

COMPROMISE?

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIALIST LEAGUE
(Fourth Internationalists)

The heated conflict over collective security has brought with it a number of suggestions for a compromise between the contending positions. Is a real compromise possible?

One such proposal was made by Molly Yard on the floor of the Peace Commission: namely, that the convention take no stand on collective security, while voting on the Oxford Pledge. Is this a compromise that the advocates of the Oxford Pledge can accept?

We do not believe that it is. This is precisely the situation that has obtained during the last year. At the last convention, the Oxford Pledge was re-affirmed, while a motion against collective security was defeated. In this equivocal situation, the actual practice of the ASU was in the direction of collective security, for the simple reasons that the leadership of the ASU was pro-collective--security. In practice, in the local chapter work and education, as well as nationally, the Oxford Pledge was allowed to die (as the lawyers say) of "innocuous desuetude"; it was just buried by inaction and not brought forward. The ASU signed the USPC Armistice Day Call for "implementation of the Kellogg Pact" by governmental action, a collective-security program. The NEC passed a resolution for a governmental embargo against the "fascist aggressors", which the collective-security-ists hailed as the first step toward a complete collective-security program. This collective-security leadership, we may modestly predict, will probably be re-elected. For the advocates of the Oxford Pledge to agree to ignore the question at this convention means actually to refer the question to the Staff and the National Executive Committee.

To leave this whole basic question hanging in mid-air after this convention would merely confuse the issue for another year. The gap between theory and practice in the ASU would merely become wider. The immediacy of this question forces us to take a stand--for or against the war for which mobilization has begun? You cannot discuss techniques in fighting war until you have first decided that you are going to fight war. The report of Lash indicated clearly enough that his orientation is toward integrating the ASU into the general Roosevelt machine, as its youth adjunct (he denounced the Republicans, for example, but not a hint of condemnation of FDR for his NYA and WPA cuts, CCC militarization, rightward swing in tax program, etc, as well as an enthusiastic endorsement of the President's foreign policy--an enthusiasm that he shares with Landon and Knox). This policy will be carried out just as surely if the Convention takes no stand. A clear-cut fight, must be made now.

The Harvard compromise, despite the good intentions behind it, is very apparently not a compromise at all. It asks the Oxford Pledge advocates to give it up; and then includes the demand for economic sanctions against aggressors, the essence of the collective-security program! In addition, it includes the inadmissible demand for redistribution of colonies, etc., to the fascist nations.

A third variant--that the Convention take up only the concrete steps in the fight against war, taking no position on either collective security or Oxford Pledge--has, in effect, been discussed above. It is not a realistic proposal. The ASU cannot escape from the basic question, even though by Convention action it may bury its head in the sand.

If collective security is carried, explicitly by motion, or implicitly by giving the national leaders free rein, one thing is clear: THE AMERICAN STUDENT UNION WILL BECOME JUST ANOTHER PRO-WAR ORGANIZATION!