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# Crushing Left Wing Majority at YPSL Convention

## Make Impossible Alibi Attempt of *Socialist Call*

[events of Sept. 2-5, 1937]

Unsigned article in the *Socialist Appeal* [New York], v. 1, no. 6 (Sept. 18, 1937), pp. 5, 7.

In last week's *Socialist Call* there appear two mealymouthed efforts to explain away Clarity's crushing defeat in the Young People's Socialist League. One, written by Al Hamilton, secretary of the Clarity-Right Wing caucus, is a sniping prevarication at the Yipsel convention [9th: Philadelphia, Sept. 3-5, 1937] after Clarity had bolted. The other, by some anonymous scribe, is an attempt to show strength where only weakness could be seen — the session of the Clarity-Right Wing caucus that had the impudence to call itself a "YPSL Convention." The only impression that remains is that of the poor authors pecking away halfheartedly at their typewriters, while a sickly blush betrays their tweaks of conscience.

Says Hamilton: "A group of Appealites who were visitors, and a smaller group of about 40 delegates remained with him ([YPSL National Chairman Ernest] Erber)," when he opened the convention. Hamilton never had an opportunity to estimate accurately the number of delegates present because he did everything in his power to prevent the convention from convening.

Let Hamilton think back. When Erber opened the convention and Hamilton filed out of the hall with a self-conscious handful of followers, there remained 148 people by actual count. Of these, 104 were regular delegates present in Philadelphia to attend a convention which Hamilton was determined would never be held. Who, that was present in Philadelphia,

does not remember the miserable picture of the Clarityites shuffling out of the hall while the walls rang with the singing of "The Internationale"? When all the Clarityites had left, not a dent had been made in attendance. Those who remained filled every inch of the room.

### **Figures Compared.**

Forty delegates, indeed! At the League convention there were no less than 23 delegates from Chicago alone, elected by 187 members (an understatement, but the figure set by the Clarityite National Administrative Secretary, Judah Drob). Then delegates had come in from California to speak for at least 200 members; 8 other delegates could not manage to come in. Twenty-nine delegates from New York (only 27% of the total) most of them elected before the split there had taken place and all of them representing directly at least the number of members set by pre-convention rules. Other delegates attended from Louisville, Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, Reading, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Boston, Dorchester, Lynn, Albany, Syracuse, Newark — 35 cities in all. Every one of these was there in the flesh representing 1,000 members all told, according to Drob's figures in most cases.

But [compare] the Clarity caucus: 92 delegates were seated — 53, or 57%, of the total came from New York. Of the remaining 39: 5 are members of the NEC, who under the bureaucratic rule of the old constitution, had voting rights, 12 came from Philadelphia, representing 44 people out of the 65 who voted in Philadelphia (the other 21 had voted Appeal), and only one voting delegate was allowed at our League convention for these 21! There was just one Clarity delegate from the country west of the Mississippi! And east of the Mississippi? There were probably 2 or 3 from Cleveland, representing 20 members; 2 or 3 from Pittsburgh for the 3 or 4 members there; 2 from Baltimore (made possible by the purchase of dues stamps on credit in excess of the real membership of the YPSL in that city); 3 from

Milwaukee, and possibly another 5 delegates from legitimate or semi-legitimate sections.

### **The Figures Broken Down.**

How much of a joke their pretense was is revealed by the New York delegation. In New York City there were 357 paid up members. Allowing another 100 for “members in arrears,” (the cemetery vote) the total is 450. Even the most unregenerate Clarityite will now admit that at least 200 of New York Yipsels were Left Wingers (250 would be more accurate, but we won’t quibble). That leaves a maximum of 250 for Clarity, the Right Wing, the YCL stooges, and miscellaneous independents. This 250 got 53 delegates. One of these came from Circle 6 Sr. Manhattan — and represented herself, the lone Clarityite in a circle of 14 members. Two came from 1C (City College) representing just themselves in a circle of 32 members. Ditto for Hunter College and other circles. Need more be added than the fact that in the last city elections the Appeal received the largest single bloc of votes, or 41% of the whole, and that since then many Left Wingers joined it.

### **Clarityite “Answers.”**

“During the (National) Committee’s deliberations, says Hamilton, “the elaborate and widespread statements concerning gerrymandering (et cetera)... were one after another answered, along with the nailing of lie after lie told by the Appeal leaders in a desperate effort to heighten the morale of a worried rank and file which did not want to leave the League.” Where facts are not with you, use rhetoric. By who were the “widespread accusations” answered? Who answered for the record manipulations in New York? Barshop? Hamilton? Milt Friedman? We remember instead the pitiful complaint by Milt Friedman, the NEC member from Clarity’s left, that the Appeal had put them on the defensive, that all that mattered was Appeal’s “split” perspective. Who answered California’s claims for unprecedented

growth and activity? Hamilton did his best to belittle it. But Drob, with his last ounce of honesty, had to admit that California had held the most successful summer school in the history of the YPSL, recruited members, and opened new circles.

Was the motion for an investigation committee an answer to the proof that Ward Rogers was a fink and stool-pigeon? Did Hamilton "nail the lie" when the photostat was thrust under his nose? An answer was given by Blackie Palla, seaman, who declared Rogers would be hounded from the labor movement just as scabs and finks are chased from the waterfront.

### **Wishful Thinking.**

Did Hamilton answer the claim that the delegates who packed the room represented all that was healthy and vital in the League, that they came from cities which had shown growth and activity? Could Hamilton dispute the fact that his few delegates, who represented hardly more than themselves, came from sections that had stagnated, declined? Was it an accident that Hamilton's report on the year's activities made absolutely no mention of figures on League membership!

Hamilton saw the "worried" look on the faces of the Left Wing delegates. These "worried" delegates held the most spirited convention in the history of the League. Were their shouts of enthusiasm when Erber opened the convention the cries of "worry"? Was it with "worry" that they boomed out "The Internationale" while the Clarityites slunk out? Did Hamilton detect a single Left Winger who was not impatient with the delay of the convention by the Centrists? Wishful thinking. Did Hamilton think the delegates would worry because he was leaving the League?

### **A Sorry Confession.**

Hamilton makes an admission that knocks the prop from under his arguments: "...the elimination of the large New York delegation might have given the Appeal a bare majority." Pre-

cisely! — only the majority would not have been “bare.” In these words Hamilton admits that the Appeal had a conclusive majority in the entire country.

When the Old Guard-Militant split took place in the Socialist Party, the party convention gave both delegations equal rights until the convention had decided upon the merits of the case, and neither side had the right to vote on the qualifications of the other. At Philadelphia, however, the Clarity NEC sought to prevent the Convention from exercising its constitutional right of deciding delegate contests by decreeing in advance that this huge inflated Right Wing-Clarity bloc was legal and that it would have voice and vote on its own eligibility. The NY Left Wing could not appeal as a contested delegation, but only as individual expelled members, seeking redress of grievances.

Precisely because the Left Wing was so certain of its majority if allowed the barest elements of democracy, it clamored for the opening of the convention. Conversely, because the Clarity-Right Wing bloc knew its own weakness it tried to stymie the convention.

### **A “Convention.”**

Compare the League convention with the Centrist caucus session. The old-young tired radicals who attended the Centrist meeting lacked spirit and enthusiasm. They gathered in an air of discouragement. In their discussion on Spain, the Right Wing-ers combined with the “normal” Centrists to defeat a minority of 7 who presented a Left Wing position. An NEC was elected, composed of budding lawyers and semi-retired radicals, and inactive incompetents. Only one member of the NEC, Hamilton himself, can boast of any real or imagined contact with youth. He had, and may have still some influence in the upper councils of the Methodist youth movement.

One of the new NEC members is the leader of the Altman youth group, Hyman Bookbinder. Barshop, who created a scandal in the League with his record manipulations, was also put on the committee. Report has it that when he was put in nomina-

tion, many delegates booed. How much of this was plain jest and how much honest peeve on the part of the few activists present, will likely never be known. Prominent militants, who are known to be Left Wing in sympathy, were completely excluded from the NEC.

### **And a Convention.**

Most of the delegates at the League convention had met for two long days in Left Wing caucus session. Yet they went through the convention with no slackening of spirit. An NEC was elected, representative of every section of the country and, above all, of militancy in the class struggle. Every one of the 18 members was active in some capacity in building the organization. They included union organizers, student leaders, professional revolutionists. No fly-by-night dilettantes. Every one of them was young, though many have years of self-sacrificing experience behind them. Older comrades, leaders in past activities, left the ranks of the youth in order to augment the cadre of party militants.

Ours was no apologetic, pussyfooting tone. The Convention meant a great deal to those delegates who had sacrificed so much to attend. They had come to lay the foundations for a mass revolutionary youth organization. With a bold militancy they organized a Young People's Socialist League that, shaking off the petty obstructionists like Clarity, will come to grips with the real enemies, the capitalist class and its reformist agents. Along this road lies the future of the revolutionary YPSL!

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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