

## Youth Notes

### THE YOUNG VANGUARD

In the last issue of the *Young Vanguard* we asked our readers for contributions. The response has been exceptionally poor. This immediately poses the question: Is there a need for a *Young Vanguard*? and, have we the forces to publish it with?

The National Youth Committee definitely answers these questions in the affirmative. The necessity of carrying on Left Opposition work among the youth, of crystallizing a group in the official Young Communist League and winning over its members, of propagating elementary Communist youth education, and of acting as the tribune of any independent activity we may carry on, can best be done with the aid of an organ of our own, a paper. At present this must take the form of a section of the *Militant*.

To publish such a section requires the cooperation of a number of comrades. We have enough young comrades in our League today to begin with. At the same time we welcome articles which express views contrary to those expressed above, that is, which contend that youth work in general is superfluous or that the Left Opposition should not carry on such activity.

### Y. C. L. CONVENTION

The date for the Sixth Convention of the Young Communist League has been set for June 7, 8 and 9. The *Young Worker* of April 6 carries the official statement of the opening of the pre-convention discussion. The statement makes a rather weak and inadequate analysis of the events which has transpired since the last convention, May 1929. It states: "From one thousand members at the time of the Party convention, we have grown to more than two thousand members. This is only the beginning, and at the time of the Y. C. L. convention we must have at least four thousand members in our League." What hypocritical nonsense! First, the comparison of numerical strength should logically be made between today and the time of the last convention. But this would reveal that, even accepting official figures, the League has lost at least fifteen hundred members during this period of unprecedented opportunities. This of course must not be done! Second: on the occasion of the Party convention, the League claimed over seventeen hundred (1700) members. Now this same figure becomes one thousand. Well, what is seven hundred members to these mass workers? A mere trifle! (It is our opinion that the present total League membership is closer to seven hundred than to two thousand). Third: To call for and expect an increase of one thousand young workers in the League by June with the present inactivity of the League is the height of bureaucratic utopianism.

### THE FREE YOUTH

The semi-monthly organ of the Young Peoples' Socialist League "*Free Youth*" sets as its purpose "To convey to young men and women as frankly and forcefully as possible the shortcomings of capitalism and the possibilities of socialism." Shortcomings of capitalism! Possibilities of socialism! What sort of militant, socialist, youth words are these? Shades of Liebknecht—Even the liberal Youth Section of the League for Reconciliation uses "stronger" language.

The four issues which have so far appeared fully substantiate such an interpretation. They contain a mixture of that mushy liberal and pacifist nonsense that one is accustomed to read in any one of the other petty bourgeois youth publications in this country.

In the April 1 issue, "*Free Youth*" carries the caption "What the Young Socialist Means When He Talks of International Socialism" and the sub-caption "Here is the living power of Socialism thruout the world today". Under these captions there follows an account of the parliamentary strength of the European "socialist" parties. We learn—although we thought these people would try to forget it—that in England there is a "socialist" Premier with 289 "socialist" members of parliament; in Germany 152 "socialist" seats, etc. No wonder there is no mention of the bloody events in India, of the murder of Baghat Singh and his two fellow militants by the MacDonald Government; little wonder that "*Free Youth*" abstains from commenting on German politics, and the daily betrayals of "the living power of Socialism" in supporting reaction—against Communists protesting the Fascist murders in Hamburg etc., etc.! If this is what "the young socialist" means when he talks of international socialism we must say: Yes, this is indeed

the "socialism" of the Hillquits, the Lees, the Vanderveldes, the MacDonalds. They are supporters and instruments of the capitalists in time of need. This is the kind of "socialism" we must struggle against crush and overcome in the course of the class war.

### INDIAN YOUTH EXECUTED

On March 24 Baghat Singh and two of his co-workers were hanged by the Indian authorities for the alleged murder of Lieut. Col. Simpson in Lahore, in December 1928 and for participation in the so-called Lahore conspiracy, an anti-British move back in 1929. This murder, which must be put at the door of the British Labor Government and the "Left" Socialists, who demanded the release of all political prisoners except those involved in "acts of violence", led to big protests throughout the country.

In Cawpore, thirty persons were killed and more than one hundred injured at a demonstration held in protest of the execution. Two companies of British troops and two hundred additional police were summoned to maintain order. For several days, rioting continued. In Bombay and Calcutta general strikes were held. When Mahatma Gandhi came to Karachi, he was greeted by a large group of workers, peasants and students with cries of: "Down with Gandhi", "Go back with your truce", "We want the murderer of Baghat Singh". According to reports, Bharat Sabha, a revolutionary youth, struck at Gandhi with the butt of a flag. The protest of the masses and especially the youth, against the murder of the three young revolutionists which came not accidentally on the heels of the infamous Gandhi Irwin agreement has taken on wide dimensions. It shows the possibility of a turn in the development of the Indian revolution. The recent failure of the petty bourgeois youth inside the Indian Youth League to give leadership is proved by their miserable failure at the recent Indian National Congress. Only a Communist party and under it a Communist Youth League, guided by Marxist strategy, tactics and leadership can lead the Indian masses on the correct road to revolution.

### AGAINST THE R. O. T. C.

The struggle carried on by the Social Problems Club of New York City College against the Reserve Officers' Training Corps has once again brought to the fore the question of student anti-militarist activities and so-called academic liberties. The Club president, Max Weiss, and ten colleagues were suspended for the remainder of the semester for protesting the censoring and confiscation of the first issue of the Club's paper, "*Frontiers*". The Club itself was dissolved.

This action was taken ostensibly for such innocent reasons as: the Club did not get permission to issue the bulletin, the Club had borrowed too much money, the bulletin is a product of an outside "radical organization", etc. The real reason for the suspensions, as a subsequent leaflet of the Club correctly pointed out, is the campaign of the organization against militarism and the R. O. T. C. Academic liberties are, as has often been proved and this time with especial clarity—rights which do not interfere with the authorities, of the college, the state and the social order.

The suspensions were however met with big protests. Social Problems' and Liberal Clubs of a number of universities, several college professors, and other groups sent in protests. A petition was circulated at City College demanding the reinstatement of the Club, of the eleven students suspended and the return of the confiscated issues of the "*Frontiers*".

The support of the Social Problems Club by these divers elements compelled the Board of Directors of the college to instruct the President to reinstate the Club, and ten of its members, and to return the confiscated copies of the "*Frontiers*". In a word, the status quo ante was established with one important exception: Weiss is to remain suspended for insubordination. Such militant action as that of Weiss' cannot go unpunished! The dignity of the authorities must be upheld!

The students should continue the fight against the R O T C. The struggle for the reinstatement of Max Weiss must go on.

"It is wholly inadequate that the youth should repeat our formulas. It is necessary that the youth should take the revolutionary formulas fighting transform them into flesh and blood, work out for themselves their own opinion with that courage which comes from sincere conviction and independence of character. Passive obedience, mechanical drill, characterlessness, obsequiousness, careerism, away with these things party."—Trotsky.

## The Young Communist League Convention

The much postponed convention call of the Young Communist League has at last been issued. Under the aegis of a certain claimed growth in membership and other small alleged gains, fortified behind the unproved statement that these were made on the basis of a struggle against resistance to the correct line, the newest edition of leaders in charge of the Y. C. L. have at last ventured to open a pre-convention discussion. For now they can show concrete results! Small gains, it is true, but anyhow gains.

However, it is not by such spurious methods that the Y. C. L. can grow and produce conscious, devoted, and ideologically equipped Communists. To us a convention and the discussion which must precede it, is a highly serious matter. To attempt to conceal the real facts, to avoid a discussion of the actual situation, to create confusion, all behind much noise and din about certain claimed new successes, is to vitiate the entire purpose of the convention. And on top of this to load on the membership the utterly unattainable and loud sounding task of doubling the membership from 2000 to 4000 during the pre-convention period, when more time must be allowed for every comrade in the Y. C. L. for study of the problems, for thought, for reading, and for discussion, is to make a farce and a mockery of a Communist convention.

### For A Genuine Discussion

It is evident that the Stalinist bureaucrats do not want a free and genuine discussion. Under the pretense of a discussion they want a docile acceptance and approval of the policies and tactics prescribed, that is, a purely formal, superficial, pseudo-discussion which allows no real or serious difference of opinion. They want to confine the expression of the membership to inane and trivial remarks on how to apply the "correct" policy handed down from above. For the discussion to have any value whatsoever, the members of the League must assume a sharply critical attitude toward the leadership and its policies. This is necessary not only as a weapon against Stalinist opportunism, but doubly necessary for the Communist youth who in general must advance themselves ideologically. It is useful to recall in this connection the words of Lenin addressed to the third congress of the Russian Y. C. L.: "A Communist who would dream of boasting of his Communism on the basis of the ready made conclusions taught to him, without performing the most serious, the most difficult and persistent work, without understanding the facts of which he should be extremely critical, would be a miserable Communist indeed."

The strain in which the bureaucratic notes of the convention will be sung was sounded in the convention call: "In its beginning to carry out the line of the Young Communist International, our League had to struggle against resistance from sections of the leadership and the membership. It is in the last period on the basis of this struggle that the League can record certain gains." What is the meaning of such a statement contained in a convention call? It can only be interpreted as a warning in advance to discourage any discussion which raises fundamental problems. It draws the boundaries within which the discussion must flow: criticize yourself for not applying the "correct" line of the Stalinist leadership!

The statement itself, however, must raise two questions in the minds of the League members which should be directed to its authors: First, why is it that the whole League, including a section of its leadership, has been unable to absorb this correct line and apply it during a period of two years? Secondly, why don't you prove through concrete examples that it is the application of the correct line that caused the gains claimed, and the failure to apply or the wrong application that caused the decline?

### The Real Situation

What is really the condition of the Young Communist League? (See the *Young Vanguard* of March 1). This analysis must be made not upon the spurge of some nomenclature (and exaggerated gain) but upon the evaluation of the present situation in relation to the past two years. The following facts must be considered:

1. Isolation of the Y. C. L. from the young workers.
2. Absolute loss in membership (3400 at last convention, drop to 1000 at time of party convention, June 1930, at present 2000—an inflated official figure).
3. Very rapid turnovers in membership.

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4. Low political understanding of membership, inexperienced and new.
5. No competent leading cadres.

These indices to the strength of the Y. C. L. are indisputable. In all probability even the most ardent defender of the Stalinist régime would not undertake to refute them, for the realities of the situation have too flagrantly exposed them. In fact they have for the most part been compelled to acknowledge them openly. They strike one all the more glaringly when contrasted to the objective situation which furnishes such good opportunities for the growth of the Y. C. L. The Stalinists do, however, dispute most vehemently the causes for this positively wretched situation. They protect themselves behind the worthless and unproved assertion that the reason lies in the failure of certain leading individuals and the membership to put into practice the infallible line.

In our opinion the immediate causes for the present enfeeblement of the League are as follows:

1. Ultra-Left and adventurist line based on the erroneous and anti-Leninist theory of the "third period".
2. Abandonment of youth policies and activities, tendency to transform Y. C. L. into a junior appendage of the party.
3. Bureaucratic régime.
4. Elimination of workers' democracy, that is, distortion of democratic centralism.
5. Inability of Y. C. L. to function as an educational organization that is, to make communists out of class conscious young workers. (We will elaborate on this point in a separate article).

### The Root Causes

The basic explanation for the critical condition of the Y. C. L. is to be found in the general crisis which today afflicts the international Communist movement. This crisis has been developing since 1923. It had its inception in the struggle launched against the proletarian wing of the party led by comrade Trotsky. There crystallized the Right wing group of Rykov, Tomsky, and Bucharin, and the Centrist bureaucratic group of Stalin, both of which combined in a bloc against the Left wing. In the United States these tendencies are represented by the Lovestone group and the present Foster leadership respectively.

The Right wing reflects the pressure on the party of alien class forces hostile to the proletariat. The Centrist group of Stalin supporting itself on the bureaucratic apparatus has no independent policy of its own, but staggers between the Right and the Left. Up to about 1928 Stalin executed the policies of the Rights. These were embodied in the failure to restrict the growth of the Kulak in the Soviet Union, in the subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to the bourgeois Koumintang in the 1925-27 revolution, and in the opportunistic application of the united front in the Anglo-Russian committee. It was during this period that the Executive Committee of the Communist International gave its whole hearted support to Lovestone in leadership of the American party. Due to the rising militant mood of the working class and the pressure of the Left Opposition, the Centrists were compelled to break with the Rights. They veered toward the Left, but innately incapable of pursuing a consistent line they plunged into an ultra-Left adventurist one. At the present time circumstances are pushing them to retrace their steps to the right, and they are consequently headed for a new debacle of opportunism.

We cannot here in any way deal adequately with this question for space does not permit. Our purpose is merely to pose the question and arouse the members of the League to a study of it. No member of the League if he strives to be a serious Communist can avoid this study or neglect it for it concerns the very existence of the Communist movement. If the convention, despite the Stalinist bureaucrats, serves the purpose of stirring the young Communists to study and think about the burning and vital questions that confront the divided Communist movement then it will have been of benefit. The Left Opposition stands ready to answer any question that any member of the League wants to put to it for clarification and to facilitate in every way possible his approach to the road of Leninism.

As we go to press, the "*Young Worker*" announces the postponement of the convention to June 28.

—GEORGE FAY