REPORT OF THE COMMISSION
ON THE SOCIAL STUDIES
PART III

CITIZENS' ORGANIZATIONS
AND THE
CIVIC TRAINING OF YOUTH

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PREFACE

As indicated in the "Charter for the Social Sciences," which was the first volume of the Report of the Commission on the Social Studies, the Commission has aimed to include in its scope every important element affecting school instruction in the subjects of the social sciences. Public opinion has been recognized as one of these elements. To insure adequate consideration of this element, the Commission appointed a special Committee on Public Relations, Jesse H. Newlon, Chairman, F. W. Ballou, Ada Comstock, George S. Counts, J. A. Fairlie, A. C. Krey, R. S. Lynd, and Bessie L. Pierce. The Committee was fortunate in persuading Miss Pierce to undertake the first of its studies. In the course of several years of related studies, Miss Pierce had accumulated much of the material required for this volume. With this material as a nucleus, she continued her work by verifying her data, by bringing it up-to-date, by supplementing and by supplanting it with new material which had subsequently appeared. The comprehensiveness of her study, the representative character of the material included, and the care with which that material has been treated owe much to that earlier phase of her work.

Miss Pierce had the assistance of the Committee during the progress of her work. With the completion of the first draft of the study, the Committee recommended it for consideration by the Commission. The Commission approved the work and appointed a special editorial committee, G. S. Ford, Carleton
CHAPTER XXI

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIALIST LEAGUE
AND COMMUNIST YOUTH GROUPS

Only recently have the two major political parties attempted to cement the opinions of youth by organization, and then chiefly among those of more than "teen" age. To find minors organized actively for political reasons one must turn to the Socialist and Communist groups who flourish chiefly in foreign areas of large cities.

The Young People's Socialist League, commonly called Y. P. S. L., is composed of junior and senior circles for those between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, and seventeen and twenty-five. "The activities," they declare, "are of such nature as to administer to the three important aspects of one's life, the mental, the social, the physical, and subsequently, the activities are as various as they are numerous: discussions and debates on public questions, literary and social events, theater parties, classes, mass meetings, field days, hikes and dances. Additionally, the League assists in the work of the trade union, educational and political branches of the progressive labor movement."\(^1\)

They distribute literature directly and through the mails, act as ushers at meetings, picket at times, collect funds for strikers, speak on street corners, at indoor meetings or over the radio, and canvas voters. Each circle meets at least twice

\(^{1}\) The Young People's Socialist League of Greater New York, For Those Who Dare to Think and Act for Themselves.
a month, at which a business session is followed usually by an educational program. This is generally a lecture followed by discussion and questions.\footnote{Ibid. The quoted material is taken from mimeographed literature of Y.P.S.L.} Obviously, the members of the circles thus become steeped in the tenets of socialism.

"The following suggestions for a program of activities for circles of the Young People's Socialist League may generally be applicable to all circles.

"There may be special activities which would be proper and beneficial to some circles and not to others. We have aimed in these suggestions to make such a program as could be followed by practically every circle in the League.

"The activities of the circles logically group themselves into the following forms:

I. Educational
II. Social
III. Athletic
IV. Business
V. Miscellaneous

EDUCATIONAL

"The Young People's Socialist League being primarily organized for the purpose of individual education and development and possibly training the youth for future membership and leadership in the Socialist movement, the educational work of the circle necessarily must take precedence over all other forms of activities. The educational work should be broad and progressive. It should aim to give every member some knowledge of Socialism and the branches of learning upon which Socialist theory depends.

"This knowledge should not be forced upon the circle mem-
bers but rather should primarily be obtained through independent research and investigation.

"In other words, self-development of the members of the circle should be the primary object sought. Every member in the circle should be expected to participate in the educational program of the circle. This branch of the circle's program may be sub-divided into:

1. Book reports
2. Talks on important topics
3. Biographical sketches
4. Debates
5. Essays and declamation contests
6. Studies in Socialism
7. Dramatics, music and other cultural activities

"1. Book Reports: What books should be reported on? A book, in order to be worth while reporting on, should be:

A. Thought stimulating.
B. Should treat of a problem of social significance, economical, political science, sociological, ethical or moral, biography.
C. The problem treated should be of current interest or timely.

"Some general suggestions may be made as to the construction of the report.

a. It should be brief and generally not more than ten minutes.

b. If the author is of any importance, a brief biographical presentation should be added.

c. The report should not be too technical or academic.

"Book reports are important in order to stimulate an interest in books. Bring to the attention of the members the important
books of the day and as a basis of discussion of important topics.

"2. TALKS ON IMPORTANT TOPICS:

A. The same rules regarding the nature of the topics to be chosen which have been outlined for book reports may well be applied to talks. In addition to the topics mentioned under book reports there should be included here the history of the labor movement and of the Socialist movement.

B. Directors of circles have by experience come to the conclusion that talks on important topics should ordinarily be prepared in manuscript form for the following reasons:

a. It makes for better preparation.

b. It makes it possible for the speaker to keep within a certain time limit.

c. The manuscript may be used as reference upon that subject, and

d. If the talk proves to be interesting and important it may be used for publication.

e. Furthermore, many of the new members are shy and unused to public speaking and reading from a manuscript would be useful in eradicating the shyness and fear of appearance in public.

"3. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES:

"Biography is very useful in developing a spirit of social service as against the dominating spirit of materialism and selfishness of these times.

"The biographical sketches may be used in emphasizing social advancement. More attention would necessarily be placed upon the great figures of the labor and socialist movement. A partial list of those who would make good subjects of biographies and the fields in which they were important are:
Labor:
Karl Marx          August Bebel
Frederick Engels  Benjamin Hanford
Eugene Victor Debs Kier Hardie

"(Note: Bebel, Hardie and Maurer have also been prominent statesmen.)

Publicists:
William Liebknecht        Edward Bernstein
Norman Thomas (Minister and Educator) Leon Blum
Jean Jaurès               Abraham Cahan
Edward Guesdes            Plechanoff

Writers:
Jack London              Bernard Shaw (dramatist)
Upton Sinclair            Beatrice Webb
H. G. Wells               Sidney Webb

Statesmen:
Meyer London              Emil Vandervelde
Ramsay MacDonald          Arthur Henderson

Lawyers:
Morris Hillquit (also publicist)
Jean Lonquist (also statesman)

Engineers:
Charles Steinmetz        Vladimir Karapetoff

Christian Socialists:
Father O'Grady            Charles Vail

"Then there are also the pioneers and martyrs in other fields of social advancement from whose lives we could gain very useful knowledge. We may mention:

Abolition Movement:
Wendell Phillips          William Lloyd Garrison
Owen Lovejoy              John Brown
Field of Science:
Bruno
Galileo
Copernicus and many of the more modern figures in the advancement of science.

Suffrage Movement:
Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Harriet Stanton Blatch
Alice Stone Blackwell
Jane Addams

Revolutionary Movement:
Thomas Paine
Nicolai Lenin
Voltaire
Peter Kropotkin
Robert Emmet
Proudhon

4. Debates:
"Debates may be individual or between teams. They may be within the circle itself or between circles. Then there may be debating tournaments, with prizes and awards for the winners. A debate, unless it results in a decision, does not ordinarily carry the interest with the members that is occasioned by the fact that there are judges present. In all debates, therefore, there should be some persons to decide the winner. These may be either strangers or in certain cases the decisions may be rendered by a vote of the entire audience.

"As far as the topic is concerned, the same rules would apply as set forth under book reports.

5. Essays and Declamation Contests:
"In addition to the important philosophical, sociological, and economical problems that may be the subjects of essays and declamation contests, the following may prove of interest:

A. Why the member is a Socialist.
B. How to improve the Y. P. S. L. organization.
C. How to make the Socialist campaign more effective.
"6. Studies in Socialism:

"The Socialist education of the members of the circle may take several forms:

A. There may be groups formed to study the subject under the leadership of a qualified Socialist.

B. There may be a synopsis or syllabus in Socialism in which some part of it is given to one of the members to study up and report on at the meeting.

C. Occasionally there may be a Socialist lecturer brought to the circle.

"In all these activities the guidance of the director who should know the subject thoroughly cannot be over-emphasized. He doesn’t necessarily have to be a teacher in this subject, but, however, he should be able to summarize the subject after the discussion and to clear up any misunderstanding regarding it.

"7. Dramatics, Music, and Other Cultural Activities:

"The circle meetings may be made more interesting by having an occasional dramatic reading or a music recital or a lecture upon music or drama or the dance, etc.

"Furthermore, if a sufficient number of the members can be found interested in any one of these subjects, they may create the basis of a group to develop talent in those fields.

Social

"The social activities would take the form of dances, concerts, luncheons, social games, trips to museums and places of interest, etc. The importance of social affairs is quite apparent to those who have studied the youth movement. The ordinary business meeting does not ordinarily lend itself to social contact and there should be certain meetings to become acquainted
with each other. The circle that functions best is one that is composed of members who have social contacts in common.

ATHLETIC

"The athletic activities may be in the form of hikes, athletic meets, teams for the playing of baseball, basketball, football, soccer, etc., tennis and handball, and such other athletic activities as it may be found possible to indulge in.

"In most of these activities numbers are necessary. A baseball, basketball, or soccer team cannot be organized unless the circle is large and has a sufficient number of members interested and qualified. Where a circle hasn't sufficient numbers, the members who are interested may join with members of other circles to form an inter-circle team.

"Then, of course, the proper facilities for the indulging in these games is quite a problem. Where this problem cannot be solved the members necessarily would have to devote themselves to such athletic activities as is within their means and resources.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

"It would not be feasible to try to outline here a complete set of rules for conducting of business meetings but certain general suggestions may be made:

A. The business part of a meeting should be limited to about one-half hour.

B. A director of the circle should be present, through suggestion, to straighten out any misunderstandings arising during the meeting. A director may in many cases so prevent acrimonious and personal debates and the formation of cliques.

C. The chairmanship should be rotative. That is, every
member should be required to take his or her turn to act as chairman. The experience of conducting the chair is very useful.

D. The necessity for avoiding petty dissensions and cliques cannot be overemphasized, but care, however, should be taken in not accusing every person who disagrees with you as being a destructive force and an organizer of cliques. Tolerance is important.

E. The circle should form a habit of opening the meeting punctually. The development of punctuality in all the members would tend to a better organization and in itself is a trait worth while developing.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

"Under miscellaneous may be suggested the following activities:

A. Mock trials.

B. Miniature congresses or conventions where an attempt would be made to duplicate the actual congresses and conventions of the party or important radical organizations.

C. Special groups for the study of music, art, literature, photography, etc.

"In conclusion, we again desire to emphasize that the suggestions contained herein have been found generally applicable to all circles. But, however, these circles should decide for themselves which of these activities are most important for their particular group, which activities are applicable and desirous or not and should govern themselves accordingly."

Membership in the Y. P. S. L. is open to "black or white, Christian or agnostic, female or not." The League desires members with "plastic" minds, but not "so plastic that you let

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others force them into the old molds, without resistance,” for then “you are no better off than old bald-heads.” 4 The League “stands for co-operation and the building of a new labor party.” 5 Like the youth organization of the Communists it is connected with its parent party but is a separate organization.

Chief of the youth groups of the Communist faith are the Young Pioneers of America and the Young Communist League, the former embracing in its membership children from eight to fifteen years of age and the latter including young men and women from fifteen to twenty-three years old. 6 As one would expect, the printed organs of these groups reflect their aversion to the capitalist class and to a government which they consider a part of an objectionable system.

The Young Pioneer, “the paper of the workers’ and farmers’ children,” throughout its articles carries to its young readers the point of view of the Communist party. “The workers in the Soviet Union are much better off now than they were before 1917,” one writer declares in an issue of November, 1930. “There is no unemployment, no starvation, no bread lines. . . . But how about the American workers? In America there are eight million out of work. Long bread lines, high rent, wage cuts, long hours of work, are what the workers in America get. . . . And how about the children in the Soviet Union? They get the best of things. In school they have good conditions. There is a law against hitting children. There is no child labor. Children get free clothing and one meal a day in the school. And when summer time comes, all the children get a chance to go out to camps, to rest and enjoy themselves. The former homes of the czar and the rich are now the rest

4 Young People’s Socialist League, The Young vs. the Old World.
5 Ibid.
homes for workers’ children.” The writer continues to contrast the Soviet Union and the United States in the following vein:

“But in America we are not so lucky. That is because we have a bosses’ government that does not care for the workers’ children. In America there are millions of children who work in the mines, fields, and factories.

“When our fathers are out of a job it means that we have to go hungry, without shoes, without warm clothing for the winter, and we cannot have the things we want.

“And how about the schools? There are many schools that are overcrowded. Children sit two in a seat. The teachers hit the children often and there they are taught to be against the working class, and to hate the Soviet Union. The kids of the rich do not like us. During the winter they go to Florida and have a swell time on the profits their fathers make out of the workers.

“Workers’ children! The Soviet Union is the Fatherland of the whole working class! It is the only country where workers rule.”

The article is concluded with an appeal to organize and “overthrow the bosses.” “Workers’ Children! Pioneers! Our task is to defend the Soviet Union!” admonishes the writer. “We must tell all the children about conditions in the Soviet Union! We must fight against bosses’ wars! Fight against the military organizations of the children that prepare the workers’ children to attack the Soviet Government at time of war! Stand by the Workers’ Fatherland! Defend the Soviet Union!”

In the same manner the Young Pioneers criticize instruction in American schools. “In school we were studying about

America. The teacher said that America is the world’s paradise, and that in America everyone has a chance to make himself great,” writes Comrade Joe Z. “She also said that children don’t have to go to work until they are eighteen. She said the people here are always happy and smiling every day. This is all bunk! Only the bosses are happy and smiling.”

Military training, too, is held in disfavor and the Young Pioneer is urged not to fight “for the big, fat bosses, so that they can get richer.” Objection is raised not only to the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps but to the organization of rifle matches, in which “thousands of children are taught to use guns.”

The Young Communist League carries on a similar crusade against the capitalist “boss,” the present condition of American industry and military training. Besides mimeographed bulletins put out by local groups, the Young Worker carries forward the Communist banner. The former are designed primarily to picture local conditions as envisaged by the contributors. For example, the Young Communist League in the Tin Mill at Gary, Indiana, and those employed in the Campbell soup factory issue such bulletins, in which workers are urged to rebel against conditions in the factories and to support measures such as unemployment social insurance. In addition, the Young Communist League and the Young Pioneer distribute literature in the locality of schools in order to gain converts to their cause. These are generally addressed to “working class students” and urge, among other things,

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8 Ibid., p. 2.  
9 Ibid., pp. 4, 9.  
10 Young Worker published weekly by National Executive Committee, Young Communist League of United States of America, 43 East 125th Street, New York. The Tin Mill Young Worker, issued monthly by the Young Communist League in the Tin Mill, Gary, Indiana. A similar bulletin is issued by a group of Young Communist League members in the shops where Campbell’s soups are made, called Young Campbell Organizer.
student government in the schools as opposed to the present system of management, described as designed to instil in the young "fear against duly appointed authorities." This literature expresses in the same spirit the Communist's point of view of the present American business system, war and the military establishment and invites readers to join their group. Although street meetings and demonstrations are other schemes of spreading their doctrines, these occur infrequently and are often broken up by the police. Special schools and summer camps afford other means for propagating their tenets.

Obviously, however, Communists are articulate in only a small proportion of our schools. They live chiefly in cities where the foreign-born are strongest. Even in New York, Doctor William J. O'Shea, superintendent of schools, in July, 1930, testified before the special Committee of the House of Representatives to investigate Communist activities:

"Undoubtedly there are children in the schools imbued with a fanatical spirit of devotion to the Young Pioneers of America, but their numbers are inconsiderable and their efforts unsuccessful. They have been an annoyance, but hardly more than that."

On the other hand, those connected with Communist youth movements declare that there has been a substantial increase since 1922 in their numbers. However, it is

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12 Ibid., particularly pp. 427-434.
13 Chicago Daily Tribune, January 18, 1930; February 28, 1930; March 6, 1930.
confessed that the Communist influence in America is “still extremely small.” Among the young children, the Young Communist League endeavors to establish groups known as the Communist Children’s Movement in order to have “new young forces” from which later memberships can be drawn. “It is the task of the Communist children’s leagues to utilize and develop the growing political interest and activities of the proletarian children in the struggle of the revolutionary proletariat. . . . The winning over of the masses of children for the struggle, the organization of that struggle and the development of the Communist children’s leagues into genuine revolutionary mass organizations of proletarian children”—that is the goal of the Communist Children’s Leagues. It is held by sponsors of the young groups that “they should find live forms of work of interest to the children.” In this it is believed that, first, ceremonial forms of work are necessary such as the ceremonial acceptance of new members, greetings, taking the oath, Pioneer rules of conduct; contests among the Pioneers are to be encouraged in order to stimulate interest and efforts should be made to satisfy “the intellectual and manual requirements of the children in games and amusements.”

Members of the youth groups of the Communist political faith are encouraged to participate in strikes and lock-outs in which adult members of their faith are engaged. In the meetings of the youth groups discussions are to take place, there

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16 Ibid., p. 12.
17 Where to Begin? How To Build A Mass Young Communist League (Youth International Publishers). Distributed in the United States by the Young Communist League, 43 East 125th Street, New York City. Written by F. Fuernberg, p. 22.
18 The Road To Mass Organization Of Proletarian Children (distributed in the United States by Young Communist League, 43 East 125th Street, New York City), pp. 3–4.
19 Ibid., pp. 24–25.
are to be music, lantern slides, cinemas, theaters and other devices to arouse interest. Children are urged to hold school meetings during recesses and after school hours "to discuss concretely the problems of the school." A school paper is suggested in which there is to be included material linking school questions with general political issues. Leaflets, circulars, and school telegrams are also suggested to be distributed to all children as well as open letters to all pupils, and small and striking stickers with slogans, preferably in verse, containing material in support of the struggle. "The struggle in the schools has hitherto been waged in the following form: 1. Discussion with the pupils and teachers. 2. Proclamation of oral and written demands. 3. Refusal to take part in Jingoistic and religious lessons. 4. Boycott of some teachers and singing revolutionary songs. 5. Election of school representatives. 6. Sending of delegations to the authorities with demands. 7. Written protests against punishment, bad food, high expenditures through the Communist Parliamentarians by means of collecting signatures from the schools. 8. Leaving school when threatened by the teacher. 9. School strikes."\(^2\)

As in the case of many other groups, songs are resorted to as a means of cementing loyalties. Although opposed to militarism, many of the songs are martial in spirit.

**THE BUILDERS**

"We are the builders,
We build the future,
The future world lies in our hands,
We swing our hammer,
We use our weapons,
Against our foe in every land."

SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST GROUPS

And we, the workers,
Who are the builders,
We fight, we do not fear to die,
All power and freedom to the workers
Is our defiant battle-cry!"21

In song, too, there is set forth aversion to the present economic structure. Under the title of "Solidarity Forever," the following lines are sung:

"The workers learned their lesson now
As everyone can see.
The workers know their bosses are
Their greatest enemy.
We'll fight and fight until we win
Our final victory
For One Big Solid Union.

Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
For the Union makes us strong.

The men all stick together
And the boys are fighting fine
The women and the girls are all right
On the picket line.
No scabs, no threats can stop us
As we all march out on time
Through One Big Solid Union."22

Although Communists invite the farmers to join their ranks, there is no conclusive evidence that any considerable number have done so. The Communists ascribe the meagerness of their numbers in the United States in some measure to the fact that

21 Songs of the Class Struggle (issued by the Department of Cultural Activities of the Workers' International Relief, National Office, 949 Broadway, New York City), p. 9.
22 Ibid., p. 7.
"politically, large numbers of the working youths are directly under the influence of the bourgeois youth organizations." On the other hand, in April, 1931, Mr. Robert H. Lucas, executive director of the National Republican Committee, declared before a gathering of young Republicans, according to press dispatches, that a great part of the teaching force of the American schools and colleges as well as text-book writers indulged in radical and theoretical political theories to the extent that they led students away from conservative political ideas into radicalism, and therefore away from the Republican party. In view of such a condition, Mr. Lucas urged young Republican organizations to be set up in all sections of the country under the advice and direction of the regular state and county organizations' leaders.

The Communist youth groups are linked throughout the different nations by an international organization. Congresses and conferences are held and policies which may fit the movement in all countries are considered at such meetings. According to the official reports of the Communist Youths' International, England and the United States have the weakest organization and presumably the smallest group. Through the international organization the same literature is available and the Young Communist International endeavors through definite programs to spread abroad the tenets to which a Communist can subscribe.

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24 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 10, 1931.