

Report to the NEC on the Canadian Youth Convention, July 13, 1967

by Mary-Alice

The first bi-national convention of the Young Socialists - Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes took place in Toronto the weekend of July 8 - 10. There were delegates from Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa, and London, and a total of more than 100 delegates and visitors in attendance.

The most important decision made by the convention was to publicly announce the formation of the YS and LJS as a cross Canada youth organization. The YS and LJS are distinct parts of a common movement, functioning in both French and English Canada. The fact that the Trotskyist youth in Canada have established a bi-national organization represents the most significant advance they have made since the formation of the YS in August 1965.

Over the last two years, the two most important political developments affecting the work of the YS-LJS have been the decline and "death agony" of the New Democratic Youth (NDY) and the development of the antiwar movement.

The strength and attractive power of the Left Caucus in the NDY, and the NDP bureaucrats' fear that they would lose political control of the NDY, had led to the expulsion of almost the entire Left Caucus over the course of the last year. NDY membership has been placed under the direct control of the NDP. The result has been the virtual collapse of the NDY in all the provinces except Alberta. In Ontario there is not one functioning NDY club.

Many of the NDY youth who were expelled were those most active in the small but growing antiwar movement in Canada, and the ones who had worked hardest to convince the NDY leadership and membership of the importance of the antiwar movement and the necessity of building it across Canada. As a result of their activities there are antiwar committees on most of the major campuses in Canada and there is a national organization of these committees, the Student Association to End the War in Vietnam, which did the main organizing work for the 2000 strong "Take Vietnam to Expo" demonstration in Montreal on July 1. There is also a viable high school antiwar committee in Toronto, Students Against the War in Vietnam, and the potential exists for building high school antiwar committees across Canada.

As in the United States, the radicalization among youth is continuing to deepen and spread, and our opponents are failing to take advantage of the openings. It was the combination of all these factors that laid the basis for the turn to open work and the public founding of the YS-LJS. Most of the discussion at the convention centered around the question of how to reach out to this new generation of radicalizing youth, recruit them

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to the YS-LJS, and educate and develop them into revolutionary socialists.

The antiwar report and discussion analyzed the present stage of the Canadian antiwar movement and the projected activities for continuing to build it. Although the antiwar movement has a firm base on the major campuses, it is still not strong enough to force the other political tendencies to participate in antiwar activities on a sustained basis. There was considerable discussion on how to draw the CP and new lefters into the antiwar activity and organization, either through united front formations or through involving some of them in the campus committees. The campaign to build October 21 across Canada was projected as an important step towards doing this and was seen as the central axis of work in the coming months. They hope to use October 21 as a way to build both SAEWV and SAWV, and establish new campus and high school committees. The Canada/Vietnam Newsletter will probably send out trailblazing tours to help build October 21 demonstrations in the key centers of Canada.

Organizationally this convention marked an important step forward for the YS-LJS. At the time of the '65 convention there were approximately 60 members in the YS; this year they recruited their 100<sup>th</sup> member during the convention itself. In '65 they were unable to put anyone on full time, now they have three full timers. They projected several organizational goals for their work in the coming year including a fund drive of \$3500 (their annual budget has increased from \$1500 in '65 to \$7000 in '67), enlarging the YSF, publishing at least one pamphlet and a number of brochures, and a sub drive for the magazine. They also felt they were in a strong enough position to consider colonizing another of the key cities.

On Sunday evening four panel discussions were scheduled: NDY work, campus work, high school work, and recruitment and education.

In the high schools their concentration on building SAWV in the last year in Toronto has been the most successful arena of work. Seven high school comrades were recruited out of SAWV alone.

In the Recruitment and Education panel the discussion centered around the weakness of all our opponent tendencies in Canada (the CP in particular is weaker than here in the U.S.) and the possibilities this opens up for direct recruitment to the YS-LJS.

The average age of the delegates to the convention was 20.9 years, and the delegates were 50 per cent men and 50 per cent women. A new national committee of 23 was elected that

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represents a strong collective leadership. At the post-convention plenum Gary Porter was elected the new Executive Secretary.

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Comrades should keep in mind that publicly this was the founding convention of the YS-LJS, to which supporters of YSF and members of the LJS were invited. The contents of this report can be read or summarized for the locals, but comrades should use discretion in allowing the report out of their possession.