
An Open Letter to All Yipsels.

[late September 1919]

by William F. Kruse

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Note:— The following letter, explaining the change of arrangements in the Young People's Department of the Socialist Party's National Office, has been sent to all league secretaries. It is reported that no change in this mailing list has been made for four months, so, in order that it may reach as many of the comrades as possible it is printed here. No official action is necessary, but the writer will appreciate all Yipsels sending in notice of change in addresses of their officials, just as in the days when the two offices, Director of the Y.P. Dept. and National Secretary of the YPSL, were held by the same person.

Dear Comrade Yipsels:

An important change has been made in the administrative relations between the Socialist Party and the YPSL and all Yipsels are urged to take note of the same.

Shortly after I left the office, my successor [Oliver Carlson] sent out a questionnaire on the subject of "What will the leagues do in case of a split in the Socialist movement?" The answer was overwhelmingly in favor of an independent young socialist organization, officially tied to none of the contending factions but on terms of cooperation and mutual understanding with all who assumed a helpful attitude toward the YPSL. A referendum to this effect was initiated by the Chicago League recently.†

The Socialist Party regrets exceedingly to part company with its younger comrades at this time, but feels that the Yipsels know best what will help maintain the integrity of their organization. If by this step the young comrades can avoid the fratricidal strife that has torn the older movement, the Party will put no obstacles in the way of such a step.

The National Convention of the Socialist Party was brought to this decision upon the advice of sev-

eral Chicago Yipsels, among them Harry Wilson, Kurt Dreifuss, and myself, and as a result has stricken out entirely the former Article 16 of its constitution which provided for supervision of league work by party units. In its place it has provided for the continuation of the Young People's Department of the Socialist Party, with no connections whatever, officially, with the National Office of the YPSL. The newly elected NEC of the Socialist Party has asked me to take charge of this department, at least temporarily, and in order to preserve the machinery laboriously built up by six years of unrelenting effort, I have consented to do so.

The Party does NOT refuse, under all circumstances, to employ a National Secretary of the league in this capacity, as was formerly done. But the attempt to employ Comrade Carlson in this dual role has given rise to an impossible situation. Without any personal criticism of Comrade Carlson, the fact remains that he has failed to hold down that dual post formerly occupied by myself. The following are just a few instances:

1. He remained away from the National Office without explanation or excuse for extended periods of time, ranging from 3 days to 3 weeks. When questioned on this point he moved his headquarters to his

†- The text of this referendum, as published on page 2 of the same issue of *YSM*, was as follows: "*That the Young People's Socialist League of America declare itself independent of all factions fo the socialist movement, and no longer dependent upon the Socialist Party for maintenance or directorship.*"

home without consulting any Yipsel body. This action received the condemnation even of the Chicago City Central, notably one of the most radical in the country, and he was ordered to go back to the office until the issue of independence was settled. He has not done so and since then he has had all mail and funds redirected by the Post Office from this address to his home. This condition caused the National Office [of the Socialist Party] first to cut off his pay pending his return, and finally to terminate altogether his employment by the party.

2. He kept falling further and further behind on the *YSM* until the printers refused to go ahead with work on it because of the unsatisfactory service they claimed they were getting from the editor. The May Magazine appeared the middle of June, the June Magazine the third week in July, and the July magazine the end of August. I have just seen the proposed copy for the August magazine which indicates that no time is to be made up this month either.

3. The last entry in the financial account book is of Aug. 7 [1919]. There is a stack of mail here untouched, even though 40 letters in one batch were sent from this office to Comrade Carlson. *YSM* subs were discontinued because of failure to answer letters of inquiry. At least two National Committeemen's motions for representation of the league at the Socialist Convention were ignored.

This letter is not sent as a personal condemnation of Comrade Carlson's attitude, but as explaining the reasons for the Party taking the action it has. The issue was forced by the Yipsel Secretary [Carlson] and a situation so impossible was thereby created that the present course was the only action that could be taken without splitting the league or destroying the machinery built up here at great sacrifice.

This issue is not in any sense one of principle between the Socialist and Communist groups, as at this writing Comrade Carlson has not yet made up his own mind on whether to remain a member of the SP or join the Communist group. It was entirely an administrative question of doing the job he was paid to do, and when he indicated by his actions that he was either unable or unwilling to do this work, someone else had to be employed to carry it on.

The best of feelings prevail between Comrade Carlson and myself, he has been living in my home

here during the 5 months that I was in the country recuperating from a nervous breakdown brought on by the work and trial of my 4 years service to the league. We are one in our desire to settle the present trouble as easily and amicably as possible.

The Young Socialists' Magazine, being the property of the Socialist Party, will come back under my editorship, and should be ordered and paid for at this office, 220 S Ashland Boulevard [Chicago]. All stocks of Yipsel supplies at present on hand were also paid for by the Socialist Party and should be bought from this office until the league is in a position to buy out our stock or get its own. Until this time the Party will continue to see to it that all necessary supplies are kept on hand, just as heretofore. There is no profit connected with these supplies anyway so there should be no objection to this course.

This office, under my direction, will try at all times to conduct itself in such manner as will only help and further the YPSL, and not in any way interfere with its processes. I shall be glad to hear from the Yipsel circles and members everywhere and will always be at their service in matters of organization and educational suggestions. Please notify me of any changes in the addresses of your officers. News notes of your doing should also be sent here for publicity in the *YSM*. And especially those parts of our young movement not embraced in the YPSL, such as the SSS and the Junior Socialist Leagues, will be aided to function nationally through this office.

I trust that no comrade will misunderstand the motives and purposes with which I reenter this office. In the short time that is left me before beginning my prison term I want to serve the young movement as best I can through this most critical time in the history of the American socialist movement. Hoping at all times to retain the same confidence that the Yipsels everywhere have heretofore reposed in me, I remain ever

Yours for comradeship,

William F. Kruse,
Director, Young People's Dept.,
Socialist Party.

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Dear Comrade Yipsels:

Several replies received to my last letter indicate that I did not entirely succeed in making my meaning plain beyond all chance of misunderstanding.

I do NOT claim to be National Secretary of the YPSL, nor do I seek to have any league recognize me as such, either temporarily or permanently.

I have taken over, temporarily, only the direction of the Socialist Party's "Department of Propaganda and Education Among the Young," popularly called the "Young People's Department." This I did only after Comrade Carlson had clearly indicated by over a month of voluntary absence as well as by other positive actions, that he did not intend to carry out this important work.

Please don't get the Young People's Dept. confused with the YPSL just because our constitution commands one man to hold both jobs, and because I never had any trouble in doing so. The department is a Socialist Party function and is far broader in scope than the YPSL; it includes the SSS, the Juniors, the *Young Socialists' Magazine* owned by the party, and many other details of propaganda and education. It used to include the Yipsel work but it has nothing to do with it at present except for the purpose of helping to straighten out the tangle in which the young movement now finds its National Office affairs.

Nationally the YPSL is at the present time, by its own voluntary choice, an integral part of the Socialist Party. The Party has indicated plainly at its National Emergency Convention [Chicago: Aug. 30-Sept. 5, 1919] that it will not seek to hold the YPSL against its own will. Steps to sever our connections will be

binding at any time the league says the word, but until that time the league remains under the old arrangement. The old status must remain until a new one is created. If Comrade Carlson had remained at his desk and continued doing the work for another few weeks a referendum would have been passed affirming the independence of the league, fixing his wages as National Secretary, and making such other constitutional changes as the new status would require, thus obviating all trouble and making the change in perfect good feeling. But now that we are in the mess we must get out of it. I have put the issue of his conduct and ability up to the National Committee of the YPSL, which under our constitution must settle it. (Art. 6, Sec. 4). The question of general policy is up to the membership where it belongs. After it is settled and while it is settled I cordially invite all members of the league everywhere to avail themselves of the cooperation and service that this office has always offered in the past. All letters will be answered. All orders for supplies will be filled. All remittances for dues will be held in trust until this question can be settled. Counting on your cooperation, I remain, ever,

Yours for comradeship,

William F. Kruse,
Director, Y.P. Dept.,
National Office, Socialist Party.

Note: No reply has as yet been received officially from Comrade Carlson by any member of the National Committee hence it cannot be published at this time. The next issue will contain a full report of action on the matter.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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