in Ohio at Lordstown, and in other places too numerous to mention we have done some very good strike support work.

We have also been involved in many efforts to organize unorganized workers, and in some cases have been in the leadership of these drives. Such efforts have been undertaken at Fisk University in Tennessee, at New York University, at Temple University in Philadelphia, among hospital workers in Alabama and Connecticut, among building trades workers in California and elsewhere. Some of these efforts have resulted in workers being brought under trade union organization for the first time, sometimes after bitter recognition strikes. Others have been lost, through company counterattacks or through weaknesses in the organizing drives.

The League has also carried on a great deal of activity in bringing the struggle to help free our comrade Angela Davis, and other political prisoners, to workers--both at the shop gates and in the working class communities. The work of Philadelphia and Detroit League members in undertaking a sustained programmed shop gate leafletting and the collection of thousands of signatures at the shop gates deserves special mention. A weakness in our work to free Angela has been a hesitancy, or a lack of knowledge of how to take this question into white working class communities, where we know many racist ideas exist, and anti-communism is much stronger. This weakness we must overcome, because it is important to the winning of Angela's total and complete freedom, and also because it is an important measure of the degree to which our white members concretely fight against racism. How we measure where we are on this question is like two sides of a coin. One side is our internal relationships with each other, which Pat spoke of this morning. The other side is our mass practice. The Angela Davis struggle is a good test of our mass practice.

We cannot allow either side of that coin to become tarnished. This is a necessity for building unity in our organization.

League members working in shops have begun in many places to try to help initiate rank-and-file committees or to work with already existing ones in steel, auto, electrical, transportation, garment, etc., in an effort to make their unions the kind of militant fighting organizations they should be. With little experience, and much trial and error, we have made efforts to improve shop conditions, to fight company racist practices, to raise political questions among workers, and to help raise the level of consciousness of your workers through mass leafletting, classes on the labor movement and on Marxism-Leninism, and other efforts. Special efforts were made along these lines after the ruling class imposed the wage freeze on workers--one of the most vicious assaults on the working class in recent history. But much more, mass popular education must be developed.

There are many other examples of our work among young workers and workingclass youth (including students, unemployed, and nationally oppressed youth) which could be mentioned. I have cited only a few; and others, when they speak, will most likely have many more experiences to relate.

Through all of these efforts we have begun to sink roots deep among rank-and-file workers where we can have some influence on the direction and content of the rank-and-file movement.

Part II--Estimate of the Current Period

As Jarvis stated this morning, and as we all know well, U.S. capitalism is in trouble. In an effort to solve its economic problems and maintain its same high rate of profits, U.S. capitalism is taking measures which cause greater and greater hardships for working class youth. These measures include: job losses through shops running away to low wage areas in the South or abroad; increasing automation which is also resulting in higher unemployment, greatly intensified speedup of the production lines (which hits young workers especially

hard), higher and higher taxes, greatly reduced services for the people; stepped-up use of racism to gain super-profits from nationally oppressed workers and to divide the working class; militarism and the continuation of the war in Indochina in which the main economic burden and the main loss of lives fall on the working class, especially us, the youth. Not satisfied with the results of the measures, the ruling class has in the recent period instituted a wage freeze, wage controls, and wage rollbacks, has passed laws prohibiting or limiting the right to strike, and jailed militant labor leaders--all Facist-like measures. In all of these actions the increasing reliance of the big monopolies upon the government to enforce its will becomes more and more evident.

Young workers and working class youth have been hit really hard by these ruling class actions--especially nationally oppressed youth. Unemployment is a mass problem for all sectors of youth now, and for nationally oppressed youth it is a disaster. As Jarvis mentioned, speedup on the production lines is the next most serious problem. Low wages, lack of skills and any opportunity to get them, racial discrimination and oppression, job insecurity, lack of childcare facilities, discrimination on the basis of sex, and lack of adequate union protection are problems which plague millions of young workers and working class youth throughout the country.

Young workers are reacting to these problems in a number of ways. Some quit their jobs, rather than work for \$1.65 an hour at inhuman speedup rates and hazardous conditions. Many don't show up for work on Monday or Friday, and often come late. Some are encouraged by the companies to use drugs on the job and off to try to escape. Many deliberately slow down the lines, and more and more young workers are fighting back--as the historic strike at the Vega plant in Lordstown, Ohio shows.

One thing is clear. Many young workers are angry and militant, and are disgusted with their union leadership's failure to lead the kind of fight-back that is required. All of the problems that young workers face today are aggravated by the lack-of-struggle attitudes of much of the present trade union leadership. Class collaboration, bureaucracy, lack of democracy, and unresponsiveness to the critical problems of working people characterize many of these mis-leaders. They reflect the deep influence of racist, national chauvinist, and male supremacist ideas, as well as anti-communism. No wonder many young workers are "turned off" by their unions and show little interest in going to membership meetings, or trying to make the union machinery meet their needs. One of our tasks is to win such young workers to see the need to build rank-and-file movements to strengthen the unions and the potential of such movements to make the trade unions what they should be.

Rank-and-file movements are springing up all over the country, in every industry. They may be organized around a single issue, such as safety, wages, pensions, speedup, racism, the struggle to free Angela Davis, union democracy, etc. Or they may struggle around a combination of a number of such issues.

Of special importance is the emergence of countless numbers of caucuses among especially Black, but also Chicano and Puerto Rican workers, who are also a part of an oppressed people. Black and Brown workers are located in large numbers at strategic points in the production process, and because of this, caucus movements among these workers take on special significance. Roscoe Proctor, in his recent pamphlet, "Black Workers and the Class Struggle," points out that "these movements are aimed mainly at the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and oppression in the industries, the unions, and the communities. What is new is that many of these caucuses reflect a deepening class consciousness among Black workers, and that many of their participants are open to or in some cases have already accepted the idea that fundamental revolutionary change of the capitalist system is necessary for the achievement of total liberation for Black people. This is a highly significant development, and one which will benefit the entire working class, Black, Brown, yellow, red and white. Carolyn Black, in her report tomorrow on the Black liberation struggle, will have more to say about this important development.

Part III

We in the YWLL need to project, at this convention, a concrete program of struggle over the coming two years which takes into account the objective and subjective conditions outlined above, and in Jarvis' main political report. To do this, we need to review some of our past weaknesses and deal with those problems, which stand in the way of our accomplishing the tasks we decide on at this Convention.

Before posing some of these problems for consideration, I think it might be helpful to review briefly some of the main theoretical assumptions upon which I think we all pretty much agree, and which should be a guide to our practical activity.

Two years ago, when the League was founded, we consciously set out to build a youth organization whose membership and leadership was predominantly working-class and working-class oriented youth (including students or unemployed youth from working class families). We recognized the importance of recruiting shop workers, with a special concern for recruiting workers from such basic industries as steel, auto, electrical, and transportation.

These were conscious policies, which flowed from a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the historic role of the working class as the only thoroughly revolutionary force in capitalist society.

Only workers as a class have nothing to gain from the continuation of the capitalist system, and everything to gain from its overthrow. Under capitalism, ownership of the means of production is private, and production is for the purpose of profits for the few. Much of the labor that workers do is unpaid labor, the source of the capitalists profit. Hence workers are exploited, and the only way to end this exploitation is to end capitalism. In addition to this, workers are the only grouping under capitalism that is powerful enough to lead a socialist revolution and build the new socialist society. Since they create all the material values, the whole economy and all of social life is affected by what they do or do not do. When they withhold their labor power in a major strike, for example, it affects everything else.

Further, the working class is the largest class, and continues to grow, in relative and absolute numbers. The struggles of the workers at the point of production teach them the need for unity, organization and discipline, all qualities which are needed in the struggle for revolutionary change.

We recognize that within the working class as a whole, the industrial proletariat holds a special place. These are the workers who, in the process of production, create new values. They include such workers as steel, mining, clothing, chemical, construction and transportation. When industrial workers stop work, it affects not only them but those workers in other industries dependent upon them as well.

Within the industrial proletariat there are certain basic industrial workers who are even more decisive. These are the workers who produce the means of production. Basic steel, electronics, and heavy electrical, chemical and oil industries, production of means of transportation, mining, are among these industries.

Whatever the workers here do affects the whole society. The contract settlements they make set the pattern, affecting all of the other industries which depend on them. When they move, they move everything else along with them.

A policy of industrial concentration for the YWLE means that we work in a concentrated and coordinated fashion to reach those workers who are most decisive in the revolutionary process, because we recognize that without their participation in and leadership of the struggle, a socialist revolution cannot be made in the U.S.

While there is general agreement in the League on these points, we have not always known how, in practice, to implement a policy of industrial concentration. Some members ask; if I am not in the shop does industrial concentration only mean that I sell Daily Worlds or Peoples Worlds, or our magazine, Young Worker, at the shop gate?

Many ask how unemployed League members or members who are high school and college students can carry on political work in a way that reflects an industrial concentration approach. Some have tended to pit our work in the shops and unions against our work in the working-class communities, or vice versa, as if the two were separate struggles. We have some confusion in our ranks on this question of industrial concentration.

I think that what needs to be seen clearly is that a working class approach to our work means reaching young workers where they work and where they live, because young workers have problems in both places. Working class communities are in crisis --in housing, schools, health, police brutality, drugs, and a dozen other ways. Thus our work in the shops and trade unions and our work in the communities should be closely coordinated, and never seen in contradiction to one another.

We recognize and should never lose sight of the fact that it is what happens with production workers in basic industry that is primary in the revolutionary process. But we also see the necessity of working with every movement that springs up in the working class communities, and the necessity of initiating some movements ourselves--through building the intermediary forms among youth in the communities that Jarvis spoke about. Our job is to work with these movements in such a way as to help bring working class content and leadership to the forefront in these movements, and to help forge a unity between the trade union movement and the community movements among youth. I would like to urge that we discuss here how we can help to strengthen the unity of our work in unions and communities.

Too often we are content to work with "The Movement," in peace organizations, committees to free Angela Davis, and other groups, without enough concern for whether working youth and working class youth are brought into these movements and into their leadership.

An industrial concentration approach means also that we approach our work with high school and college students from a working class standpoint. Most high school students will be either unemployed or working for a living when they leave high school. Part of our responsibility is to orient these youth in the direction of class struggle, trade union struggle, when they enter the labor force. This is in addition to the work we help to initiate around the immediate problems high school students and college students face. We can also seek to involve these students in strike support activities while they are still in school. Thus an Industrial Concentration approach is an approach that applies to all of our work--in shops, trade unions, high schools, colleges, and communities.

A second weakness in our work has been inadequate attention to the Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican caucus movements, mentioned above, in which young workers are playing such a key role. In many areas we have almost no relationship to these movements. We must correct this. We should be relating to those Black and

Brown caucuses that already exist, as well as helping to initiate such movements where none now exist and where there is a need and desire for them among nationally oppressed workers.

A third weakness in our work has been insufficient struggle against racism in the shops and in the white working class communities. This comes partly from a hesitancy among our white members to raise this issue among sectors of the class where racist ideology has penetrated very deeply, and where it is harder to raise this issue. This is in part a reflection of some problems of white chauvinism in our ranks. It comes also from our white members not knowing how to deal with problems of racial oppression in the shops and unions in such a way that we carry other white workers along with us, rather than isolate ourselves from them. We must overcome these weaknesses and find concrete ways to wage a consistent, day-to-day, week-to-week struggle against racism in the shops, trade unions, high schools, colleges and communities. This is essential in order to lay the basis for a united movement of the entire working class.

Another weakness in our work has been insufficient recognition of the special problems faced by working women and to involve ourselves in struggle around these problems. These include problems of lack of adequate child care facilities for the children of working women and men; job discrimination and low wages; male supremacist attitudes and practices, and many more.

Another weakness in our work among young workers has been lack of a real youth approach. This has been dealt with extensively in the draft resolution, and I won't repeat that here, except to add that it is the lack of a youth approach that caused some problems of overlapping in the shop and trade union work of League members and older Communist Party members. When we won't focus in on the youth angle, our work becomes almost indistinguishable from that of older CP workers. And, I also think it is partly responsible for our slow growth in building the League among shop workers. We have been exploring ideas as to the best organizational intermediary forms in the shops and unions to give expression to this youth approach, and I'm not sure we've found them. In all probability, experimentation and life experiences in the next two years will enable us to find the most appropriate forms and really break out and build the League in a mass way in our concentration shops.

Lastly, although unemployment is recognized by all of us to be one of the most serious problems youth face today, yet in only a few areas have we made any really serious efforts to organize around this question. Why? How can we change this? Let's discuss it here.

Concrete Tasks in the Next Two Years

I would like to now project a number of concrete tasks for our work in the next two years, for discussion here and adoption by this Convention.

1. Single out key industries and key shops in each area for concentration by all League members including working members, unemployed members, and students. Goals: to initiate rank and file movements involving young workers; to develop mass, popular educational materials, classes and forums to help raise the level of consciousness of these young workers, and help develop Socialist consciousness among them.

In this process we must recognize that today, because of the greatly increased role of the government in serving the interests of the big monopolies, every economic struggle must become a political struggle as well. We must fight not only at the point of production, but in the halls of the legislatures as well.

The National Staff would like to project as our national concentration industries, auto, steel, electrical, and transportation. Others should be added . . . in local areas which may be of special importance, either because of the social or age composition of the shop, or because of the size and economic importance of a particular industry to a given community. I would like to urge that we discuss here how to unify our union and community work with the perspective in mind of moving our whole organization around these concentration industries.

2. Project helping to make young workers an important force in 1972 elections. Elections should be seen as an overall framework for our work in the next seven months. Our task in these elections is two-fold. On the one hand we must expose the fascist demagogue Wallace. We must reach white working youth and the white working class communities, with the truth about this phony Messiah. Wallace pretends to offer solutions to the problems of poor and working people, but in reality his "solutions" are a cover for monopoly maneuvers against the people. The extent to which our white members in particular carry out this task is another concrete measure of how effectively and consistently we struggle against racism.

The other side of our task is to bring the candidates of the Communist Party, Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner, to hundreds of thousands of working-class youth. We should make every effort to set up shop-gate meetings, rank and file caucus meetings, meetings in halls near our concentration shops, and meetings in the working-class communities.

Only the Communist Party candidates offer any real solutions to the problems that young workers and working-class youth face, and we must place this alternative before the youth of this country.

3. Build a movement around the fight for jobs, including this as one of the key demands in a National Youth Act.

A national youth act can be a vehicle through which we mobilize masses of youth in a nationally coordinated movement.

Such an act must provide a platform for struggle around all of the problems youth face, since they are all interrelated. It should be a part of Jarvis Tyner's electoral platform.

Such a campaign must go hand in hand with a program of concrete struggle.

Coalitions of youth and older workers can be organized to try to keep plants from shutting down and running away, to demonstrate, to send delegates to legislators, and in many other ways to fight for jobs.

We must also fight against efforts to hire youth and welfare recipients to work at lower than minimum wage levels.

We must fight for a 30-hour week at 40 hours pay, which will help create many more jobs for youth.

4. Bring the struggle to free Angela Davis and other political prisoners into every one of our concentration shops and industries.

Let's build a committee to Free Angela Davis in every concentration shop as a part of a massive rank and file movement involving millions of young workers--Black and white. Again, the extent to which white members of our organization make this effort among white workers and in the white working class communities is another concrete measure of the level of struggle against racism in our organization.

5. We must intensify our efforts to bring the brutal, racist war of aggression in Indochina to an immediate halt.

The sentiment among young workers to end the war is growing steadily. This rank-and-file sentiment is beginning to be reflected in the anti-war activities of some of the leadership. But much more education and mobilization of the rank and file young workers is necessary. This is our task. We must work to bring the powerful fist of the labor movement fully to bear in the movement to end the war. For that power can be decisive!

6. Work to help build the TUAD initiated Emergency Election Conference July 1-2 at the Packinghouse Center here in Chicago.

The aim of this Conference is to influence the program of the two major parties, and to influence the selection of the candidates of these parties.

The Conference will attempt to help to bring the needs and demands of labor to the forefront in the election campaign, and to join in coalition with other peoples' organizations, such as NWRO and SCLC.

League members with a base in the rank and file in their shops and unions are being asked to endorse the Call to this Conference.

The entire League should help to build this Conference. Fred Gaboury, the National Coordinator for TUAD, will speak during the discussion and give further details.

7. Establish a National Labor Commission.

8. Produce popular literature on questions of special concern to young workers and working class youth.

9. Hold a national conference on industrial concentration as soon as possible following this Convention.

If we succeed in carrying out the tasks outlined above, we will quickly break out of our sectarianism and become what Chairman Jarvis Tyner has described as the "biggest, baddest, left youth organization in the country."

Right On, YWLL!