

# Student Union Bulletin

ISSUED BY THE AMERICAN STUDENT UNION, 112 EAST 19th STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

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## OHIO CONFERENCE FORMS AMERICAN STUDENT UNION

### Hearst Leads Bitter Attack on Meeting

Establishment of an American Student Union precipitated a dramatic dress rehearsal of the enemies confronting it.

The attack culminated in a desperate but vain attempt by the Hearst press, the American Legion and Ohio State "patriots" to force removal of the conference from the Columbus Y.W.C.A. hall where the delegates had gathered.

The first barrage against the Union was delivered almost simultaneously by the administration of Ohio State University and the Hearst newspapers. Less than a week before the convention, President Rightmire banned it from the campus of Ohio State although permission had been granted three weeks before.

#### Rightmire Blames "Shortage"

Dr. Rightmire blamed a "coal-shortage" for the ban; he remained adamant when the conference offered to pay full operating expenses.

The next day—December 21st—the Sunday editions of the Hearst press carried a bitter indictment of the projected Union, sensationally tracing its origin to a "Moscow plot." In streaming headlines it proclaimed that the Union was part of a "Communist attempt" to "murder" all their "enemies."

Spurred by these fantasies, the Franklin County Post of the American Legion stepped into action the moment the convention gathered at the Columbus "Y."

On the fraudulent charge that a speaker at the opening session of the congress had "insulted the American flag," the Legion demanded that the "Y" oust the delegates at once.

#### Credentials Seized

As the "Y" directors were receiving this protest, Arthur Barrows, a former captain of the R.O.T.C. at Ohio State, seized part of the credentials' list of the conference—in the presence of four witnesses—and fled. He was captured two blocks away and police were summoned.

When the conference sought to press charges against him, police officials announced that no charge would be accepted "until the following Monday"—when all the delegates were to be gone.

Meanwhile, it was discovered that another local "patriot," representing the Ohio State "Americaneers," had entered the convention on forged credentials. Several chosen spies despatched by the Hearst press had also entered the congress to "get the real stuff."

#### Federal Agents Present

Encouraged by the atmosphere of "patriotic" espionage and intimidation, a local official of the American Legion proceeded to boast to a student reporter that "federal agents" had arrived and were scrutinizing the sessions of the Union.

To climax the assault, the Legion officialdom then issued its final manifesto, warning that the annual allotment furnished the "Y" by the community chest would be withdrawn if the convention was not ousted.

The "Y" officials, unable to obtain a quorum for a meeting replied by announcing that they "in no way sponsored" the conference. They indicated, however, that it could be continued at their quarters.

### 427 Delegates At Convention

The delegates to the Student Union convention probably comprised the largest single gathering of diverse political and religious groups ever before assembled to form a progressive student organization. The credentials report follows:

Delegates: 427  
Voting Delegates: 362  
Schools represented: 113  
(Colleges: 76; High Schools: 37)  
Student Councils represented: 20  
Delegates backed by 10 signatures: 24  
Delegates from various campus clubs, organizations, etc.: 82  
S.L.I.D. delegates: 116  
N. S. L. delegates: 141

### Student Union Stirs Support by Progressives

In a deluge of messages from every part of the country, progressive leaders and organizations sent word of their enthusiasm for the American Student Union following its official emergence at the Columbus conference.

Francis Gorman, vice-president of the United Textile Workers of America and one of the leading labor figures in the country, declared:

"It is gratifying to find that students are aware of the dangers involved in split ranks. I shall be glad to serve on your advisory committee. . . ."

Charles Hendley, president of the New York chapter of the American Federation of Teachers, hailed the Student Union as "a rallying point for all students interested in furthering the cause of peace."

Other noted figures in the educational world who have consented to serve on the Union's advisory board are Professor Robert Morss Lovett of the University of Chicago, Dr. Reinhold Niebhuur of Union Theological Seminary, Professor Alexander Meiklejohn of the University of Wisconsin, Professor George S. Counts of Teachers College and Dr. Louis Hacker of Columbia University.

Norman Thomas, national leader of the Socialist party, sent a message to the conference extending it "congratulations for having won the wrath of Hearst."

Mr. Thomas will serve on the advisory board along with Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank and Lincoln Steffens, well-known writers, and Mary Fox, executive secretary of the League for Industrial Democracy.

### Union to Push Nye-Kvale Bill and Youth Act

Acting on the program adopted at the Columbus conference, the administrative committee of the American Student Union has already voted to carry on two campaigns of national significance.

The drives, to be waged in cooperation with other youth, labor and progressive bodies, center around two pieces of legislation to be submitted to the United States Congress at its present session. They are:

1. The American Youth Act, providing for a comprehensive, democratically-administered system of student relief as opposed to the inadequate allotments now furnished under Roosevelt's National Youth Administration.

2. The Nye-Kvale bill, providing for the abolition of compulsory military training and its replacement by optional drill.

#### Await Early Action

These measures, both of which have already awakened widespread interest in Congress with

The Youth Act outlines a system of "college projects" on which needy college and graduate students are to be employed at wages "equal to the prevailing rate of wages for the work performed." The sum must be at least twenty-five dollars a month, the bill specifies.

It further provides that "the Secretary of Labor and the Commissioner of Education are authorized and directed to provide for full payment of fees plus the average weekly living expenses of needy students in high schools and vocational schools, provided that such compensations, exclusive of all fees, shall in no case be less than \$15 a month. These payments shall become effective upon entrance into high school or vocational school."

The Act outlines a system of control by youth, labor, farm and social service groups as opposed to the present supervision of the N.Y.A. by business and industrial interests led by Owen D. Young and Bernarr McFadden. Its significance has been vastly enhanced by reports that even the relief now provided by the N.Y.A. may be withdrawn in June.

The Union's support of the Nye-Kvale bill, which favors optional military training over compulsory, was extended in the belief that passage of this measure will serve as another step toward complete abolition of the R.O.T.C.

### Delegates of 113 Schools Unite to Establish First Progressive Coalition

COLUMBUS, OHIO, Dec. 29—Nearly 500 delegates from colleges and high schools throughout the country joined today in the establishment of an American Student Union.

The unity convention represented the first full alliance in this country of liberal, progressive and left-wing forces on crucial issues facing independent students and teachers. It met at the Y.W.C.A. hall in this city.

### A.S.U. Will Publish "Student Advocate"

The first issue of "The Student Advocate," monthly magazine of the American Student Union, will be off the press on January 26.

The deadline for contributions is January 14th. All students are urged to submit contributions—either articles on general student issues or student literary efforts.

### Delegates Elect Campus Leaders to Direct Union

The first national committee of the American Student Union, elected by the delegates to the Columbus meeting, is composed of students who have been prominent in undergraduate action in every sector of the nation.

George Clifton Edwards, Jr., who was named national chairman, is a graduate of Southern Methodist University and has acted as field secretary of the S.L.I.D.

The conference named Celeste Strack, one of the students expelled from the University of California in Los Angeles last year during the fight for a student-controlled open forum, as high school secretary of the Union.

#### Lash Is Elected

Joseph P. Lash, leader of the student anti-war strike last year, a graduate of C.C.N.Y. and a former executive of the S.L.I.D., was chosen national secretary. Serril Gerber, former executive secretary of the National Student League and a graduate of Los Angeles Junior College, was elected field secretary. The Union's Director of Publications is James A. Wechsler, former editor of The Columbia "Spectator" and author of "Revolt on the Campus." Molly Yard, a graduate of Swarthmore College, will act as treasurer.

The national committee includes Nancy Beatty of Ohio State University, Bruce Bliven, Jr., of Harvard, Jeffrey Campbell of St. Lawrence University, Lewis Cohen of the University of Louisville, James Cox of Virginia-Union, Harold Draper, Brooklyn College '35, Francis Franklin of the University of Virginia, Maurice Gates, Howard '33, Albert W. Hamilton, of the Central Y.M.C.A. College in Chicago and Alvaine Hollister of Antioch College.

Others are Leo Koutouzos, Central Business High School, Martz Lewis of DePaul University, Harold Libros of Temple University, Virginia McGregor, Occidental '35, Katherine Meyer of Vassar, Quentin Ogren of the University of Chicago, Walter Relis of C.C.N.Y., Dorothy Rockwell of Smith College, Warner Shippee of the University of Minnesota, Julius Sippin of Lincoln High School, Marjorie Sprake of Brooklyn College, Monroe Sweetland of Willamette Law School and Hamilton Tyler of the University of California.

Braving the worst storm of Winter to reach the congress—by bus, car, and hitch-hiking—the delegates came to speak for a host of campus, religious and peace societies, student councils, politics clubs, fraternities and student newspapers.

Almost one-half of the assemblage represented sections of campus life heretofore unaffiliated to either the Student League for Industrial Democracy or the National Student League whose merger paved the way for formation of the Union. It was an impressive cross-section of the growing progressive movement in American schools, meeting in a period of the most desperate reactionary outbreak which has visited the nation.

#### Hearst Leads Attack

Confronted by a firm "united front" of the Hearst press, the Legion and their local mouthpieces, the delegates carried on two days of discussion and debate aimed primarily toward the preservation of internal accord.

They succeeded. The program drafted for the Union was acceptable to virtually every element present and provided the springboard for their affiliation to the Union. It centers around six major planks:

1. **Peace:** Endorsement of the Oxford pledge committing the Union against "support of any war which the United States government may undertake"; support of an annual strike against war and the war preparations of the United States government; carrying on of a vigorous campaign for abolition of the R.O.T.C.

#### To Defend Student Rights

2. **Freedom:** Defense of the right of students and teachers to speak or act on major social issues; resistance to financial domination of the schools by Trustees drawn from corporation and banking interests; opposition to the Hearst-Legion assaults on academic freedom.

3. **Security:** For passage of comprehensive relief legislation for students as distinct from the inadequate National Youth Administration program.

4. **Education:** Sweeping extension of educational facilities; for the building of free city colleges in large communities.

5. **Equality:** Opposition to racial discrimination in the schools and colleges, whether in the form of "segregated" education in the South or social discrimination in school activities.

These were the highlights of a program adopted on the basis of reports from students in every territory. The conference made plain its independence of any political party, emphasizing, however, its desire to cooperate with labor and other progressive bodies in the realization of common ends.

The conference was launched on December 27th with separate sessions of the Student League for Industrial Democracy and the National Student League.

#### THE AMERICAN STUDENT UNION

112 East 19th Street, New York City

- I apply for membership in the American Student Union and enclose \$.50 as annual membership dues.
- I also wish to subscribe to "The Student Advocate," the Union's monthly magazine, and enclose \$.50 for a year's subscription.
- Membership for High School Students: ..... \$.25 per year
- Subscription for High School Students: ..... \$.50 per year

#### Joint Offer for Colleges:

- Membership, Subscription and two pamphlets ..... \$1.00

#### For High Schools:

- Membership, Subscription and two pamphlets ..... \$.75

Name: .....

College or School: .....

Address: .....

City: ..... State: .....

# PROGRAM DRAFTED AT CONVENTION

First American Student Union Conference: Columbus, Ohio, December 28-29, 1935

Because American students want peace:

Because they, like their forefathers, are devoted to freedom and equality:

Because they seek educational and economic security:

And because present-day society is increasingly denying them these elementary necessities, students in American high schools and colleges have formed a powerful alliance, an American Student Union. This Union strengthens the students' quest for security and seeks to realize their hope of a warless future. It strives to free the schools of repressive influences. It educates students to the causes of their plight and to the need of aligning with labor and other progressive forces in the achievement of these ends.

Together with teachers and professors everywhere, the American Student Union stands as a bulwark against those forces which would regiment American education and intellectual life and reduce them to the sterility of culture under Fascism.

## The Right to Education and Security

Our society can and should provide a high school education for every person, and no one should be prevented from attending college because of his economic status.

Today a concerted attack on free, public education is taking place. The Tories, in order to reduce taxes, would strip the schools of vital equipment, institute additional fees, lower salaries of teachers, and further restrict the right to education, meanwhile condoning and inspiring expenditure for armories, battle-cruisers, and military training. The American Student Union answers: Schools Not Battleships.

The issue is not new. The long struggle in our American democracy between the oligarchy of privileged wealth and the plain people has been bitterly reflected in the continued attempt of these vested interests to curtail public education. The facts speak plainly:

64 million people in America have never finished high school;  
32 million people have never completed the eighth grade;  
only 1,200,000 have finished college.

We view every attack on free, democratic education as an attack on democracy itself. The American Student Union campaigns for the rapid extension of educational facilities. It proposes a school building program extending from elementary schools in the south to free city colleges in large communities. The distribution of educational opportunity must be freed from all discrimination of race, color, politics or religion. The Student Union stands opposed to the Southern system through which the Negro is kept in servitude by denial of educational rights.

Extension of educational facilities can be utilized only if accompanied by economic aid to the student. A school building program, especially in the South, cannot ignore the complementary need for providing young people with lunches, carfairs and homes. Neither the National Youth Administration nor any other student aid program now in effect has met the needs of American students. We advocate an adequate system of student relief, to be democratically administered as a safeguard against the growth of a government-inspired, vote-getting movement. In order further to give economic aid to the student, the American Student Union encourages and assists the establishment of co-operative houses, eating-places, and bookstores.

Widespread unemployment after graduation has in many countries produced a feeling of defeatism and futility easily exploited by Fascist demagogues. To draft elaborate plans for "vocational guidance" is futile and illusory so long as there are no jobs. Painstakingly to "choose a career" is a grim paradox without some avenue of employment.

We are not a lost generation. Unemployment is not inevitable. The continued progress of our nation requires the services of all its young men and women. It requires especially an increasing number of doctors, engineers, teachers, and other professional groups. Our services would be utilized if more purchasing power were available to the people. An obvious step to the realization of such an increase, and one which the Union supports, is the enactment of social security legislation. We support all efforts to raise the American standard of living essential to which is the organization of workers, manual and white-collar, into legitimate trade unions.

Those economic objectives for which the Union will relentlessly fight—student relief, employment, security,—are elementary, reasonable human rights; we declare that a society which cannot find places for its young people, except in work camps and on battlefields, stands condemned.

## In Defense of Academic Freedom

Today, when education should be providing inquiry and enlightenment for the solution of human needs, vested interests are imposing systematic repression on our educational institutions. Students who seek to speak and act on vital issues are disciplined by administrators and denounced by self-styled "patriots." The teacher who believes that his responsibility is to the truth, rather than to the *status quo* is threatened with loss of rank and job. The curriculum, instead of squarely facing urgent and immediate problems, is often divorced from reality and laden with outworn prejudices. On every side the Tories are reinforcing their rule over our schools and colleges. They do so

without regard for truth, learning, or human welfare; they do so at the expense of students, teachers, and society whose interests demand social improvement.

Within the University these financial pressure groups are represented by boards of trustees, dominated by industrial, banking, and corporation leaders. These groups ultimately dictate University policy and hinder scientific inquiry when it conflicts with their own economic interests; they resist every effort by students to realize economic security, to explore social disorder, and to organize for permanent peace and a more abundant life. They are the forces behind intimidation of professors who dare to grapple with the economic facts of society. Dismissals, suspensions, intimidations are their technique. Goose-step education is their aim. Closely identified with this repressive movement are the hysterical outcries of the Hearst press, and allied sponsors of "loyalty oaths," "red-baiting" crusades, Vigilante attacks—all designed to prevent consideration of the real issues of this generation.

These encroachments on academic freedom—on the rights of students and teachers to think, speak, and act without fear of reprisal—threaten our whole educational system; they are forerunners of those tendencies most fully expressed under Fascism.

American students have many times demonstrated their willingness vigorously to defend these traditional student rights. The American Student Union proposes to constitute itself as an unyielding force against the inroads of repression, remembering that this battle for freedom is being duplicated throughout our society, against that big business clique whose status is endangered by general social and economic betterment. The Union defends the independence of the student and the teacher. It presses for representation from labor and other progressive groups on Boards of Trustees and Boards of Education; it dedicates itself to the democratization of the whole school system; it exerts every effort to revitalize the curriculum, to provide content and social purpose for education; it encourages and supports progressive, socially-minded action outside the curriculum. This freedom we hold to be vital to genuine education; these rights we declare to be imperative to the student search for peace and security.

## The Student and Peace

Throughout the world our generation is being drilled for war. Although the American campus is pervaded by a deep desire for peace, marching units of the R.O.T.C. are a solemn reminder that the government is a leading protagonist in the arms race. The same tendency is manifest in the armaments, of laboratories, and even of class rooms for war preparations. Today all machinery of "armament control" has collapsed; the United States is spending more money for preparedness than at any other period in its peace-time history. This nation-wide tendency foreshadows the imminent transformation of the American university into a link of the war machine.

The American Student Union opposes militarism in education not only because it is and has always been a brutalizing force but because it represents the preparations of the American Government for entrance into another world war. We support all legislative measures which would make the R.O.T.C. optional, as a step towards complete abolition of military training on the campus.

The present heightened international tension should make us more alert to the peril of American conflict with Japan or other imperialist nations over the economic stakes in the Orient and South America—stakes which are of benefit, as in the case of all wars fought by imperialist nations, not to the American people but to a handful of powerful American financial and industrial groups. The present boldness of Fascist Italy and the belligerence of other fascist nations merely reveal that internal conditions in these countries are most acute. But basic to the present insecurity of peace is the far-flung struggle to maintain colonial privileges and possessions. In these bitter clashes the American financial barons are directly involved. The approach of another European war hastens the day when these interests will again dictate American entrance—unless they are fought relentlessly now.

The A.S.U. uncompromisingly opposes the war preparations of our own government. It undertakes to organize the collective resistance of students now against the steps which lead to war and in the event of war to the war itself. Education on the causes of war is an essential factor in a peace movement. The A.S.U. will, in its educational work, seek to reveal the inefficacy of such "peace agencies" as the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact which have so plainly failed in previous crises; this failure arises directly from the domination of the League by governments which are imperialist and which are now utilizing the League to further their own economic aims. The war which we shall be called upon to wage must be aggressive in character and purpose, and the "interests" we shall be asked to defend will be those of the few, not of the many. These circumstances demand independent organization and action against war by the anti-war forces of the world, preeminent among which is the organized labor movement.

In this endeavor to organize effective anti-war action among students the A.S.U. has undertaken the sponsorship of the anti-war strike in cooperation with all other groups ready to support it. The strike is a declaration of our determination to prevent our government from going to war. It is a dramatic, effective, unmistakable statement of our regard for peace. It is a rallying cry for all who act to preserve peace. It is, moreover, a dress rehearsal of the action we will take the moment our government seems likely to declare war.

The A.S.U. accepts without reservation the Oxford pledge "to refuse to support any war conducted by the U. S. government." We will endeavor to win universal support of this pledge; we regard it not merely as a statement of conviction but as a powerful deterrent of government action; we believe that it will become the focal point for those hundreds of thousands of students who wish to join in exerting pressure for the maintenance of peace.

## The School and Minority Races

The evidences of racial discrimination which are alarmingly apparent in our educational institutions are the immediate concern of the A.S.U. The fundamental democratic beliefs in tolerance and equal educational opportunities are completely denied by such practices as racial quotas, economic discrimination, and segregation. By such methods, reactionary demagogues of Europe have succeeded in half a dozen countries in keeping the people fighting among themselves rather than against their common enemy. Only through cooperation and understanding between students of all races can an intelligence and progressive citizenry be created.

In many American colleges registration of Jewish and especially of Negro students is flatly refused, and even in the most liberal it is allowed only on a percentage basis. In the cases where applicants are admitted, racial discrimination is exemplified in the code of social inferiority accepted and promoted too often by student fraternities and honorary societies, and by the administrations themselves. The situation is even worse in graduate and professional schools, particularly law, engineering, and medicine, where every attempt is made to disqualify Negro and Jewish students. Finally, those students who are forced out, and those who succeed in graduating, find an even more biased foe in the economic discrimination which closes the professions to them.

In the Southern States the problem of discrimination in education is still more serious. The social code and the whole economy of the South are based upon the subservience of the Negro race, as much today as in the period of slavery; and educational system and civic life suffer accordingly. The complete segregation in schools and colleges strikes at both Negro and white students. The low cultural level of the Negroes in the South can be traced directly to the enormous difference in funds spent on Negro education as compared with the appropriations for white schools. And the impoverishment and complete inadequacy of elementary and higher education for both Negro and white, is equally due to the segregation, which necessitates duplication of facilities.

The A.S.U. stands against racial quotas and differentials, against intolerance, Jim-Crowism and segregation, whether these apply to Negro, Jewish, Chinese, Indian and other minority groups irrespective of religious and political affiliations. Only by guaranteeing equal and adequate educational opportunities, only by providing security of employment without discrimination, can any social order claim the allegiance of its younger members. The Union calls upon all students of whatever race to cooperate in seeking these goals.

## The Student and Society

Students everywhere are anxiously seeking a way to improve their life, to defend their rights, and to enter the struggle for their interests, for freedom, and for peace.

In this struggle they are immediately confronted by an inner oligarchy of high finance, industry and politics, which in its own narrow interests, dominates and throttles the American school and student. A wide gulf separates this inner oligarchy not only from the student but from the people. The latter want peace, it foments war. The latter want freedom; it inspires repression. The people demand jobs and social security, which the Tories block in order to perpetuate their dividends and their rule.

In a larger sense, the ends which the A.S.U. has set for itself cannot be secured by students alone, nor within the confines of the campus. Our struggles inevitably take us to the sources of power, the legislative halls and behind them the inner oligarchy. Our struggles demonstrate our community of interest with trade unions and farmer groups, who, just because they are the chief victims of exploitation by the inner oligarchy, are the mainsprings of progressive social change. The A.S.U. is not a political organization. Although it recognizes the need for thoroughgoing social change, it leaves to political organizations as such the achieving of these changes.

The A.S.U. welcomes into its ranks anyone who wishes to act on a single issue outlined in this program, no matter what his disagreement with other phases of it. We emphasize, however, our belief that these issues are interrelated, that the program of the Union embodies all of them; that its subordinate units are pledged to the fulfillment of them.

The A.S.U. represents a step never before achieved in American life: a coalition of every progressive force against those interests which threaten to destroy all of us. The Union is independent of any political party; it proposes to unite students irrespective of political parties or religious faith, in defense of their lives and liberties. It offers to them an instrument through which together they may strive to achieve a better, secure and fruitful life. These are tasks confronting all of us; these are aspirations which we share together. When our enemies are so closely aligned, so united in purpose, there can be no barrier to our collective effort. Without it, we are doomed. Together we can advance to a new frontier, a future of peace and plenty for our generation and those to come.