

New Ferment in the CP Youth Movements

British YCL Convention Sees Mood of Revolt Among Delegates

London, Oct. 31

The recent Young Communist League national conference, which took place in London on October 26-27, revealed that discontent with the official line has reached an unprecedented level here.

The efforts of the leadership to channel off all the dissatisfaction in a rather futile controversy—should the League attempt to appeal to youth with rock-and-roll music and pictures of Marilyn Monroe, or with more political education?—did not prevent several outbursts of real hostility.

One of the major examples of this was the passage in the face of official opposition of an amendment to a resolution on conscription. Hitherto it has been YCL policy to demand "Cut the Call-Up" from two years to one. The amendment, which was passed 98-69, demanded a speedy abolition of conscription.

The feeling of the conference was manifested in voluble protests from the floor against allowing a well-known supporter of the party line, who was not a delegate, to move the resolution calling for one year's conscription. Although he was allowed to speak by conference vote, he did not prevent the delegates from turning down the official policy.

This decision—embarrassing as it is to the CP leaders—did not, however, quench the delegates' desire for change. Numerous speakers called for a return to the ideas of Lenin, and one was even bold enough to call for the publication of the works of Trotsky and Bukharin.

Later on in the conference, when a speaker in passing mentioned that he had been listening to the arguments of the Trotskyists while waiting outside the conference hall, there was a round of applause which was not confined to visitors of Trotskyist persuasion.

The tensest part of the meeting, how-

ever, followed the address given by John Gollan, the new CP general secretary and Harry Pollitt's successor. After he had mustered all his oratorical powers to denounce the "counter-revolutionary" rising in Hungary and to defend vehemently the use of Russian troops who had "shed their blood to liberate Hungary from the fascists in 1945," it was found convenient to hear a report from the Standing Orders Committee on an emergency resolution dealing with Hungary that had been introduced.

The speaker did not read the resolution but stated that it demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Hungary and sought to line the YCL up with international reaction. Despite the willingness of the committee to accept emergency resolutions, stated the speaker, this one would be an insult to the conference. Amid all sorts of protests, the Standing Orders Committee recommendation not to discuss the resolution was put to the vote and carried 107-34.

After such strenuous efforts to convince the delegates not to discuss the question, for a quarter of the delegates to vote against the recommendation shows the degree of opposition within the YCL. It was not, however, surprising that a reference by the chairman shortly afterward to the discussion on inner-party democracy produced hoots of derisive laughter from the body of the hall.

PARTY LEADERS WORRIED

It is clear that this opposition is seriously worrying CP leaders in Britain. A discussion on Trotskyism is being carried on among YCL members in Merseyside and similar discussions are being conducted elsewhere in YCL ranks.

Furthermore, the disquiet is not confined to the YCL. The publication of the *Reasoner*, an opposition journal produced by CP intellectuals, is only one manifestation of dissatisfaction with the official line.

Longstanding dissatisfaction with the Communist Party program, "The Socialist Road to Britain," among some CP circles has been brought to a head by the Khrushchev speech and recent happenings in Eastern Europe, and the trickle of resignations threatens to swell into a powerful stream. Throughout the big cities of Britain many CP members are anxiously buying and discussing Marxist literature of an anti-Stalinist complexion.

More than anything, the factor which holds them back is the absence of a clear alternative. The Labor Party leadership is regarded with contempt by most and its anti-Stalinist left wing is divided among a number of different tendencies.

Clearly the aim of all those who want a real advance in the development of a healthy anti-Stalinist left wing must be to work for a closer relationship between the different groups. Only then can the maximum benefits be derived from the growing realization within the CP that the so-called Communist movement is nothing but a barrier to the achievement of socialism.

LYL Leader Evinces Political Re-Thinking

By EDWARD HILL

A discussion meeting at the University of Chicago last week brought to light some very interesting developments in American youth politics. Two speakers made presentations, William Jennings Jr., Illinois acting chairman of the Labor Youth League, and Michael Harrington, national chairman of the YSL.

Jennings began by endorsing the idea of the meeting and the whole conception of discussions between LYLers and various socialist groups such as the YSL. In his summary, Harrington greeted this notion, and reaffirmed the YSL's desire to engage in such discussions with the LYL throughout the country.

Efforts to arrange a debate with the LYL in New York had failed when the LYL representative turned down the YSL challenge. At that point, the LYL was pushing for a "broad" kind of discussion involving a whole array of political points of view and shied away from any direct confrontation. So Jennings was making a break, and a welcome one, from the attitude of various LYLers in other parts of the country.

But this was not the most interesting aspect of Jennings' talk. It was his analysis of the 20th Party Congress which exhibited the sharpest break from what the LYL line has been in the past.

In discussing the congress, he spoke of the "bureaucratic caste" which was being brought into line, of the pressure of the people, and so on. In passing, he had words of blame and praise for Trotsky and for the *Militant*, the organ of the Socialist Workers Party. One would have to describe his politics as at a half-way (or even two-thirds) point in the direction of the SWP.

He refused, however, to carry out all of the implications of the ideas he was putting forth—he would not answer a direct question as to whether he backed the Hungarian workers. This, he said, was not a proper question (and interestingly enough, the SWPers present applauded this statement).

Harrington told Jennings and the audience that he was happy to see an LYL spokesman move as far as this away from the ideas of Stalinism, even while criticizing Jennings' analysis. And even though Jennings had announced that he was speaking for himself and not for the LYL, Harrington pointed out that his ideas went far beyond what the LYL usually describes as its range of difference, and led to the notion of supporting not only the Hungarian workers but a revolution of the Russian working class against their bureaucratic class as well. Jennings said he felt that this was an attempt to stifle discussion in the LYL, and this statement met with applause from the LYLers and SWPers in the audience.

CHANGE-OVER

What the Chicago meeting demonstrates is that the crisis in the world Stalinist movement and in the American CP is at work in the LYL too.

The LYL was founded in the late forties at the instigation of the Communist Party (which recognized the "need for an independent, non-party Marxist youth organization"). At the time of its constitution, there was a Young Progressives of America already in existence as a broad front of Stalinists and Stalinoids. As a result, the LYL was something of a tight, politically homogeneous Stalinist organization, not as much so as the old Young Communist League but more in that direction.

In 1952 a shift in line was made. Some

years later, Leon Wofsey (then national chairman of the LYL—he resigned this spring with a statement of self-criticism) described the change. Prior to 1952, he said, "an atmosphere of 'false discipline' was permitted to develop and such high standards of membership set that no 'ordinary' young mortal could be expected to join," i.e., the pre-1952 LYL was a cadre organization, the post-1952 LYL more of a broad front.

The process which was initiated in 1952 (the date of a similar CP turn) was accelerated by the events of the 20th Party Congress and the news of the Khrushchev revelations. Wofsey was replaced as an extremely broad line was announced.

However, the LYL did not stop there. Since the change-over, there has been discussion in the LYL looking toward the dissolution of the organization. One possible perspective is a drive for broad socialist clubs including anti-Stalinists. This has already been attempted in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

WELCOME DEVELOPMENT

However, this must be placed in the context of the fact that the LYL has suffered a precipitous decline in membership. Its membership in traditional centers like New York is only a fraction of what it was only three or four years ago.

There has been a tremendous speed in the shift of points of view in the past months (a YSLer was denounced as a "Trotskyite" in the spring for bringing up Marxist objections to the Khrushchev report, while Jennings in Chicago, a few months later, speaks with a certain admiration for Trotsky); and this must have had a tremendous demoralizing influence on the "broad" LYL.

The YSL, of course, welcomes these developments. There are many sincere socialists in the LYL—Jennings would seem to be a case in point—and the breaking of the ideological straitjacket of Stalinism may make it possible for them to take their place in the democratic socialist movement.

This is not to say that the LYL has been transformed overnight, or even that Jennings' position is typical of the organization as a whole. But there are stirrings, significant ones; there are those who are painfully working their way to an independent position. It will take time, and there will be half-way houses such as Jennings has found. Yet the development is, in itself, moving in an excellent direction.

After the discussion, Harrington stated that he wanted to reaffirm the YSL's stated position in favor of a confrontation and discussion of the YSL and LYL points of view. The Chicago meeting, he said, proved that this is a fruitful approach in the current period.

CHICAGO PICKETLINE

On Saturday, Nov. 3, the Chicago unit of the Young Socialist League sponsored a picketline demonstration at the British consulate in the city, in protest against the imperialist attack on Egypt. It received wide press, TV and radio coverage. Story next week (crowded out of this issue).

Forum in Los Angeles

The Forum For Democracy and Independent Political Action, a discussion group sponsored by Los Angeles socialists and pacifists, held a symposium on "The Causes and Consequences of The Civil War in Russia's Satellites" on November 2. B. Glen of the Socialist Party and Ted Enright of the Independent Socialist League were the speakers.

The Forum (formerly called The Forum For The Third Camp) exists in order to provide "a meeting place and an audience for the confrontation of ideas and ideologies." Its sponsors are: Gordon Carey, pacifist; Ted Enright of the ISL; Gordon Smith of the Los Angeles Socialist Party; and Arlon Tussing of the Los Angeles unit of the Young Socialist League.

BERKELEY (Cal.) YSL

Sunday, Nov. 4—4-6 p.m.
Nationalism and Colonialism
In the Arab World
Friday, Nov. 9—8 p.m.
The Hungarian Revolution
Friday, Nov. 16—8 p.m.
The 1956 Elections in Retrospect

All meetings at 2161 Shattuck Avenue, Rm. 31, except the meeting of November 9 which will be held at the Wesley Foundation, Bancroft and Dana Streets. (The Foundation does not necessarily subscribe to what will be said, but continues its tradition of supporting free speech.)