

February 8, 1958

Dear Members of the Young Socialist Club:

When we first participated in forming the YSC we had high hopes that it could slowly grow and attract young people who had little or no previous association with socialism and the left. We hoped it could educate young people to the desirability of socialism and that it could help meet the immediate as well as long run needs of young people. In good faith we were willing to try and make a success of a group that started out with people of rather fixed and divergent ideas on socialism. Our experience is that the group has not grown but has shrunk in size. We have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the group will not grow, at least with a permanent kind of membership.

The reasons for this stagnation are deep-going, in our opinion. A couple of people have engaged in a smear campaign to convince others the reason YSC hasn't grown is that we have kept people away. That just is not true. We brought any number of people to meetings and events, especially in the early stages, but they quickly became disgusted and would not return. However, we didn't tell every left thinking young person we know that they had to be in YSC or something was wrong with them, particularly when they said they'd be labelled in YSC and as a result would not be able to participate in other youth groups. No, we're afraid the causes for YSC's problems are not that two individuals did or did not keep their acquaintances away -- and we did not do that. The causes are much deeper.

We think the experience with YSC is that young people will not come into a youth group and remain in which Trotskyism is the dominant thinking or plays a considerable role. That is because of the content of those ideas and how they are practiced. The positions taken by Trotskyism are soon seen as not corresponding to reality and not in the best interests of young people. For example, the Trotskyist opposition to the struggle for peace and peaceful co-existence in a world of ICBM's and Sputnik hysteria pushes young people away. They correctly reject the idea that only when we have socialism can we have peace and that the peace activities of the American people are a diversion from the struggle for socialism or that these struggles conflict with the colonial independence movements. While there will always be a war danger as long as capitalism survives, the future for young people can be free from atomic warfare even if socialism is not won in the next few days or years, if the people impose that on those monopolists who seek world domination and war. And if the anti-colonialism movements are to succeed they must be backed up by the struggle against an atomic war.

These young people also realize that independent political action by the workers and other democratic strata of the people does not always or even often (today) mean running "socialist" candidates off in one little corner that draws advanced young people away from any place where they can influence others.

YSC has tried to operate as a group that 50 or 100 members and in a lot different period, demanding of its members that they do YSC work nearly every day of the week or they are not really "revolutionary." New young people can not be won to support socialism on that basis. In addition, that style of work which flows directly from Trotskyist philosophy isolates those few more convinced young people who are willing to put in all that time from those whom they should be influencing. There is not time left to participate in community, high school or campus activities. As you know we have refused to work in that way.

It has also become increasingly clear to us that despite protestations to the contrary, in practice, the Trotskyist position is one of no struggle on day to day needs of young people but instead offers pie-in-the-sky. Each issue confronting young people is not taken from the viewpoint of developing the broadest movement to win gains, improvement in the conditions of the young people. Instead the tendency is to single out issues on which there is no hope of achieving any small victories. The often unspoken logic behind that practice is that then you can most expose capitalism and show the need for socialism, while avoiding the danger that illusions that capitalism can be cured will result from any gains won. Though seldom drawn out this far, the logic of it is that when conditions get real bad we'll be better off because then the workers will establish socialism. The Trotskyist in this youth group tend to forget its special character as a youth group and concentrate solely or mainly on adult issues in forums and activities. But that's not surprising if the actual way in which current issues are dealt with simply to expose the system and not also to build the movements capable of winning some immediate needs of young people. Adult questions will do just as well or better for this purpose. Slowly but surely young people who come around the group realize that nothing's going to be done to improve their day to day lot -- socialism is enough in itself -- wait till it comes -- and for this further reason they don't and won't stick. Work to achieve gains on immediate needs and work to achieve socialism are not in contradiction, rather they are inseparable.

Also a number of young people have expressed to us the fear of being labelled. The Trotskyists quickly put everybody into a category and try to determine the individual's former or present connections and leanings. Thus you're a "social democrat," a "Stalinist," or a "true revolutionary." If you're a "Stalinist" then you're a former LYler or a Communist. The word is then spread far and wide. While this practice may be defended as not bad intentioned and "just an objective political estimate," its objective effect is much akin to McCarthyism in that the young person so labelled cannot participate in other youth groups and their jobs and future education are endangered. Few young people will go near an organization with that atmosphere.

The supposed ex-LYler -- "Stalinists" -- Communists, after having been singled out and labelled are then concentrated on by a number of the Trotskyists to show them the "true revolutionary path." Instead of concentrating on winning new young people to socialism, they concentrate where they think converts to Trotskyism can most easily be made. In our opinion this demonstrates that the Trotskyists in practice (though probably not in their own minds) are not really out to build a united socialist youth movement but are out to convert already convinced socialist youth for narrow partisan benefit. In this process the Trotskyists make a point of indicating the few ex-LYlers or YSLers who are in the several groups around the country or on the Young Socialist newspaper, all of which the Trotskyists dominate. Objectively speaking, these people, including ourselves, are used as window dressing to suck in others. But for the reasons pointed out before these young people and the broader young people who have had no left contact do not stay. While we do not accuse the Trotskyists of bad motives, we do not intend to allow ourselves to be so "used," especially in a group that can't grow. X

We have come to the conclusion that there is no basis today for organizational unity of socialist-minded youth with the Trotskyists. A broad socialist youth movement will not grow best by that kind of unity. As we pointed out the views

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and practices of the Trotskyists are such that they drive new people away. Being in the same group with a sizeable number of Trotskyists, therefore, dooms all in the group to inability to aid in the growth of socialist views among youth. Unconvinced young people just won't stay in a group where there is constant squabbling in very sectarian language over concepts they do not feel are important.

We think there may be a basis for joint action on a given issue between other socialist youth and youth groups in which Trotskyists play a major role. Time will tell if that is the best way to help meet the present needs of American youth and win them to support socialism.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Dot & Danny Rubin

P.S. (In longhand) We have mailed this letter to members of the coordinating committee.