

Youth work Joplin/Fraser
Student work Joplin

Comrades are asked if possible
to make a donation of 20p for
each IB towards the costs of
duplicating and mailing.

Please send contributions for the Internal Bulletin to the centre,
typed A4 on Roneo stencils if possible.

YOUTH DOCUMENT

1. A POLITICAL PROBLEM

Trotsky pointed out that the revolutionary party must base itself on the youth - indeed, its success can be rated in its ability to attract youth ("genuine youth - and not old men of twenty" Writings '37-'38). Clearly, the enthusiasm and dynamism of youth, not corrupted or disillusioned by the cynical practice of the labour movement bureaucrats, is a vital component of any organisation aiming to overthrow capitalist society. Yet, Trotsky went on to point out that this enthusiasm in itself is not enough. It will die off unless there is clear understanding, based on theory and living experience, education and self-education.

He goes on to point out that :

"Revolutionary irreconcilability is a precious quality once it is directed against opportunist adaptation to the bourgeoisie and against the theoretical flabbiness and fainthearted hesitation of all sorts of office and parlour Communists and Socialists of the type of Browder, Norman Thomas, Lovestone and the like. But "irreconcilability" turns into its opposite when it merely serves the sectarians and confusionists as a platonic consolation for their inability to link themselves up with the masses. Fidelity (loyalty) to the ideological banner is the indispensable and fundamental quality of the genuine revolutionist. But woe to him who turns this 'fidelity' into doctrinaire stubbornness, into repetition of ready-made, once-and-for-all learned formulas, without the capacity to give heed to life and respond to its needs. Genuine Marxist policy means carrying the ideas of the proletarian revolution to ever wider masses, through ever changing and ever new and frequently unexpected combinations of historic conditions."

The point of quoting Trotsky here is not to say the situation we face today is exactly the same as that Trotsky was talking about in the Young People's Socialist League in 1938 (for a start, there were 700 youth in the YPSL). But clearly, the above is a response to similar sorts of problems we are facing now. The point is to shed some light on the extremely polarised situation we have in W.. youth work.

Youth work in the W.. is not being done, in the sense that we have a national perspective common to all, and that the branches then carry it out under the discipline of the organisation. At the moment we have some youth work done on a federalist basis, ie everyone does their own thing. The Youth Steering Committee does not function and has not functioned properly for over a year. There has not been a central direction to youth work. The federalist approach has led to demoralisation and stagnation in many areas. The Youth Steering Committee are clearly to blame - from both sides of the fusion.

However, the reasons for this state of affairs is not simply inertia on the part of the comrades responsible. In fact very far from it, the reasons are political, stemming from different assessments of the SWP, different reasons for being part of it, different methods of work different histories as well as all the different tradition and political positions in general of the 2 old organisations.

Yet, we are a fused organisation and at the time of fusion both agreed on the basis of common work, resulting in agreement on the idea of the NLWYM and the resolutions, Where we Stand, need for a paper and steering committee at the initial conference of the NLWYM in June 1981. But, fully 6 months before that before the fusion was anything like definite, there was meetings where SWL and Barricade comrades agreed that the 2 youth groups had a similar approach and were trying to move away from the SWP-type sectarianism towards a serious labour movement orientation. We agreed that the 2 groups were moving in the same direction and that therefore we should work together.

2. A SECTARIAN REGRESSION

The problem we face, is one of a sectarian regression by some comrades; a desire to pull away from the YS as the bedrock of our youth work, and to declare CF as a separate youth organisation.

Indeed, some comrades argue that we will need this separate organisation in preparation for the closing down of the YS by the LP leadership. If the YS was closed down, the last thing serious revolutionaries would do would be to go off and form a separate organisation. Our place would be in the thick of the struggle to re-instate it, to continue national structures despite the NEC dissolving them, to keep local YS's going in the (unlikely) event of moves to shut them down. With the current strength of the left in the CLP's, there would be massive hope for this struggle - to walk away from it would be criminal. Yet the logic of setting up CF groups as alternatives to the YS's is to move away from the YS, to move away from the labour movement.

That is a complete change of orientation. It is not being 'flexible'. In all other areas of our work the labour movement orientation is central - why should it be any different for youth work?

As Marxist revolutionaries we should be more than good militants and fighters. We should have a perspective for overthrowing capitalism, for which we need a revolutionary party, and an organisation thoroughly rooted in the working class - we are concerned with all aspects of life under capitalism, and we have a total view of the world that helps us understand why it is like this and how we need to change it.

Paramount in our programme and strategy is the working class - the organised working class is the only force that has the power to change society, and yet the organised working class at the moment does not include those who are the best, least cynical and uncorrupted fighters - the youth. And this is the idea we have to get across to the masses of youth willing to fight, wherever or whatever they are involved in now. One way of doing this is to show how we can fight in the YS.

If we say the YS is an optional extra, just another meeting to go to, then we will be failing in our aim of winning youth to the idea that revolution will only be possible if the organised working class is mobilised to do it.

All this would appear to be basic stuff, but the point is that if we carry on with the idea that CF groups are OK as an alternative to YS (except possibly in the most exceptional circumstances) we will end up facing the wrong way - away from the labour movement.

We cannot create, in present conditions, another rival labour movement. We will not build a revolutionary party by facing away from the LP or the TU's. The same applies to our youth work.

The YS is the youth section of the LP, the party the working class look to to fight in their interests. The YS is the largest youth section in Britain attached to the labour movement. YCND now is bigger, but in it we as revolutionaries fight for a labour movement orientation - and that includes an orientation to the YS.

We came to our common conclusion on work in the YS because in both organisations there was a moving away from the sectarian approach of the past, an attempt to root ourselves and our politics in the working class, a move away from being 'pure' revolutionaries (not revolutionaries at all, in fact) to trying to relate to much broader forces than ourselves, through trying to convince workers of our politics by being part of what they were doing - instead of commenting on what was going on in the LP or the EPYS or the TU's from the sidelines.

YS work was seen as a means of doing this - both to take our politics into the YS, and as a means of using the undoubtedly better known name of the LPYS as a way of working more effectively ourselves.

Comrades should read the Wiganisation document, which was an explanation of how successful YS work was done by the SLL in the early '60's and an attempt to use those sorts of methods in our work now. This idea has not properly been put into practice. There were sporadic attempts, which were not maintained.

3. HOW TO DEAL WITH M AND BUILD THE YS

Clearly, the major stumbling block in the YS has been the M, who control the apparatus, very effectively. They see the YS as their organisation, not as a youth organisation. That there are more forces than simply ourselves willing to fight against this in the YS was shown by the attendance of 200 (10% of the people at last year's conference) at the CF fringe meeting. Yet there does seem to be a feeling in our ~~own~~ own ranks that the YS is M's property.

While it is understandable and reasonable for our newer comrades to feel intimidated and ill-equipped to deal with M hacks, it is not reasonable to then turn that into a reason for arguing that YS work is not important and that we should, as a result of difficulties experienced by individual comrades, turn away from the YS and form separate groups or a separate youth organisation. Such difficulties were a problem recognised by both old organisations, but neither said that the solution was to say that YS work is too difficult for us, so we wouldn't bother.

On the other hand, going to a M-dominated YS meeting every week is nobody's idea of youth work - that is not youth work. Sterile arguments with M, often engineered by M for the very purpose of demoralising us and supposedly 'proving' to new YS members M had brought along that we weren't interested in doing anything are utterly pointless. Our comrades should always go to their YS with the intention of turning it out to working class youth - with concrete proposals for action, leafletting door queues, organising pickets, supporting strikes, recruitment drives, organising forums where new youth can be introduced to our politics; anything from a disco to a local demonstration.

A common complaint from our comrades is that they have done this - have regularly gone and proposed campaigns etc, but the M always vote them down. So what do we do then? We don't run off in a fit of pique. That approach simply confirms the M's argument that they are the 'doers' and we are the ones who sit around talking about doing. We can say we are going to have this picket, leafletting etc anyway. As YS members we are going to do it. We can go along to YCND meetings as YS members and make the links. We don't need a YS branch rubber stamp to do that. Most important, we can build the YS.

Recruitment to the LP or the YS is very easy. A common fear amongst comrades is that they don't want to take new youth to the YS as they might get bored, or we'd lose them to the M. But if the meetings are boring, then it's up to us, with the new recruits, to liven them up. If we're frightened of losing our contacts to the M, then we're not in a position to build a revolutionary party ... or a YS! There are a few big YS's dominated by M, like Hackney Central. These are not the rule, but even these have openings for us. M do not have everyone's ear at once. If it's a big, functioning YS, then there are new people whom we can talk to, whom we must talk to. We must in cases like that, build the YS or we are just wasting our time.

Obviously it is easier to build in a non-aligned or NLWYM YS, but it is by no means impossible to do it successfully in a M YS. Most commonly, YS's do not have a vast number of M in them. Many of them are no more than shells, and M can be by-passed with a little determined effort from us. This is the kind of approach advocated in the Wiganisation document. It is not the kind of work that bears immediate fruit - we cannot just turn up at, or set up, a YS and expect the local youth to fall at our feet. As pointed out in the original

YS orientated.

Coventry NE YS did good anti-racist and black defence work as the YS and got a vast amount more support (little enough) from the local labour movement PL's and TU's than they would have as a CF group. It was short-lived, but that cannot be blamed on the method of working through the YS: on the contrary, as the initial response was good.

An important event over the past year was the YS Black Youth Conference, at which we argued that the YS should spearhead a move to set up a labour movement anti-racist and anti-fascist campaign. If we were serious about that argument (there were no disagreements about it at the time), then how do we propose to fight for it and carry it through if we do not take YS work seriously and the labour movement orientation seriously?

5. YOUTH RADICALISATION

Our aim is to build a revolutionary youth organisation. We have to find a way to relate to the thousands of youth flung on the dole, no hope of a real job for the foreseeable future, at the mercy of racist police, quite liable to be attracted to the fascist's ideas unless we get to them first.

Since the late '70's there has been talk of youth radicalisation, meaning that there's a greater willingness to fight, or at least reject the way society is run - the rise of the ANL, specific campaigns, like the huge march of mostly young blacks into the centre of London from Deptford, the St Paul's riots in Bristol, followed by the nationwide riots in the summer of '81, the Bradford 12 campaign - a radicalisation that no-one has seriously made any gains out of in terms of recruitment to the revolutionary left.

There is no organisation big enough or dynamic enough or with the right politics to do it. The YS is big enough, and does draw some of them but the vast majority of radicalised youth have a sceptical attitude to any sort of organised left groups. However, it is fantasy to believe that by presenting our own tiny forces as the alternative to the official labour movement, and by sufficiently strident propaganda, we can transform the spontaneous rebellion of youth in single issues into all-round revolutionary politics and build this fragmented radicalisation into an alternative mass movement.

The YS is certainly not dynamic enough and does not have the right politics - the leaflet they put out during the riots, lecturing youth that they shouldn't riot as the only way to get anywhere was to join the YS (they meant M). However, they did get a large attendance at their meeting in Brixton (better than any other left group); and of course, technically, they are right - rioting is not an answer to the problems youth face, but rather than blaming the youth for not joining M, the blame should have been firmly laid where it belongs - with the weak-kneed leaders of the labour movement for making the organisation so f the working class unattractive to youth.

The labour movement makes a few token gestures towards organising youth. There was the Jobs Express and the People's March. Most unions have youth sections with no power, mainly training grounds for up and coming bureaucrats, firmly under the control of the union leadership. The LP has a youth section which does not act as one - that is one thing the M do for the Labour leadership. Youth have little faith in the labour movement as an alternative to their present existence. The point is, what do we say about this? Do we say change the labour movement? Or do we say forget it and try something else? We as revolutionaries have to be committed to changing the labour movement to make it habitable for youth, just as for any other section of the working class. And a revolutionary youth organisation has to be rooted in, and consequently part of, the organised working class.

While, obviously, we are a active part, or should be, of various camp-

Wiganisation document - to do youth work successfully means a reallocation of work in the local branches with the understanding that comrades centrally involved in youth work, of which there should be some in every branch, would be committed several nights a week, and during the day if they're unemployed to building and organising around that work.

The aim is to challenge the idea that the YS is and always will be the M's sole property - we can take our politics and programme into the YS and, with consistent and hard work, build the YS and our branches better than M ever could, as we have the perspective of turning the YS outwards and creating a genuine, mass socialist youth movement.

How do you build a YS? LP wards, constituencies, YS branches regularly have recruitment drives - going round, knocking on doors, saying, do you want to join? Often this immediately starts off a discussion on the state of the LP, and you can immediately identify yourself as on the left, an SO supporter. That, as anyone who has done it will confirm, is extremely easy.

If recruitment drives are not part of your branch's work, then propose that they are, and go and do it. Every constituency has a copy of the electoral register which always has on it names and addresses of young people coming up to the age of 18. Go and visit them all with a leaflet. (In Edinburgh Central YS, it was done once with a n 18th birthday card from the YS, saying that now they were 18 they had no alternative but to fight the Tories and they should join the YS. Many did).

Often YSs are built on the basis of a few mates at school - you only need 5 names, and as long as it doesn't remain the same mates, that is a start. All constituencies have TU delegate coming from branches where there are bound to be TUists under the age of 26; get their names and go and see them. Sell the paper at colleges, schools, dole queues, youth clubs and cafes, swimming pools, shopping precincts, discos, gigs, all the places youth go - don't just stand there on your own looking forlorn, go as a group make the sale an activity. Hold discos and social events (as outlined in the Wiganisation document). Keep the YS active and visible as a campaigning force locally, supporting strikes, doing anti-racist campaigns, leafletting army recruitment centres, helping to organise the unemployed etc. Reach out. A lot of constituencies still have no YS. It's only by building new YS's in areas where initially we haven't got anyone that we'll make a breakthrough in the YS nationally.

4. YOUTH AS EXCEPTION

Some comrades have argued that the YS has a reputation that working class youth, especially unemployed or black youth, have a positive hostility to. They are hostile to the LP, clearly seeing it as a reformist organisation that they want nothing to do with. The YS is tainted with this image because it is the official youth section. So this healthy response to reformism is used as a reason not to orientate to the YS initially, and to set up groups - CP groups, outside the YS - which would do the campaigning work suggested above.

This seems a reasonable argument. But, it can be destructive, especially if it's done on a local basis without reference to what the organisation as a whole is doing. And it means that arguing that youth can be an exception to the labour movement - especially black youth. Black youth do not relate to the LP or the YS, so there ought to be separate forms of organisation.

It's true the labour movement is not a welcoming place for them, as it is not for women, youth in general, gays or just plain militants. But in no other cases do we argue that that is a reason for 'going round' the labour movement. We can, of course, use all sorts of special campaigning methods: working, for example, through setting up a local anti-racist committee. But such anti-racist committees etc will have to be labour movement orientated - and that includes

aigns, like Bradford 12 or campaigns against unemployment, YOP's or the NTI, working in these, in itself, is not enough. We have to have an over-all view of what we are aiming at and how we get there.

Despite much argument about what CF groups are doing, in some cases they do appear to have become alternatives to the YS. Comrades are proposing campaigns, work and so on that they would be proposing in the YS, in the CF group - it is clearly thought of as an alternative to the YS.

While this might seem to be an attractive idea, declaring ourselves as an separate revolutionary youth organisation, it is by no means an adequate response to the tasks that face us now. It is attractive to think that we can get on with our work without the M apparatus breathing down our necks. It's much easier - no interference with our contacts, we can say what we like with no opposition and so on - but our task is to create a revolutionary socialist current of youth within the existing labour movement.

That is why the drift to set up CF groups has to be resisted. Obviously, this does not apply to caucus meetings of CF supporters before a YS branch or a co-ordinating meeting of CF supporters over several constituencies, regionally or nationally.

But CF groups should not become an alternative to the YS. If comrades think they should, then there should be an assessment of what is wrong with the original positions of both organisations before the fusion.

6. THE NATIONAL LEFT WING YOUTH MOVEMENT.

We launched the NLWYM as Red Youth and Barricade supporters with a leaflet and a basic 'Where We Stand' in ten points at the YS Conference 1981. The leaflet said: "At this conference we have seen the beginnings of a revolutionary opposition to the YS majority. We want to build that and provide an organisation for YS's not aligned to the M tendency. We do not think that the YS should impose the conditions on membership that the M do. We are for free and open discussion of politics in the YS. We do not consider M's programme to be revolutionary". Just after that conference, the racist killing in Coventry took place and our comrades were centrally involved in black self-defence work and the campaign against racism. So the first NLWYM conference was held in Coventry, managing to attract quite a few of the youth that had been involved in the campaign. That conference was very optimistic and had a lot of new youth attending. That was where the new paper CF was launched from. The 2 Conferences of the NLWYM since, have not had a similar number of new youth. The NLWYM has not 'jelled' properly. It tends to become an arena for discussions which are going on in the W... It has very little independent life of its own, which is not altogether surprising since it has not grown significantly in over two years. The blame for this state of affairs can be laid at the national youth leadership's door; but it can also be laid on the rest of the organisation too.

7. THE PAPER

At a W... youth cadre school, held about a year ago, there was a discussion about the paper, with fairly extensive criticism of content, layout, format - the lot, with an admission on the part of a lot of comrades that they were not selling it. This had already been deduced by the centre, as practically no money was coming in for the issues produced. Since then, there has been an attempt to get more articles written for the paper from comrades outside London, to achieve a better balance between 'culture' type articles and labour movement, YS, and unemployment articles. The lay-out has become less 'outrageous' or 'squint', and there has been an effort to regularise the production.

Nevertheless, money still does not come in from the areas to pay for the next issue even. Clearly, we need a drive throughout the organisation, branch by branch if necessary, to work out where and when paper sales can be organised -

there is no excuse for not selling the paper.

Despite the dire state the NLWYM is in, the 200 youth who turned up at the YS conference CF meeting are clearly looking to us for an alternative in the YS, we have a responsibility to them, at the very least, to pull ourselves together.

8. M AND THE WITCH-HUNT

The witch hunt in the LP appeared to initially have a disorientating effect on M. Their response at first was that nothing was likely to happen, and they would carry on as normal, refusing to be part of any campaigns to defend them. This aloof stance proved to be difficult to maintain in the face of such an obvious witch hunt, and ~~thus~~ presumably under pressure from the R&F of M, they decided to hold a series of readers' meetings to sort out the national response.

The attitude of M to the witch-hunt - backing down, declaring that they would rather have their people expelled before a constituency suspended - has not been well received by those lefts prepared to defend them. It has also meant that there has been a questioning of their conservatism in the YS.

They have not really had a campaign to defend the YS it has purely been for them a question of their own survival as a tendency. The threat to the YS as a youth organisation has not been taken up by the M (until very recently, now that the YS budget has been slashed).

Our response has been to feature a campaign to defend the YS prominently in the paper, pass resolutions in as many bodies as possible, to demand that the YS leads a defence campaign, and propose affiliation to LAW. But our effectiveness has been limited by the number of YS branches that we are active in - this is a result of our federalism and our lack of coherent attitude to the YS. Obviously any campaign we try to conduct will be adversely affected and severely limited by our lack of cohesion as a national organisation.

The LP leadership could try to pursue the witch-hunt by attacking the YS, even if they're not going for expulsions. The NEC could very easily stop annual and regional conferences. They just need to pass a resolution. That would not mean that YS branches would be disbanded, but it would destroy any national organisation. It might not be something M would resist very much, both for the reason that they have not so far resisted much on anything, but also that they do have a network of their own, meaning that they would not miss the official endorsement of the LP very much (apart from profoundly disliking the 'unofficialness' of it).

That means that we have at all times to point to the necessity of the YS national organisation, as a youth section, and the need to have a 'Defend the YS' campaign rather than just defending M.

9. YCND

This is the year of Cruise - the year they're due to arrive. Yet our YCND work is appalling. YCND is wide open to us, and there are plenty of opportunities

for wide-ranging debate and discussion on all areas of politics. Despite our desultory work, we have managed to get a representative on the YCND NC, who has done much sterling work with not a great deal of results as she is practically on her own in terms of CF involvement in the fastest growing youth organisation. Since M has a sectarian attitude to YCND, to say the least, we as CF are (or can be) the most public face of the YS in YCND and have a responsibility to do the work. We need to put major resources into building the May YCND Festival

and YCND, and all under-21's comrades should join YCND as a matter of discipline. The work is not hard, as there is no monolithic bureaucratic control, and there is not the anti-political attitude that tends to prevail in adult CND. Tremendous possibilities of access to school students exist, and

aigns, like Bradford 12 or campaigns against unemployment, YOP's or the NTI, working in these, in itself, is not enough. We have to have an over-all view of what we are aiming at and how we get there.

Despite much argument about what CF groups are doing, in some cases they do appear to have become alternatives to the YS. Comrades are proposing campaigns, work and so on that they would be proposing in the YS, in the CF group - it is clearly thought of as an alternative to the YS.

While this might seem to be an attractive idea, declaring ourselves as an separate revolutionary youth organisation, it is by no means an adequate response to the tasks that face us now. It is attractive to think that we can get on with our work without the M apparatus breathing down our necks. It's much easier - no interference with our contacts, we can say what we like with no opposition and so on - but our task is to create a revolutionary socialist current of youth within the existing labour movement.

That is why the drift to set up CF groups has to be resisted. Obviously, this does not apply to caucus meetings of CF supporters before a YS branch or a co-ordinating meeting of CF supporters over several constituencies, regionally or nationally.

But CF groups should not become an alternative to the YS. If comrades think they should, then there should be an assessment of what is wrong with the original positions of both organisations before the fusion.

6. THE NATIONAL LEFT WING YOUTH MOVEMENT.

We launched the NLWYM as Red Youth and Barricade supporters with a leaflet and a basic 'Where We Stand' in ten points at the YS Conference 1981. The leaflet said: "At this conference we have seen the beginnings of a revolutionary opposition to the YS majority. We want to build that and provide an organisation for YS's not aligned to the M tendency. We do not think that the YS should impose the conditions on membership that the M do. We are for free and open discussion of politics in the YS. We do not consider M's programme to be revolutionary". Just after that conference, the racist killing in Coventry took place and our comrades were centrally involved in black self-defence work and the campaign against racism. So the first NLWYM conference was held in Coventry, managing to attract quite a few of the youth that had been involved in the campaign. That conference was very optimistic and had a lot of new youth attending. That was where the new paper CF was launched from. The 2 Conferences of the NLWYM since, have not had a similar number of new youth. The NLWYM has not 'jelled' properly. It tends to become an arena for discussions which are going on in the W... It has very little independent life of its own, which is not altogether surprising since it has not grown significantly in over two years. The blame for this state of affairs can be laid at the national youth leadership's door; but it can also be laid on the rest of the organisation too.

7. THE PAPER

At a W.. youth cadre school, held about a year ago, there was a discussion about the paper, with fairly extensive criticism of content, layout, format - the lot, with an admission on the part of a lot of comrades that they were not selling it. This had already been deduced by the centre, as practically no money was coming in for the issues produced. Since then, there has been an attempt to get more articles written for the paper from comrades outside London, to achieve a better balance between 'culture' type articles and labour movement, YS, and unemployment articles. The lay-out has become less 'outrageous' or 'squint', and there has been an effort to regularise the production.

Nevertheless, money still does not come in from the areas to pay for the next issue even. Clearly, we need a drive throughout the organisation, branch by branch if necessary, to work out where and when paper sales can be organised -

there is no excuse for not selling the paper.

Despite the dire state the NLWYM is in, the 200 youth who turned up at the YS conference CF meeting are clearly looking to us for an alternative in the YS, we have a responsibility to them, at the very least, to pull ourselves together.

8. M AND THE WITCH-HUNT

The witch hunt in the LP appeared to initially have a disorientating effect on M. Their response at first was that nothing was likely to happen, and they would carry on as normal, refusing to be part of any campaigns to defend them. This aloof stance proved to be difficult to maintain in the face of such an obvious witch hunt, and ~~then~~ presumably under pressure from the R&F of M, they decided to hold a series of readers' meetings to sort out the national response.

The attitude of M to the witch-hunt - backing down, declaring that they would rather have their people expelled before a constituency suspended - has not been well received by those lefts prepared to defend them. It has also meant that there has been a questioning of their conservatism in the YS.

They have not really had a campaign to defend the YS it has purely been for them a question of their own survival as a tendency. The threat to the YS as a youth organisation has not been taken up by the M (until very recently, now that the YS budget has been slashed).

Our response has been to feature a campaign to defend the YS prominently in the paper, pass resolutions in as many bodies as possible, to demand that the YS leads a defence campaign, and propose affiliation to LAW. But our effectiveness has been limited by the number of YS branches that we are active in - this is a result of our federalism and our lack of coherent attitude to the YS. Obviously any campaign we try to conduct will be adversely affected and severely limited by our lack of cohesion as a national organisation.

The LP leadership could try to pursue the witch-hunt by attacking the YS, even if they're not going for expulsions. The NEC could very easily stop annual and regional conferences. They just need to pass a resolution. That would not mean that YS branches would be disbanded, but it would destroy any national organisation. It might not be something M would resist very much, both for the reason that they have not so far resisted much on anything, but also that they do have a network of their own, meaning that they would not miss the official endorsement of the LP very much (apart from profoundly disliking the 'unofficialness' of it).

That means that we have at all times to point to the necessity of the YS national organisation, as a youth section, and the need to have a 'Defend the YS' campaign rather than just defending M.

9. YCND

This is the year of Cruise - the year they're due to arrive. Yet our YCND work is appalling. YCND is wide open to us, and there are plenty of opportunities

for wide-ranging debate and discussion on all areas of politics. Despite our desultory work, we have managed to get a representative on the YCND NC, who has done much sterling work with not a great deal of results as she is practically on her own in terms of CF involvement in the fastest growing youth organisation. Since M has a sectarian attitude to YCND, to say the least, we as CF are (or can be) the most public face of the YS in YCND and have a responsibility to do the work. We need to put major resources into building the May YCND Festival

and YCND, and all under-21's comrades should join YCND as a matter of discipline. The work is not hard, as there is no monolithic bureaucratic control, and there is not the anti-political attitude that tends to prevail in adult CND. Tremendous possibilities of access to school students exist, and

we cannot afford to waste more of the opportunities that were open to us last year - of the Jobs not Bombs march - during this year.

10. Women in the YS / young women's conference.

This idea has been floated for several years now, through both the youth organisation and Women's Fightback, and has come to naught. There are very few young women in CF - which resulted in a horrendous disparity at the founding conference of the NLWYM when a motion calling for the SC to be elected on the basis of 50:50 male and female was carried, with many of our own comrades arguing against. This has arisen again in recent months over a proposal to have a women-only conference. It will go ahead and all our youth comrades should support and build for it.

11. Discipline.

The majority of CF SC members are full or candidate members of the W., which is a bad situation. As a broad movement an ideal number is one third so that arguments are won on the basis of politics and not numerical force. It also means that there are arguments between W. members due to our lack of cohesion. This has now got to the situation where W. members (not raw youth, but long standing members) are arguing against each other and using the SC as a forum for W. internal matters. That is an unacceptable situation.

Much of the problem of our youth work seems to be that comrades feel at liberty to ignore or only follow to the letter, W. positions. There are many incidents, many of which are trivial, but one in particular illustrates the problem.

Motion for the CF conference in November arrived from a CF group, which were clearly not our positions. The EC had to discuss them and a full youth commission was called. Had the comrade concerned discussed the matter in the W. branch, and not used the opportunity to pursue internal disputes outside the organisation, we would not have wasted so much time, which could have been better used to build the conference.

Our conception of an autonomous youth movement doesn't mean that W. youth comrades function autonomously. Branches should be helping out in planning an over-all approach to youth work on a day-to-day level. This is not to keep a tight rein on comrades but to give assistance and take seriously what is a priority area of our work. The dreadful state of our youth work isn't just the leadership's fault, it is also to do with branches ignoring it.

12. OTHER YOUTH GROUPS

The SWP has wound up Rebel with all its other 'peripheral' groups and now has no youth group as far as we know.

Revo appears to be the only other group doing youth work. Revo doesn't have claims to be a loose youth organisation. It is democratic centralist and apparently has 3 or 4 functioning groups. The rest of Revo members are in the IMG, who, despite their supposed loyalty to Revo's democratic centralism - once a decision has been made - argue the IMG line in Revo. As the NC is dominated by IMG members, then Revo almost always takes the line of the IMG.

Revo has a totally different approach to building a youth movement. They seem to believe that by working in single issue campaigns, a youth movement will be built. This movement is Revo. We work through the YS recognising firstly, the impossibility of 'dual unionism' type ideas of building and secondly because the YS is the youth section of the labour movement. Revo doesn't seem to have done much recently. Their paper is a watered down SC and comes out even less frequently than ours. Where we have tried to work with Revo, especially at last year's YS conference and in SSIN, they have been unco-operative and tried to impose their strategy and conceptions on relatively trivial organisational

questions. Also they behaved in an uncomradely fashion, to say the least, at our meetings at Conference.

Joint discussion on joint work have been held with Revo og YCND and YS work, but due to their hostile attitude to us at YS confernce, when we had a loose agreement to co-operate, we ahve not met them since. They did not attend YS Summer Camp so there could be no joint work. In general, the prospects of CF and Revo moving closer together through joint activity is relatively small, as they appar to be moving in a different direction from ousselves.

JOPLIN

FRASER January 1983

STUDENT WORK.

Having been pushed

by real changes in student attitudes and organisational affiliations, and by seizing opportunities open to us in particular Student Unions, our student work has changed dramatically over the last 18 months. For those comrades who either don't know/don't remember what we used to do, it might be useful to explain.

The I-CL (and I believe the old WSL too) had a dismissive attitude to student work. Students and Student Unions were seen as merely useful resource centres. One went along to Labour Clubs or Socialist Societies to argue with another left group, to sell the paper and to hopefully recruit. General Meetings were for scraps with either the SWP or the Tories, and rather than taking up campus issues or even national student issues we were outsiders who would move a motion about Ireland but not take part in a discussion about, say, academic representation which would actually matter a good deal more to a whole layer of S. activists. Basically we were outrageous sectarians, completely cut off from the 'average' student movement activist, , who we have since discovered are good people, willing to work with us to some degree. The students we recruited were unlikely to be involved in student politics.

In the last couple of years we have become more responsible towards student unions. This is partly because Labour Clubs have a tradition of concentrating on (or at least doing) Student Union work and SW finds itself as a focal point for the left within Clubs as they have replaced Socialist Societies (non-aligned) and Socialist Student Alliance (ex IIG organisation) groups as the 'natural' home for leftist students. We have had our attention focused for us on SU, we couldn't maintain credibility and carry on as we were. Its also true to say that S.U. **to give up** have been forced **or** become more militant because of the cuts, and so we get a more sympathetic hearing than we had a few years ago.

With this slight increase in student militancy a new type of student activist is developing - the unlike previous generation is in the 'P' and unwilling to separate LC from SU work.

These changes have created a lot of openings for us, if its taken seriously we can become an important group in NUS/NCLs within a very short time. And the reason for this isn't that we have been in LC for years (although this certainly helps) and no-one else has, but because we are the only group who are in any sense plausible that argues for a Labour Movement orientation. Clearly the Militant might say something which appears to be similar but they are so badly out of place in a student movement which is quite well educated about sexual politics.

In this situation we launched Socialist Students in NCLs. The SLG and R are working with us. The SLG have only a couple of students but they are well placed, we have no problems with them. Of course the same cannot be said about R. who are essentially sucking us about. They won't formally come in SSIN but expect preferential treatment. Most of their rank and file from Penningtons faction want to formally join SSIN, but are prevented. Some very good R students keep in touch with SSIN, and are constructive at the meetings but the leadership is convinced that the 'project is not totally relevant'. R main problem seems to be that they don't know what's going on or what they are trying to do, they couldn't even manage a paper-seller at NUS Conference.

SSIN has started off with the presumed success. We are able to organise a genuine current of independent NCLs people and persuade non-NCLs activists to join up with us inside NCLs. We have created an organisation that meets a need - a fairly hard, NUS orientated NCLs group. Within SSIN we are by far the largest group and by having the one position that numbers allow the far-left on the NCLs NC we are the group that sets the pace.

SSIN has a loose platform, designed to establish maximum unity. But the level of political awareness in NOLS by non-CIV non-Militant activists is necessarily quite high, and the platform might be out of place for a Labour Left, Briefing type group in CLPs which SSIN is really the equivalent of. There isn't any indication as yet that a Briefing type group would have been more appropriate despite the IMG's insistence that NOLS was not ready for a broad campaign that included positions on Ireland. There is an accepted body of positions which left-wing student activists hold that isn't found in average CLPs, and fortunately these positions tend to be ours too. The intensity of political discussion in colleges also means that new activists are educated quite rapidly.

The first SSIN conference attracted 27 people, but we have met new groups since then. It's a fair estimate that by NOLS conference at Easter the number of clubs with us will have risen from about 7 to 20.

Our work around NUS National Conference and the Further ED. Sectoral Conference (techs) has established us as an independent group within NUS.

NOLS supports the continued participation of NUS in the European Student Union conferences (EUS). At last Easter conference we opposed sending a delegation because the NUS were excluded, and because these conferences are not a lot more than Stalinist propaganda exercises. We were beaten by a Presidential ruling (which can only be challenged in the Courts) - any of our boycott candidates who were elected would have been deemed to have resigned, and therefore replaced by the highest loser. At the following conference we opposed the report-back, arguing that its conclusion about necessary changes were banal and would persist in ratting on Solidarnosc. We were able to achieve quite remarkable thing, given the nature of NUS Conferences, we suspended all Standing Orders to

have a statement from Solidarnosc read out and we lost the vote 307-312. After this the interest in us obviously grew considerably.

At the FE conference our position on women was passed and so was the motion on FE's and the Labour Government. Had the conference not clashed with exams its likely that our candidate would have been elected to the FENC. we made a good impact without our most experienced FE activist being able to attend.

Inside NOLS we are able to get invite to places we have never had a presence before. And if S+ keeps the place open to SSIN on the NOLS NC this should continue, so its not only our student work which benefits from student work.

Branches without students should try to make contact with LC. Its quite likely that they will be willing to have a speaker about almost anything, so if a comrade is an officer in some campaign or other then definately invite yourself. Contacting LC about public meetings is well worth doing, and its particularly important that they are contacted about industrial disputes.

Students who don't do student work should at least reconsider. We

can grow in NOLS and of course students will also help out in the YS work. Students who are active in their SU and LC should automatically be planning on going to NUS and NOLS conferences. At Christmas Conf. only 2 W.. students were there, if we had more prehaps we would have won the Polish motion.

Joplin.