

## What Is the Situation in the Y. C. L.?

The convention of the Young Communist League has been long overdue. It is now more than half a year since it should have been held. What is the reason for this long delay? For whom and for what purpose is the convention continually deferred? Merely to ask this question is to reveal in a flash that the Y. C. L. is in a bad crisis. For if any slight but real advance out of the retrogression could have been detected, we may rest assured that the convention would have been held promptly behind a barrage of denunciation of the "renegades" and loud cheers for Stalin, as is now the custom. But those responsible for the present critical condition of the League have preferred periodic postponements with the hope that this would give them an opportunity to crawl out of the morass into which their stupid policies had dragged the League. But they have not succeeded in improving the situation.

The Young Communist League was never so impotent as an independent youth factor in the class struggle as it is today. In a period of economic crisis and mass unemployment of young workers it has become a negligible, insignificant, and utterly ineffectual instrument of the class conscious young workers. This is vividly shown in the inability of the League to rally any young workers and to put up any kind of an effective fight against the deprivation of second class mailing rights of the *Young Worker* by the U. S. Postoffice. The Y. C. L. finds itself isolated not only from the broad sections of the young workers but even from the more advanced and class conscious young workers who in the past followed its leadership. This is not apparent to many members of the Y. C. L. who do not understand the functions of the League as a youth organization and who mistake the comparatively greater power of the party to mobilize masses for their own strength.

To whatever phase of youth activity supposed to be conducted by the Y. C. L. one turns, it is found that it either does not exist or else has the semblance of life which reminds one of a paralytic old man. The youth sections of the revolutionary unions do not exist except in name; general economic trade union work—we need not even try to speak of it; opponent youth work there is none; anti-militarist activity—if there is any it must be ingeniously concealed; work among the Negro youth—abortive attempts; pioneer work—we hear no shouts of jubilation from this direction. What then? Has there been an increase in membership? 1700 members are claimed (undoubtedly exaggerated) which is about one-half the number at the time of the last convention. The rapid turnover in membership is incontestable. Is there a single substantial achievement to which anyone can point? We are afraid that the champions of the Stalinist line in the League can only resort to their specious self-criticism.

What have been the results of the famous "Shock Plan" which was supposed to have culminated its achievements on September 30, 1930? Or has it been extended ad infinitum? What were the results of the industrial youth conferences in eight industries, the Negro youth conferences against lynching in seven League districts, the mass unemployment youth conferences, all prescribed in the plan? Has a mass Negro youth organization been formed, and the Labor Sports Union transformed into a mass organization? Has the League membership been doubled? How many of the 48 shop nuclei have been created, and how many of the 85 shop bulletins issued? How many of the 10,000 young workers have been recruited into the T. U. L., and how many of the 500 young Negroes into the Y. C. L.? What happened to it all? Has it all been relegated to the archives together with Steuben and Harvey? And were we wrong when we condemned it as stupid adventurism?

One of the most alarming features of the whole situation is that the League is ceasing to function as a Communist youth league and is being transformed into a sort of junior section of the Communist Party. A significant indication of this process is that for the first time the Y. C. L. did not hold its own Liebknecht-Luxemburg memorial meeting (N. Y. C.) and permitted the party to combine this memorial, which was always considered the privilege and duty of the youth to hold, with the Lenin memorial of the party. In the unemployment campaign the special demands of the youth have gained no prominence or attracted any attention whatsoever, while through its own efforts the Y. C. L. has not succeeded in

rallying around its demands any unemployed young workers. In the party's election platform not a single youth demand was raised. In the election campaign period the *Young Vanguard* pointed this out and proposed a youth platform. One week before the elections the *Young Worker* carried a long list of youth demands. The *Young Worker* immediately following the elections carried a leading editorial: "ruthless Bolshevik self-criticism"—in true Stalinist style—of the lateness of the appearance of the demands, the lack of any League election activities, etc.! The regular occurrence of such events these days makes one suspect that errors are committed so that one can get a chance to "self-criticize"! In short, the tendency is for the League to carry out less and less its own independent youth activities and youth campaigns, and to participate only in the campaigns of the party.

The greater proportion of the membership in the League is extremely immature and inexperienced, having been in the organization a comparatively short time. They possess no knowledge or previous experience with which to judge critically the policies and the régime of the apparatus. In fact they require an elementary education as to what a young Communist league is, how it functions, and what makes it different from the party. Thus they have no criterion by which to guide themselves. They are taught that the Stalinist lines and policies are sacred and infallible. Any criticism of policies that anyone of them ventures to make is condemned forthwith as Trotskyist. Ideological development consists in convincing oneself that all the Stalinist strategy and tactics are correct. If there are failures and shortcomings it is because the unquestionably correct line is applied incorrectly. In such an atmosphere which does not permit the right and the duty to question the formulas presented, revolutionary thought and growth is crushed and hampered.

Despite this, however, there is a vague dissatisfaction with the Centrist policies. It is unclear and timid. It expresses itself in disapproval of certain minor features of the unemployment campaign and in criticism of the conduct of the dressmakers' strike. It is unable to see the whole crisis in the Communist movement, and the logic of the struggle for trying to correct the isolated false policies which are perceptible to it. Further developments and new Centrist zig-zags are bound to clarify and sharpen the process.

We must attempt to arouse discussion on all the problems that confront the League

## The Dilemma of the War Department

The economic crisis which is sweeping the entire world today has created a dilemma in the War Department, if we are to judge by the letter reproduced below. In the past it was customary to recruit men from tenement neighborhoods and cheap lodging districts, such as the Bowery. Men out of work and facing starvation would enlist just to get food and a place to sleep. The present depression has of course increased the army of unemployed enormously, and widespread starvation and misery should make it comparatively easy for the recruiting service to get all the men they need for the army. But therein lies the dilemma. An army composed of city proletarians driven by hunger and privation to enlist, would not be made of the right material for a staunch defense of capitalism. Such have too little regard for law and order and our established institutions generally. Their natural sympathies would lie with the workers.

The American ruling class realizes quite well that the time is not so far off when it will have to depend on armed force to maintain the tottering throne of private property, nor does it require military genius on their part to understand that an army composed chiefly of proletarians would not be a dependable army.

No, army recruiting must be more "selective" than in former days. Reading between the lines, one sees that the War Department wants men permeated with the idea that the established order has been ordained by God, men who have been so chloroformed by the sky pilots that they will blindly do the bidding of their pastors and masters.

What kind of response may be expected on the part of the ministers of God thus appealed to? It is to be expected that they will obligingly lend a hand in the noble

project of leading the sheep to the slaughter. We saw that in the last World War. The following is a reproduction of the letter sent out by military officials to all the religious shepherds of the ruling class:

**HEADQUARTERS . . . Recruiting District**  
February, 1931.

Dear Reverend:

In keeping with recent instructions of the War Department to make recruiting for the Army more selective, it has been pointed out that leading clergymen can aid materially the Recruiting Service in its effort to secure only high class [sic!] men for the Army.

The Recruiting Service is mindful that many parents appeal to their pastors for advice in matters affecting the welfare of their children. It follows therefore, that an assurance from ministers, priests, rabbis and leaders of various faiths to parents who seek advice in matters pertaining to an enlistment, will play a large part in aiding parents to reach a decision.

A comprehensive publicity campaign is being prepared with the idea in view of acquainting the public at large and parents in particular with the manifold benefits offered to the youths of this country through an enlistment in the U. S. Army.

An open testimonial from representative clergymen will aid materially in carrying on this campaign. It is therefore kindly requested that you express your opinion in answer to the following:—"Would you recommend an enlistment in the Regular Army to a man of good moral character?"

For your information there is enclosed a pamphlet issued by the Army Recruiting Service.

Your reply will be appreciated.  
Very truly yours  
(Signature)

And this "theoretician" pilemizes against the Trotskyites! Such is offered as unquestionable reality to the Comsomol Congress! The latter surely is now able to understand the relations between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world, knows how to proceed. For has not Kaganovitch carried out the instructions of Stalin, who we are told by the former, "designated international education of the Y. C. L. as one of the most important tasks"?

At the Ninth Congress of the Y. C. L. of the Soviet Union (which we will treat with at a later date) the spokesman for the Stalin régime in the party, Kaganovitch, made some interesting and revealing remarks: (*Imprecir*—Vol. 11, No. 5.). In contrasting the economic situation of the Soviet Union with that of the United States, this learned Marxist (?) informs us:

"We in Soviet Russia are buying new machines; we are building works and factories in order to set going new and more rapidly working machines. In America things have come to such a pass that they are prepared to place people at slower working machines, to lay idle hoisting cranes and other machines in order to employ as great a number of people as possible. We, on the other hand, want to erect new works for the construction of cranes and other means of transport. In America they no longer wish to have short-hand typists but to have everything written by hand. We, however, are building typewriter factories and wish also to make setting machines. We are going forward to a new technique—in America, however, they are seeking to find a way out by means of technical retrogression!" (Page 108)

Why now, more than ever since the 1919-20 Palmer raids is the offensive of the bosses intensified, especially against the Communists? Why the taking away of second class mailing privileges from the *Young Worker*, *Vida Obrero*, *Revolutionary Age* and the *Young Comrade*? Why the attempts to outlaw the Communist movement? The party and league officials answer in unison: Because we are a mass movement; as a war maneuver against the Soviet Union. The first reason has only one weakness—it is untrue. The party still has not gotten completely out of its swaddling clothes. The League is insignificant. The second reason given, while containing some truth, does not however hit the basic point. The attack on the workers' press, the attempt to legalize the Communist movement is an organic and inseparable part of the general offensive of the capitalist class against the workers. The bosses, who are trying to get out of the present crises at the expense of wages, worsening of conditions of labor, greater speed-up, mass unemployment—understand that the workers will make desperate efforts to resist. From this they conclude that a vigorous offensive against the working class, especially the Communist organizations is on the order of the day. In a word, the possibilities for the growth and expansion of the party and league, due to the deep-growing discontent of the workers exist and all means are and will be taken to crush these organizations, that is, so as to be able more ruthlessly, and unchallenged to exploit the workers. This explains the attack on the League, on the *Young Worker*, etc.

The workers should answer this challenge with a broad united front. The party and league can lead such a movement only with correct strategy and tactics. The League, especially, is now accorded an opportunity to get out of its sectarian isolation, to make contact with the mass of youth workers, in a word, to become a mass Communist youth league. At present, the calling of youth united front conferences for the defense of comrades Ryder and Lynn should be taken as a first step.

**HEAR! HEAR!**

The *Young Worker* of February 16, informs us: "Comrade Minerich, who is now in the Pittsburg district, writes us something which we want to call to the attention of the whole League. A notice appeared some time ago in this column about two new units in East Ohio. Comrade Minerich, going thru this section, found that the two 'new units' were merely hopes; they didn't exist. We warn the comrades that we will expose every exaggerated report sent into the National Office." (Pg. 6.) Hear, hear! comrade. We'll do our bit to enforce this warning!

—JOSEPH CARTER.

## Youth Notes

The *Young Vanguard*, the voice of the Left Opposition youth, is henceforth going to appear as a regular monthly section of the *Militant*. Through these columns we will endeavor to speak to the youth leaguers, as well as to the general working youth, on the problems and tasks of the young workers and their vanguard, the Communist youth; to rally them around the banner of the Communist League of America (Opposition). The need for an organ which would be the "collective organizer" of the working youth, by reflecting their every day life and struggles; by disseminating elementary Marxist education; through articles on fundamental Communist youth tasks and policies, is exceptionally acute today when the potentialities far outstrip the actualities.

To this end, to help the communist youth movement to create such an organ—we make our beginning with a section in the *Militant*. Readers of these lines should send in contributions. Youth leaguers, young workers, students write!

On February 5, in Philadelphia, Pa. two members of the Young Communist League, Tess Ryder and Anna Lynn were tried and convicted of sedition. The offense consisted in distributing leaflets for a Liebknecht anti-war meeting to the Philadelphia National Guardsmen. The indictment however is much more serious: It aims at the **illegalization of the Young Communist League and through it of all workers organizations.** It reads: "Anna Lynn did unlawfully become a member of an assembly, society, or group, called the Young Communist League of Philadelphia, Pa., of which the policies and purposes are seditious."

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