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THE YSL

The Young Socialist League is an independent nation-wide socialist youth organization and stands for the ideas and program of democratic socialism. It includes in its ranks young people from varying backgrounds, with differing views and in assorted occupations. While most of its members are college students, it includes high schoolers, young professionals, factory workers.... Among its members are those who consider themselves pacifists, Marxists, and non-Marxists, but who feel that despite their theoretical differences they can join together in a common program of militant democratic socialism.

WHAT IS OUR HISTORY?

The YSL was formed in the winter of 1954 by the merger of two youth organizations -- the Socialist Youth League and the then Young Peoples Socialist League. The two groups felt that since their politics were so closely akin there existed no excuse to maintain separate rival groups. Since that time the YSL has remained an independent youth organization, with close fraternal ties to the Independent Socialist League (the former parent organization of one of the merged youth groups) and ready at all times to cooperate with other socialist groups. It has since held two additional national conventions to shape its policies in keeping with changing world events.

WHAT IS OUR POLITICAL PROGRAM?

A recognition of the importance and necessity of democracy -- political, social and economic -- is the key to our politics.

Socialism and democracy are inseparable. Only through democracy can socialism be achieved, and only through socialism will we have full democracy. By democracy we mean the fullest rights of all individuals and groups to express their views, to develop their ideas, to organize, and to attempt to peacefully alter, change or modify the system or any social policy. This means the right of all political parties to participate in free elections, it means the right to organize unions and to engage in strikes. It also means that democracy should be extended into industry so that the economy too will be run by the people for their own benefit. And of course it means that these rights shall exist not only for those with whom we agree but especially for those with whom we disagree!

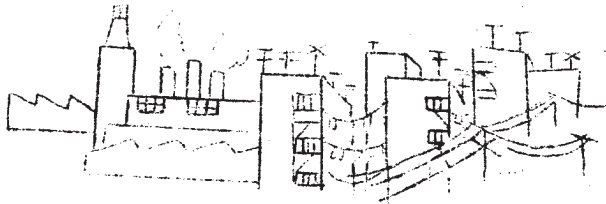
Neither capitalism nor so-called Communism are based on such a conception of democracy. The system in Russia is not any form, or malform, of socialism (nor for that matter is it actually Communist in its truer meaning). Instead Communism represents a new type of imperialistic exploitation based on the control and "ownership" of society by those who have a stake in the State--the bureaucrats and CP leaders.

The road to a just and sane society lies in the rejection of capitalist and Communist systems and in the development of a conscious "third camp" of socialism backed by the colonial peoples, the working people the world over and all others with a respect for human dignity and freedom.



The YSL holds that the present American social system and the parties that compete for control of it cannot further a policy of social progress. Recent history has graphically demonstrated the bankruptcy of these parties and their inability to solve the crucial problems of our time. A stable economy is maintained only thru a huge cold war budget. And even with this staggering sum spent on waste and arms, inflation eats away at every increase in living standards. Automation, instead of being welcomed as the beginning of a new industrial revolution which will free millions from the 40-hour week, is seen as a threat to both labor and business because our industrial leaders cannot cope with such phenomena in our "free enterprise" system. Or, similarly, instead of rejoicing over "threats" of peace, each suggestion for disarmament is met with financial and economic consternation.

From some so-called "responsible leaders" we hear talk of the glories of yesteryears -- with a call for reaction. Others use fine sounding language of progress and then retreat under the slogan of "practicality." American liberalism at best fights a defensive struggle to "maintain," and at worst calls for increased "statism" without insurance of greater human freedom.



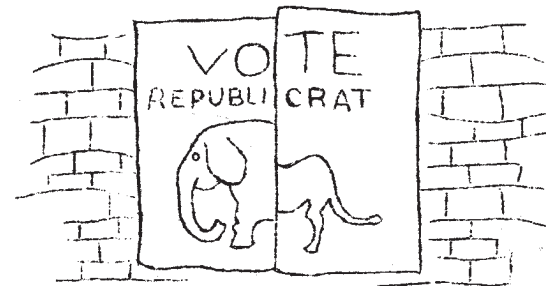
The present government and the system it represents cannot begin to really face our educational crisis, the chronic housing shortage, the dilemmas of city planning, the inflationary spiral, the tedium of industrial life, the crisis of mental sickness, the anarchy and human waste involved in our medical care, juvenile delinquency, or our cultural and moral morass. And above all else, none of these forces can begin to solve the problem of war and peace. They do not even dare to put an end to the biological suicide of nuclear testing.

The answer to Russian totalitarianism cannot be guns, cannot be capitalism. Of these the rest of the world has long since had enough. Until the resources, the plenty and the know-how of the U.S. are utilized to provide a genuinely democratic alternative, the cold war will continue. And until that time arrives the U.S. will

only be fooling itself if it imagines that it is the leader of the free and freedom-loving peoples. Today it is the leader among the Sygman Rhees and the Francos, the despots in Asia and the Middle East. It has the eager support only of the most reactionary forces in every continent. Its present alliances are forged not with the people of the world, but are part and parcel of the system that tyrannizes over them.

To change this we need a policy of consistent defense of democracy, at home and abroad. Such a policy is in fact the policy of socialism.

We do not know the answers to all the problems facing us; we do not pretend that the path we have chosen is fool-proof. But we are young. We are not yet cynical and "tired out." We are not ready to sit back and contemplate our navels or sneer at "radicalism" with the "answer" that "there are no answers" except annihilation, callousness and miracles.



The first step must be the formation of an independent labor party. Such a party, based on the support of organized labor, could develop a program to meet the problems of our society and could rally behind it all the progressive sentiment latent in the country. Only when the tremendously powerful force of organized labor is released from its present bondage to the tweedledee and tweedledum of Demopublican politics can it begin to use its weight to turn the balances toward the left -- toward democracy.

*In brief, we stand for:

1. Opposition to capitalism and Communism and support to all those struggling for democracy and self-determination--in Hungary, Algeria, E. Germany, Okinawa, Kenya, Cyprus....
2. For the withdrawal of all foreign troops, the ending of the arms race and an immediate stop to nuclear tests.
3. For the defense of civil liberties for ALL, including those with whom we disagree--Fascist or Communist.
4. Opposition to Jim Crow and all forms of racial and religious discrimination. We offer full support to the courageous Negro people in their fight for full equality in every aspect of American and world life.

5. Support to the trade union movement in its struggle on behalf of working people. We consider the labor movement to be a bulwark of democracy and the force capable of playing the leading and decisive role in the struggle for a better society. Today labor is faced with the immediate task of strengthening itself by eliminating corruption and increasing internal union democracy.

6. Opposition to the politics and campaigns of the Democrats and Republicans and support to all attempts to form an independent party based on labor.

7. Support to public aid for education, low-cost housing, legislation for higher wages, improved social security, increased public power, aid to the family farmer and the farm laborer.

8. Education as to the need for public ownership of industry, workers control and consumer planning so that production can be democratically organized and created.

The above program is a general outline of our politics and approach. Around these policies many differences exist and continual exploration and rethinking occurs.

HOW THE YSL IS ORGANIZED

We recognize the need for as effective and active an organization as possible. At the same time there needs to be free discussion, creative thinking and the fullest

democratic processes because democracy is as important to us in our internal life as it is in our program for society.

The YSL is based upon local units, such as those in Pittsburgh, New Haven, Seattle, Chicago, Albuquerque, Los Angeles and San Francisco. There are also organizing committees and scattered members-at-large.

At least once every two years there is a national convention, with a full pre-convention discussion period and with every opportunity for the expression of minority views. At each convention a National Executive Committee is elected which meets several times a year. Inbetween a smaller body of the NEC meets weekly to plan and execute the daily details of the organization.

The YSL also published, aside from its major public organ The Young Socialist Challenge, a bi-monthly discussion bulletin called the Young Socialist Review. Local units publish material of their choice and all individuals and tendencies within the YSL are free of course to present their views in order to effect a change in the policies of the organization and in order to educate members and non-members alike.

The YSL also supports Labor Action, the organ of the Independent Socialist League, and helps in the editing, publishing and

distributing of ANVIL, a nation-wide student socialist magazine.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Our activities are varied. Aside from publishing and distributing the publications mentioned above, activities vary from member to member and unit to unit.

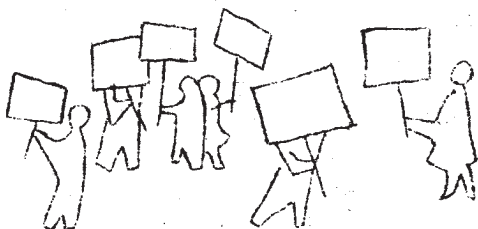
In Chicago many of our members attend the Univ. of Chicago. Aside from having our own club on campus, we are active in the Politics Club, a general radical club, the NAACP, and the Student Representative Party, a campus student government party. We present speakers, organize discussions, initiate protest meetings, etc.



In New York our members are active at many city colleges. In 1957 they were prominent in the fight to allow John Gates, Communist leader and editor of the Daily Worker, to speak at the City colleges. In 1956 they helped organize for youth participation in the big Madison Square Garden civil rights rally.

In NY, as in Chicago, Los Angeles, Berkeley and elsewhere we have organized picket lines of students at the Spanish

embassy against the persecution of Spanish democrats, the French protesting Algerian suppression and the Russians for suppressing the valient Hungarians. We help finance young speakers in talks to student audiences that have never before heard anything but the "official-American-line" much less a radical or socialist.



The YSL has proposed an exchange between a representative of the YSL and the Russian Communist Party youth organization. We have promised to raise the necessary funds to organize an extensive tour for such a spokesman to American campuses. In return however we insist that they organize a similar tour of Russian colleges where we could present our views and sentiments freely. If the offer is accepted it cannot help but be useful in letting Russian students know of the existence of a militant anti-capitalist AND anti-Communist force among American students.

These are just a few of the many things we have done recently. Our activities range from writing, publishing, speaking, organizing forums, joining in protests and petition campaigns, aiding trade union

picket lines, sending aid to youth movements abroad, aiding in local civil liberties cases, and cooperating with other organizations whose aims we support such as the NAACP, and the ACLU.

Of course there is also a variety of educational-recreational activity designed primarily for members. We hold regional and national conferences, weekend camps and a yearly one-week summer camp where members and friends come from all over the country to talk, listen, sing, dance, play sports, swim, put on shows, sun themselves, and to argue... Fellowship we have found is an important part of socialist organization, just as it should form the basis of social organization!



In other words, we do those things that any individual young socialist or radical would do on his own, only more effectively, plus those things only socialists organized together can do in furthering the ideas and policies of democratic socialism.

WHAT ARE OUR PERSPECTIVES?

We do not imagine that socialism will come to America through the leadership or numerical growth of the YSL! Nor do we imagine that we have the final word on all the issues of the day. We do not

even pretend to be the only legitimate socialists in America! Rather we hope someday to be a part of a general socialist tendency within a vigorous American labor party. But even before that day comes, we hope that all American socialists will be able to unite in a common organization to educate for and advocate socialist policies and to help make a labor party a reality.

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