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# YSA

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 7  
August

No. 5  
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## Young Socialist Alliance

P. O. Box 471, Cooper Station, New York 3, New York

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# Young Socialist Alliance

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## THE NEGRO STRUGGLE AND THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

### Draft Resolution on Civil Rights

submitted by D. Konstan, A. Nelson and S. Stoute

'In the politics of Marxism the tactics of the day, as well as the strategy for the long run, flow from a theory which, in turn, is a generalization of previous experience in the evolution of class society in general and of capitalism in particular' --James P. Cannon, The Road to Peace, p.15 (emphasis added).

'For the proletariat, however, (national) demands are subordinate to the interests of the class struggle.' --V.I.Lenin, The Right of Nations to Self Determination, p.23.

(1) The new level of militancy reached by the Negro people in their struggle for equality sharpens the contradictions of capitalist society, highlights the problem of the crisis of leadership, and furnishes the first significant breakthrough for the participation of revolutionary socialists, especially youth, in struggle since the post-war reaction. However, the peculiar racial distortions of American proletarian consciousness, in addition to the oppressive lag of organized labor in the struggle, pose the special problem of tactics and organizational forms which can serve to unite the American working class to overthrow capitalism.

(2) This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that the NEC Majority has a basically false and disorienting theory on the Negro movement, which essentially holds that integration is a 'merely' bourgeois demand, far surpassed by black nationalism which is profoundly revolutionary and inevitably drives, under its own steam and without Marxist leadership, toward socialism; we thus have a reliable, though non-Marxist, ally. A further consequence of this 'theory' is that the struggle in the south is of secondary importance; here again, moreover, objective conditions are supposed to give birth to a revolutionary leadership, and thus our presence in the south is entirely unnecessary. It is 'sufficient', we are told, for the YSA to endorse SNCC without reserve, and with the assistance of the federal government and a thoroughly confused misrepresentation of the permanent revolution, Trotskyist leadership becomes utterly dispensable.

(3) The labor bureaucrats well served their masters--the American capitalist class--when they failed to extend the organizational drive of the CIO into the south, and when they divided labor in organized areas by permitting and encouraging discriminatory practices in the unions. The pattern of struggle for

the American working class was in large measure determined by these defeats. While the labor bureaucracy conservatively maintained its privileges by ignoring the needs of the most oppressed layer or caste of the working class, the Negro people lost confidence in their white allies and grew prepared to take independent action to secure equality.

(4) The Korean War, like all wars, speeded up social processes, increasing the militancy and consciousness of the Negroes and leaving in its wake the palliative Supreme Court decision on segregation in 1954. Legalistic tactics were surpassed when the Negro people in Montgomery discovered the weapon of the economic boycott; 'they pushed the whole movement towards a higher stage of development.' (The Class Struggle Road to Negro Equality, p.10) Furthermore, the growing independence movement in Africa increased the confidence and consciousness of the Negro masses in America. The next major tactical development in the Negro struggle was the sit-ins, which spread throughout the country.

(5) However, in the bosom of this new militant movement there erupted the same infection which had corrupted labor's drive toward integration: a conservative bureaucracy which took root in the absence of revolutionary leadership. Thus the tactics of self-defense, ~~against~~ violent racist attack, of Robert F. Williams, which are vitally necessary to furthering the struggle in the south, and which have been deliberately hushed up by the bourgeois press, were opposed and condemned by the conservative leaders of the Negro movement.

(6) Mass pressures have resulted in the limited radicalization of the older civil rights organizations, such as the NAACP and CORE, despite the repressive efforts of the bureaucratic leaderships, while new militant organizations have been formed in response to the needs and aspirations of sections of the Negro people (SNCC, SCLC, RAM in Philadelphia, etc.).

(7) Moreover, the recent period has seen the rapid growth of the nationalist (separatist) movement. However, nationalism must be seen as a product of the crisis of leadership in the northern movement. (Note: nationalism is a popular term which does not lend itself to scientific or concrete definition. It may refer generally to anti-white feelings or to strong sympathies with the African independence movement (LCA). In some circles it has been generalized to mean simply militancy. Most specifically it refers to separatist movements organized along racial lines. This sense is the only one which has any meaning for Marxists. The movement best representing nationalism today is the Muslims.)

(8) Nationalism is a bourgeois demand. Its economic base lies in the need for subject nationalities to liberate and organize themselves in order that commodity exchange (capitalism) may develop more freely and rapidly. It can be supported, from

an independent proletarian point of view which fosters no illusions of patriotism or national superiority, only when the oppressed nation has a nascent economy which is kept from development by oppression. In the oppressor nation, the right to self-determination may be advocated as a counter-measure to chauvinism.

When the problem of nationalism is posed in its classical Leninist form, it becomes apparent that separatism is not in itself a revolutionary demand, requiring the unconditional support of Marxists.

(9) The separatist demand of the Muslims, their advocacy of the building of a separate black economy, and their dangerous abstentionism with respect to the mass integration struggle are utopian and petty-bourgeois. The class base of their ideology is the petty-bourgeoisie of the northern big-city ghettos (especially New York and Chicago).

(10) The Muslim movement is fundamentally a religious organization. It is dominated by a tight bureaucratic structure. This makes it virtually impossible to work within the movement. Nevertheless, the Muslims have a broad appeal to the black working class, which is perhaps the dominant element in their composition. This is due ultimately to the lag in consciousness and lack of revolutionary leadership in the labor movement; to the absence of an alternative Negro revolutionary leadership and organization; and to the Muslims' vitriolic denunciation of 'white society' plus their assertive self-confidence, which correspond to the new mood of the Negro people. We can best reach the working class elements in the Muslims by working with them when possible, defending them against the attacks of the capitalist government; at the same time we must publish critical appraisals of their ideology in our press, exposing its petty-bourgeois content.

(11) Existing civil rights organizations are naturally responding to the heightened consciousness of the Negro masses. The NAACP, for example, has experienced a 'revolt of the youth' at its last convention in Chicago, July 1-6. A new turn in the northern movement has been marked by the fight against racism in the unions and the mass picketing of construction sites. Another example of the turn to mass action is Philadelphia CORE's current fight against the slum-lords. CORE has also made efforts to support SNCC's work in the south, and is the primary vehicle of militancy in the 'united front' organization which has continued to picket the Downstate Medical Center construction site in New York City despite the withdrawal of support by the ministers after Rockefeller's token proposals.

(12) The rise in militancy of the masses and the changes reflected in the leadership show many contradictions; thus while a section of the leadership of Philadelphia CORE still firmly

upholds the doctrine of non-violence, and tends to eschew mass demonstrations, the leadership as a whole nevertheless busily mobilizes an angry mass and leads it in militant actions. These contradictions afford an incomparable opportunity for revolutionary socialists.

(13) Our general task in the coming period must be to recruit a black Trotskyist youth cadre to the YSA. We do this by participating in the civil rights organizations openly as revolutionists fighting for militant mass actions. The basic method of Trotskyists working within these organizations is clearly to establish left-wing revolutionary caucuses by means of a transitional approach embodying a succession of concrete programmatic slogans. The long-range perspective is of course to develop an alternative leadership based on class struggle solutions in these groups; this inevitably involves a polarization and confrontation of political tendencies, which is preparatory to a split of revolutionary from conservative petty-bourgeois forces in the organization.

(14) The specific programmatic slogans must be geared to the particular circumstances and organization. In the north, general slogans may be:

A) A pre-arranged percentage of all newly hired apprentices or laborers must belong to minorities (Negroes and Puerto Ricans or Mexicans)--cut the hours of work sufficiently to provide jobs for all, with no cut in pay.

B) Workers themselves, through their weapons of mass action (picketing, sit-downs, demonstrations) must reform their class organizations; against decertification suits.

C) Demonstrations must continue despite promises by government officials until the specific terms agreed upon by the membership have been met; against Cecil B. Moore-New York ministers type of sell-out.

D) End all restrictions employed to soften demonstrations--against strait-jacket approach of the bureaucrats (the March on Washington).

E) End support to traditional capitalist parties.

F) Support independent Negro candidates and socialist candidates who run on principled programs of civil rights.

G) For independent political action by minority peoples for civil rights.

(15) The southern region of the United States is a doubly exploited area: the average wage is approximately half that of the northern region. This is made possible by the absence or weakness of unions, and by widespread racial antagonisms. It is only the super-exploitation of the Negroes which, in the era of imperialist decline, maintains a tense stability in the south.

(16) The contraction of the world market, and increasing foreign competition are responsible for the drastic cuts in American steel production: steel factories are currently operating, it is well known, at less than 50 % capacity. In Birmingham, primarily a steel town with the highest concentration of proletarians in the United States, the contraction of steel output and automation have resulted in a major unemployment crisis. Negroes are the first to be laid off industrial jobs, when they have them (about half the union locals in Birmingham have no Negro members at all--a fact which is not true of industrial unions in the north). Worse than this, Negroes now face unfair competition in local menial jobs from unemployed whites--whites invariably get preference. There is thus an army of frustrated and angry unemployed Negroes in Birmingham.

(17) Against this background enter the petty-bourgeois ministers, raising their petty-bourgeois demands (one sales clerk position, etc.). Committed to non-violence and fearful of proletarian militancy, the King-Shuttleworth-Abernathy leadership have only one weapon: to put pressure on the big bourgeoisie--represented by the federal government--to intervene on their behalf. The federal government (i.e., Robert Kennedy and Roger Blough) can act at the expense of the local bourgeoisie to head off future demonstrations by granting the mildest, most meaningless concessions. Nevertheless, because racism is an essential divisive factor in the working class which is propping up American capitalism in the epoch of its decay, it is impossible for the big bourgeoisie to grant any significant demands. The only action by the Kennedys in the Birmingham crisis was sending troops--directed against the Negro community rather than to protect them. The latest civil rights bill is such a farce as to have received vehement criticism from the NAACP and the Urban League.

(18) Utterly frustrated by the suffering endured for the sake of King's utterly insignificant demands, and enraged to see even these bargained away without a struggle, the unemployed workers, who previously had stood on the sidelines, took the incident of a bombed motel to vent their anger in violent resistance. The responsibility for this undirected violence, and for the subsequent campaign of terror against the Negroes which has been waged and is being waged in Birmingham, must be laid to King. While it is true that King's leadership has been largely discredited, the price was very high--possibly widespread demoralization. (See statement by James Forman, executive secretary of SNCC, concerning Birmingham in National Guardian, May 30, 1963: 'The usual effect of long waiting periods after a few concessions is to kill the Movement.')

(19) Even though SNCC, which is not homogeneous, has maintained its militancy and its attachment to the aspirations of the masses, events like the Birmingham crisis are entirely beyond the scope of the organization because of its formal commitment to non-violence and its self-imposed limitations on its perspectives.

(20) SNCC is the most viable part of the southern civil rights movement. Its cadre continually come into conflict with NAACP, CORE and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (King). Its statement of purpose is a credo of non-violence, but people of different ideologies are not excluded. SNCC does not have a worked out program but their workers condemn the 'black bourgeoisie' and orient towards the poor masses. They have very close ties with SDS, which is practically dominated by YPSL, and with SCEF. SNCC is the left wing of the southern civil rights movement, and it is a movement which we should be a part of.

(21) The SNCC leadership is every day formulating concepts of struggle for the movement. The empirical changes in orientation stem from their experience in the day to day struggle alone. While this cadre is militant and is tied to the aspirations of the black masses, it harbors many illusions as to the nature of the oppressor, the nature of capitalist society, and therefore the nature of the struggle itself. From this flows an incorrect conception of the methods necessary to effectively combat racism.

(22) The masses of black workers and the SNCC leadership and ranks will not pragmatically come to understand and adopt the science of Marxism simply by virtue of their militancy and readiness to grasp any methods within their reach that they find may be necessary to the forward surge of the fight. They are groping for answers, and some of the more conscious of them have picked up pieces of phraseology without fully comprehending their significance which seem on the surface to indicate the necessity to change the system; but this must not be mistaken for a true revolutionary class consciousness.

(23) The rising upsurge and militancy of the black revolt and the contradictory and confused, groping nature of what is now the left wing in the movement provide the revolutionary vanguard with fertile soil and many opportunities to plant the seeds of revolutionary socialism. Our task is to create a Trotskyist tendency in the broad left wing of the movement, while building that left wing. Our ideas will help the movement, not hurt it. We must consider non-intervention in the crisis of leadership a crime of the worst sort.

(24) It is our duty to send a small fraction of YSAers to work consistently in the south in SNCC. The task of this fraction should be to establish itself as a part of the movement



by proving its dedication and devotion through hard work. We should seek to recruit individuals through extensive discussion with militants while projecting to the movement as a whole certain immediate programmatic demands, as well as transitional demands, to be adopted. We work in these movements because we want to fight racism in practice as well as in theory, because we know that it is only through the socialist revolution that racism can be wiped out. To build the revolutionary vanguard is to participate in and build a revolutionary leadership of the current struggles of the working class--of the fight for Negro liberation. In the course of these struggles the cadres of the world revolution will be built.

(25) General demands in the south must be:

A) For organized self-defense movements in southern cities--for the tactics of Robert F. Williams; against federal military intervention, which always supports the status quo.

B) Against discrimination in unions and industries--especially companies with government contracts or subsidies.

C) For drives for union organization.

D) For independent political organization--make voter registration meaningful.

(26) The most oppressed stratum of the working class is in motion. It struggles bravely but blindly to remove the unbearable burden of capitalist exploitation from its shoulders. There is only one program which can point the way to the Negro masses north and south: Trotskyism, the vanguard consciousness of the proletarians of all the world. The American working class still idles in a false and quickly dissipating security; the doubly exploited Negro caste has special demands corresponding to its peculiar needs and the pervading crisis of leadership. These circumstances dictate special organizational forms which reflect the independent activity of the Negroes. It is essential that Trotskyists help crystallize and guide these transitional forms, preserving the independence of the black proletariat from bourgeois influences, and preparing the Negro people for the task which they will share with the white sector of the working class--the revolutionary transformation of society.

New York  
August 18, 1963

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STATEMENT ON THE CUBAN QUESTION

by Shirley Stoute and Lynne Harper

The attached minority document, 'Draft Resolution on the Cuban Revolution,' dated December 21, 1961, was presented for vote at the last YSA Conference in December, 1961. This final draft is hardly known in the YSA even though it was the document which then defined the minority tendency in the organization. The reason for this lapse is that an earlier, preliminary version, dated November 20, 1961, was the one printed in the Young Socialist Forum (Vol. V, No. 2) and given general circulation.

Although other questions, especially the Negro struggle, are in the forefront before the YSA today, there are two substantial reasons to submit this document to the YSA Discussion Bulletin for the information of the YSA membership generally and for the delegates to the coming National Conference. The first of these reasons is that very clearly, in our opinion, the prognoses set forth in our Cuban resolution--e.g., on the counter-revolutionary aims in Cuba of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy--have met the test of later events such as the missile crisis; the viewpoint adopted by the majority has not stood up.

Secondly, we stated then that 'Taken as a whole, the process going on today in Cuba is that of the formation of a deformed workers state--that is, the creation of a society like that which exists in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China.' In the opinion today of the overwhelming bulk of the minority comrades in the YSA, this process has reached a point of consolidation such that Cuba has become a deformed workers state.

August 18, 1963

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DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

1) The Cuban revolution constitutes the highest point of revolutionary development hitherto attained in the Western Hemisphere; it is potentially the commencement of the American socialist revolution. Realization of this potential is possible only if the Cuban revolution once more surges forward, internally and externally, to the establishment of workers' democracy in Cuba and the spread of the revolution to at least the decisive countries of Latin America.

2) Despite enormous accomplishments, Cuba remains economically backward and isolated in a Western Hemisphere under the domination of U.S. imperialism. This situation is the direct

cause not only of the obstacles to the further progress of the Cuban revolution but also of powerful tendencies toward degeneration.

3) For the masses of Cuba the most significant economic achievement of the revolution has been a substantial increase in living standards. This has been accomplished through a radically egalitarian redistribution of income and wealth, and a reorientation of the pattern of investment to give priority to the construction of schools, homes, and cultural and recreational facilities. At the same time, a start has been made toward diversification of Cuban agriculture. The direct action of the working class in seizing industry and, in many cases, in exerting democratic control over this industry; the organization of the peasantry into democratically run cooperatives; the arming of the masses with the formation of the militias--all this, while it was not consummated in the actual control over the state by the working class, did give the masses a very real weight in the political life of the country. This was an important acquisition of the Cuban masses and marked the Revolution as a profound social upheaval which brought the Cuban masses for the first time in history into partial control of their own destiny.

4) The revolution has basically overturned the previous Cuban property forms. The U.S. and Cuban owned latifundia have become the property either of the working peasantry or of the state. All U.S. owned industry has been confiscated and the properties of a considerable portion of the Cuban bourgeoisie have likewise been expropriated. Since Cuba remains free from the burden of meaningful compensation and indemnification payments, these measures can provide the structural basis for a non-capitalist type of planned economy.

5) The speed and depth of the property overturn has been essentially a response to the actions of U.S. imperialism. Although the Cuban revolution began with purely bourgeois-democratic aims (agrarian reform, overthrow of the Batista dictatorship, national independence) these could not be achieved without a fierce struggle against U.S. imperialism and its Cuban bourgeois retainers. The refusal of the Castro regime to back down before U.S. blackmail and economic aggression led it to mobilize the Cuban masses and strike against the economic bases of imperialist and bourgeois rule. Its very survival compelled it to destroy the old army and police which had been the bulwark of the 'democracy' of Grau and Prío as well as of the dictatorships of Batista, and replace them with a new revolutionary army and a vast popular militia.

6) The main concern of U.S. imperialism in its vicious hostility to the Cuban revolution has been to safeguard U.S. economic positions throughout Latin America. The U.S. has been held back from a military invasion of Cuba only by the probability

that such action would spread the revolution instead of suppressing it, and the certainty that a U.S. attempt to occupy Cuba would be met by the Cuban people with resistance of the utmost ferocity. U.S. policy toward Cuba therefore has attempted to strangle and distort the Cuban economy through a combination of military and diplomatic pressure with naked economic aggression.

7) The Cuban economy has been able to continue functioning under these blows only because the Soviet Union came to its aid by taking Cuban sugar in return for oil, munitions, and essential industrial products. Far from being altruistic, this action is entirely to the economic and political advantage of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy which rules in the Soviet Union and the other countries of the 'Socialist Camp.' It is aimed at bringing the Cuban revolution under control and using it to put pressure on the U.S. in order to gain more concessions in an eventual 'peaceful co-existence' deal.

8) The political development of the Cuban revolution has throughout been marked by the absence of a sizeable revolutionary-Marxist political party and the total lack of democratic structures whereby the government would be responsible to and controlled by the workers and peasants. For a considerable period these factors were overshadowed by the revolutionary actions of the Castro regime and its responsiveness to mass pressure. Nevertheless, the fact remained that the Cuban state and economy were in the hands of a separate administrative apparatus independent of the workers and peasants because not subject to election and recall by them. Even that most democratic of institutions, the popular militia, was deprived of the essential democratic right to elect its own officers.

9) Even in the period of revolutionary upsurge there were strong tendencies towards the imposition of bureaucratic structures upon the revolution. This was most clearly evident in the case of the Cuban Trade Unions whose democratically elected leadership, whatever its vices, was composed of Fidelistas who had ousted the old pro-Batista bureaucrats in 1959. During 1960 this leadership was arbitrarily and undemocratically removed and replaced by a new leadership, largely Stalinist in origin, subservient to the government. Subsequently the structure of the union movement was revised to eliminate the autonomy of individual unions, placing centralized control in the hands of a small bureaucratic group.

10) Since the April 17 invasion there has been a real intensification and acceleration of the trend toward bureaucratization and authoritarianism. Most agrarian co-operatives, theoretically controlled by their peasant members, have been transformed into 'People's Farms' under centralized state administration. Tentative forms of workers control in industry, the 'Technical Advisory Councils', have been allowed to lapse into inactivity. Government policy as represented by Che Guevara, is

specifically opposed to workers' control and assigns to Cuban Trade Unions the exclusive role of increasing production, not defending the specific class interests of the workers.

11) As the Cuban regime develops political structures these likewise tend to be bureaucratic and authoritarian. After April 17, under cover of phrases about the 'socialist revolution,' a single-party system has been developed through the amalgamation of all remaining political groups into the 'Integrated Revolutionary Organization.' The Stalinist apparatus of the former 'Peoples Socialist Party' plays a major role in the ORI which was represented at the recent 'National Production Congress' by the veteran Stalinist leader Carlos Rafael Rodriguez.

12) Far from guaranteeing freedom of speech to all tendencies supporting the revolution, the Cuban government since April 17 has begun major repressions. Most important has been the suppression of the Trotskyist paper 'Voz Proletaria' and the book 'Permanent Revolution' by Leon Trotsky. Political censorship has been imposed on films, and the independent cultural publication 'Lunes' forced out of existence. The arbitrary arrests and long detentions without charges of North American revolutionary socialists strikingly indicate the existence of a well developed secret police apparatus free from legal or democratic restraints.

13) Taken as a whole, the process going on today in Cuba is that of the formation of a deformed workers state--that is, the creation of a society like that which exists in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China. By minimizing the influence of the working class in the revolution, by limiting the appeal of the revolution to workers in other lands, by tending to give power to an uncontrolled bureaucracy, and by subjecting the future of Cuba to the counter-revolutionary diplomacy of the Kremlin, this process raises the danger of capitalist restoration in Cuba. However, this does not signify that in Cuba today the bureaucratic apparatus is as consolidated or dominant as in the countries of the Soviet Bloc. The democratic mass mobilization and participation in the revolution of the workers and peasants has been so powerful and far-reaching that at all levels significant resistance to the process of bureaucratization occurs.

14) The Cuban workers and peasants are today confronted with a twofold task: to defend their revolution from the attacks of the U.S. and native counter-revolutionaries, and to defeat and reverse the tendencies toward bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution. To confront this task they crucially need the establishment of workers democracy.

15) Workers democracy, for us, signifies that all state and administrative officials are elected by and responsible to the working people of city and country through representative institutions of democratic rule. The best historical models for such

institutions were the Soviets of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Workers Councils of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The Cuban workers and peasant can, no doubt, develop their own original variants of these forms. There is only one essential attribute without which any democratic form is but pretense and mockery: there must be full freedom of organization and expression for all political groups and tendencies that support the revolution, without any concession to the Stalinist monolithism of the one-party system.

16) The full victory of every modern revolution, the Cuban revolution included, requires the emergence in a leading role of a mass revolutionary-Marxist party. The small Trotskyist groups, in Cuba and elsewhere, have a vital role as the nucleus of such parties. They can fill this role only if they continually preserve their political independence and ability to act, and if they avoid the peril of yielding to non-Marxist and non-proletarian leaderships their own ideological responsibilities and the historic mission of the working class.

17) In its relation to the Cuban revolution the YSA, like every revolutionary group, has two principal tasks:

a) To exert the utmost effort to defend the Cuban Revolution not only against the military and other attacks of U.S. imperialism, but also against the political attacks of the social-democratic agents of imperialism.

b) To struggle for the development and extension of the Cuban revolution and against the attempts of counter-revolutionary Stalinism to corrupt the revolution from within. We seek to further this development and extension both by supporting revolutionary actions of the existing leadership and by constructively criticizing, openly and frankly, the mistakes and inadequacies of that leadership. Both to develop the Cuban revolution and to extend it throughout the Hemisphere, we base ourselves on the imperative necessity for the establishment of workers democracy and the formation of the mass party of revolutionary Marxism.

--submitted by Shane Mage  
to the YSA Convention  
December 21, 1961.

A REPLY TO COMRADE SHEPPARD

by Roger Abrams

Comrade Barry Sheppard's latest literary production, Our Sectarian Minority, throws little light on the political character of the minority--but quite an abundance of illumination on the character of our National Chairman. Faced with a criticism of one point in his Draft revision of the Where We Stand declaration, he comes out shooting--and not only at his critic, Comrade Peter Friedlander, but at the 'Marxist-Leninist-Robertsonite' minority for which Comrade Friedlander allegedly speaks!

According to Comrade Sheppard, 'The favorite method of these sectarians is to quote.' Comrade Sheppard's own article serves to confirm that the favorite method of Vulgar Marxists is to distort. And to point out Comrade Sheppard's distortions, I shall be obliged to quote him.

1) 'We defend the Bill of Rights and every other 'bourgeois right' that Friedlander scoffs at which were the gains of the First American Revolution.' (pg.18)

Sheppard is obviously referring here to Comrade Friedlander's parenthetical labelling of Women's rights as 'bourgeois rights.' From the context (Ideology and Tradition, pg. 12), it is clear to anyone not looking for factional ammunition that Comrade Friedlander put in this phrase not to downgrade the struggle for bourgeois rights but to show that the proletariat, even when fighting for bourgeois rights, must maintain its class independence.

2) 'Friedlander didn't mention the 'alien' slave class, and its struggle against the slave holders, but we must assume that we cannot side with the slaves either, for he is against including Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips in the tradition we identify with.' (pg.17)

I gather that Comrade Sheppard doesn't consider the bourgeoisie and the feudal aristocracy, to which Comrade Friedlander really did apply the term, alien classes! How else explain his sarcastic use of the term? And it is not a question of Frederick Douglass or Wendell Phillips. The question is, are we in the traditions of the American people--which include, among other traditions, the best revolutionary traditions of a section of the working class, especially of the descendents of the slaves--or are we in the revolutionary tradition of the most conscious members of the international working class, including such Americans as Wendell Phillips and Bill Haywood? Our task is not to complacently rejoice in our ability to find heroes in American history, but to bring the latter tradition in its highest expression--Trotskyism--to the American workers. 'It is necessary to teach the American beasts.' (Trotsky)

It is hard to discover which of these two (over-lapping) sets of traditions Comrade Sheppard wishes to place us in. For Prosecutor Hoadley, it is evidently 'Indiana's own Eugene V. Debs.' But for Sheppard's Marxist opponents, 'We stand proudly in the great struggle traditions of our working class--with every manifestation of their struggle.' Not a perfect formulation, but it is better to have Comrade Sheppard play the American proletarian revolutionist than play the American hero-worshipper.

3) 'We take sides with the American revolutionaries against the British...We take sides with the Abolitionists and slaves... against the slave masters.' (pg.18)

Comrade Sheppard seems to get vicarious pleasure from taking sides in struggles which took place long before he was around to participate in them. We don't want to deny Sheppard his pleasure, but Marxists study the past not to take sides in the past struggles but to more effectively take sides with the workers in their struggles in the present and the future.

4) 'Friedlander's argument gets even worse. He tells us even if we concede to him that Marx shouldn't have taken sides in the American Civil War, and if we place ourselves only in the tradition of the American workers (I assume we could then leave in Debs' name), we are still filthy bourgeois! The American workers, you see, are not Marxist-Leninist-Robertsonites--and anything less than such simon pure people must be avoided like the plague lest one become bourgeoisified.' (pg.18)

A masterpiece of demogogy and distortion concentrated into one concise paragraph! Nobody says, comrade Sheppard, that Marx shouldn't have taken sides in the Civil War. He was alive while it was being fought, not 100 years later. Such a distinction means little, of course, to our Austro-Marxists. The contemporary struggles of the international proletariat, including the American Negro workers, could just as well take place in another century without appreciably decreasing our Majority's involvement in them.

The last half of Sheppard's masterpiece-paragraph turns reality on its head, inside out, and through the fourth dimension. If the American workers were, or would spontaneously become, Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyists we could sit back and 'take sides' with them while watching them on TV making the revolution. Unlike the Majority, however, we believe in the need for a revolutionary party to fight against bourgeois influences on the proletariat in order to lead the socialist revolution. It is these influences that 'must be avoided like the plague.'

Sheppard makes a big point of defections from the minority. Is it any wonder, when we realize that a mild criticism by a new comrade is met by a dishonest, almost psychotic, response from



our National Chairman, that a number of young people have been driven out of the organization? Moreover, many of those who supported the Minority at the last National Conference have left the YSA on account of age and are now devoting their time to work in the adult Trotskyist movement.

Sorry to disappoint you, Comrade Sheppard, but most of the present Minority supporters, and many still to come, will be around a long time to haunt you.

New York  
August 18, 1963

COMMENTS ON THE "WHERE WE STAND" DOCUMENT

by Douglas Jesse (Minn.)

The new "Where We Stand" document is clearly an improvement over the "Where We Stand" position adopted at the founding convention. It identifies YSA more clearly with a Trotskyist program by explicitly stating our positions on the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the other workers' states. Furthermore, it attempts to link our movement to past American struggles by including American revolutionary leaders as part of our tradition.

However, as Barry Sheppard writes, "Any short statement of principles, as the 'Where We Stand' necessarily is, is insufficient in itself for general propaganda purposes." The "Where We Stand" document is so brief and so stripped of explanation that it cannot effectively represent YSA to the general public or to potential recruits. When a student asks a YSA member what our political position is, he is asking not only for a naked statement of that position, but why we hold it and how we arrived at it. Without this explanation, the potential recruit will brush off our statement of principles as a collection of lifeless rhetorical statements. One of the advantages that a Marxist politician has over all other political people is that his method enables him to explain how he arrived at his program. Since we have this advantage we should reflect it in our propaganda to other students. If our "Where We Stand" document were to be filed away in some dusty closet, it is totally adequate but if it is to be circulated in public then it is insufficient.

Barry thinks, "we need a pamphlet explaining the program of the YSA, with the "Where We Stand" added as an appendix, as one of our propaganda weapons." If the pamphlet is a truly comprehensive explanation of our program, attaching the "Where We Stand" to it serves no function. Another suggestion is to approve the proposed "Where We Stand" at this convention with the understanding that it will be used only as an outline for a more comprehensive and better written statement. This comprehensive statement should be our official "Where We Stand" position and should be published in pamphlet form for widespread distribution.