

Report on YPSL convention by Walt G. and Peter H.
Held July 8-9, 1968

The Detroit local sent two comrades who were allowed to attend as "Militant" correspondents. There was no serious attempt to stop us. Due to personal reasons it was impossible to cover more than the Monday morning session which was a 4-5 hour organizational report.

The convention was held at the Workman's Circle Resort in South Haven, Michigan. There were a number of SPers present, among them Max Shachtman, Dan Shelly and three or four others who were quite vocal with the YPSL's. None of the older SPers attended the convention. Apparently only Shachtmanites and a few close political allies were present. There appeared to be no political differences at the convention, however there may have been, since we missed the political report.

At most forty people attended, thirty two as delegates. We were the only non-YPSL's present.

The convention was opened by their outgoing National Secretary, Pam Hart. She was the only black person at the convention. The "keynote" address was delivered by their National Chairman, Penn Kemble. He was an open SPer. Despite casual joking the overall air was one of pessimism. He said, for instance, although "we won at the SP convention, the only thing we won was the right to hope for the future of socialism in America---anyone who listened to the organizational reports couldn't help but be discouraged". He closed saying: "we have a responsibility to the SP---to rebuild the party".

Pam Hart then gave an organizational report from the YPSL national office. They claimed to have spent \$13,000 last year in the national office alone. She said the SP had 5-10,000 members and YPSL had 4-500 members. Kemble interrupted to say they hold members well. At this point he also mentioned that there were members of the "international" press present and "members should be aware of the possibility of misquotation". Kemble is graduating to SP work. Elections to their offices were to take place the following day.

Area Reports: all locals except Boulder, Colorado, and Washington present.

Berkeley: two delegates, gave impression of being a very small local. "Negotiations Now" campaign was their main area of work with three people on full time. They claimed a financial turnover of \$12,000 in six months. Democartic party takes up much of their time. They said that since the Young Democrats endorsed McCarthy YPSL had no role. They also said they preferred Kennedy. Despite this the Vice President of the California Young Democrats is a YPSL. YPSL is "helping"

to write their "69" platform.

They were antagonistic towards the Berkeley actions. It is a "reflection of an unhealthy political atmosphere present". Nothing was said about the defense of the demonstrators rights.

CCNY: eight delegates. The report was given by Josh Murovnik. They were quite proud of their recruiting at Music and Arts high school. Their activity is divided between the Kennedy and McCarthy campaigns. They claim to be able to reach and influence a number of very important people on campus like faculty and student government leaders. It was reported that they have a front called the Jewish Socialist Youth to recruit from Hillel, a large Jewish student organization. They claim to be the largest political organization on campus.

Among the delegates there was general air of hostility toward the antiwar movement. The CCNY delegate explained in detail their attitude (at CCNY) toward the student strike. The younger YPSL's listened quite attentively.

Harvard: five delegates. The report was given by Ben Ross. He said that Harvard YPSL had grown from 15 to 56 members, eight of whom were SPers. They voted critical support to McCarthy. It was claimed that Harvard SDS is on the verge of split and saw this as an opportunity for recruiting "from our left---we have been recruiting almost exclusively from our right". This problem of a left cover was mentioned several times. Kemble interrupted to say that Harvard was one of their more successful locals.

Music and Arts high school: delegates counted in the CCNY delegation. The report was given by Dena Rosenberg. They claimed 30 high school members in New York. 18 of these are from Music and Arts, 10 from Bronx high school of Science, and 2 from misc. high schools. This was the only report dealing specifically with high school work, but others had mentioned it off-the-cuff, favorably. The reporter said they recruited people who already considered themselves socialists.

An unspecified number of high schoolers have graduated and will try to organize at Columbia and Barnard. From the tone of the presentation they probably won't have to many left in high school.

New York at-large: eleven delegates. Josh Murovnik gave the report. Most New York at-large members are workers (white collar mostly). Their main activity has been preparing for the convention and supporting the high school teachers strike. They have also participated in the farm workers movement through participation on picket lines, raising money etc. They have some people on the CCNY faculty and one person on the New York Social Services Union executive board.

Sacramento: six delegates. Bob Byron gave the report. The Democratic party is their main arena of work. They split their labor between the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns. They are trying to become Democratic party functionaries in voluntary rather than paid positions. (made big point about this). Joan Grossner and her husband reported on their one term colonization of some Catholic college in Oregon. One good contact was made. They said they tried to orient themselves toward liberal "do-gooders". In Sacramento they have four people on full time in the farm workers boycott. Their perspective is to ship people out of Sacramento into other areas, especially Los Angeles. They have created a "Friends of YPSL" for faculty members who aren't quite ready to join the SP, but are friendly and act as spokesmen for YPSL on campus. Apparently this "Friends" phenomenon is limited to Sacramento. They also work with an all black night janitor's union at the university.

Boulder: no delegates were present because they had to return to work from the SP convention. They were entitled to two delegates. Their main work is in the graduate assistance union at whatever campus is in Boulder.

National Projects

a. Front Lash - in response to white backlash. It concentrates on voter education, voter registration, and bringing youth into involvement and working on a labor-student alliance.

In Ohio, Rick Garcia was sent in to work on voter registration. He went to liberal student groups urging upon them the importance of primary elections.

b. National Farm Workers activity - most of the local farm workers activities were already reported. Generally, they said that they would continue this work wherever possible. The reporter said that they have been gaining much influence and many friends, but said nothing about any of them joining the SP or YPSL.

c. Negotiations Now campaign - last summer they had two full time organizers traveling across the country. They have changed the name of the committee to the National Committee for a Political Settlement in Vietnam. They have called a convention for this group but did not mention when or where. Politically the group will continue its past approach for a cease fire, free elections, international supervision, economic aid for reconstruction and land reform. Although it wasn't clearly said, full support to the current negotiations was pretty clearly implied. At this point the convention broke for lunch.