
Relation Between the “Y” [underground YCL] and the “L” [overground YWL]: Resolution adopted by the First National Convention of the Young Communist League of America, early May 1922. †

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 152, l. 8.

The “L” [Young Workers League] of A[merica] shall be the revolutionary organization of youth which will draw to it the wide masses of young workers and train them for active participation in the class struggle. For this purpose the “L” [YWL] must be an organization which is thoroughly Communist in action and which follows the leadership of the YCI. This the “L” [YWL] **can only** do when its activities are directed by the American Section of the YCI [the Young Communist League of America]. It is therefore necessary, for the welfare of the “L” [YWL] and the working class youth that the YCL should control the policies and direct the activities of the “L” [YWL].

By no means must this be interpreted to mean mechanical control. We say control through active participation in all the work of the “L” [YWL]. The Y [YCL] members must be the most active and hard working members within the “L” [YWL]. No task should be considered too big for them, and none too small. They should not balk at doing hard or menial work. We must show the membership that we are working for the benefit of the organization. In this manner we will gain their confidence and they will entrust us with the leadership of the organization.

In order to do the big things, we must show the

rank and file our willingness to do the little things. Our motto must be: “Control through leadership.” Leadership through active participation in all the activities of the “L” [YWL].

In educational work, discussions, classes, lectures, etc., the Y [YCL] members must stimulate discussion and lead it into Communist channels. The Y [YCL] members must show that they are the most advanced and enlightened part of the “L” [YWL].

The Y [YCL] members must always be on the lookout for those member of the “L” [YWL] who have attained the theoretical and practical training which fits them for membership in the Y [YCL].

In order to carry out the above plan, we propose the adoption of the following points:

1. Every member of the Y [YCL] must be active member of the “L” [YWL].
2. The Y [YCL] must act as a nucleus within the “L” [YWL].
3. The Sub-District Committees must see that every Branch of the “L” [YWL] has a Group of the Y [YCL] within it. If necessary, Y [YCL] members should be transferred from one Branch to another to form these Groups.‡

†- According to Theodore Draper in *The Roots of American Communism*, the founding convention of the Young Communist League was held Thursday, April 20, 1922 in Bethel, Connecticut. (pg. 344) This date differs from what is stated in the archival document here, however, it reading “Adopted by the first National Convention, May, 1922.” The archival constitution here is attached to an extensive set of resolutions, seeming to indicate a convention of more than a single day’s duration. The founding convention of the parallel “legal” organization, the Young Workers League of America, is known to have been held in New York City from Saturday, May 13 through Monday, May 15, 1922 — some days after the termination of the YCL convention. If Draper is incorrect with his April 20 date, as now seems probable, it is most likely that the YCL founding convention was held for some number of days terminating on Friday, May 12, 1922.

‡- The primary party organization of the YWL was a “Branch” of from 5 to 150 members; following the model of the underground Communist Party of America, the YCL was based on the “Group” consisting of from 5 to 10 members.

4. Every Group of the Y [YCL] constitutes itself into a nucleus. If there is more than one Group [of the YCL] within a Branch [of the YWL], they must meet jointly as a nucleus within the Branch.

5. All questions of importance regarding the “L” [YWL] must first be decided upon within the nucleus before being taken to the “L” [YWL].

6. Questions of policy, the election of officers, educational activity — these and similar matters should not be brought into the “L” [YWL] before they have been thoroughly discussed and a decision arrived at within the Y [YCL].

7. All decisions of the nucleus are binding upon the members.

8. A steering committee shall be elected by the nucleus. It is advisable that the [YCL Group] captain or captains shall be members of this committee.

9. Questions in the above category which are brought up on the floor of the “L” [YWL] without having been previously been taken up by the nucleus, and which cannot be delayed for another meeting of the nucleus, shall be decided by the steering committee. All decisions of the steering committee are binding upon the members of the organization.

10. The steering committee shall have the power

to call meetings of the nucleus whenever it deems necessary.

11. The nucleus shall meet at least once in 2 months.

12. In places where there is a CCC [YWL City Central Committee] or a City Executive Committee of the “L” [YWL], the Sub-District Committee of the Y [YCL] shall determine the policies that members of the Y [YCL] are to pursue within those committees. In special cases, the Sub-District Committee may call meetings of such members for the purpose of discussing the question.

13. On minor or technical matters, such as the time of meeting of [YWL] Branch, etc., all Y [YCL] members may vote as they see fit.

14. City organizers of the “L” [YWL] who are members of the Y [YCL], but not regular Sub-District Committee representatives, shall be present at meetings of the Sub-District Committee with voice but no vote.

15. All important offices within the “L” [YWL] shall be filled by members of the Y [YCL] whenever possible. The higher the office or committee, the more solid must be our control.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.