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New York, N.Y. 10014

July 27, 1971

TO ALL BRANCH ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

A number of questions have arisen concerning the numerical basis for the election of convention delegates and the proportional representation of delegates representing political minorities. The Convention Call outlined the procedure to follow; this letter is a reminder of that procedure and further explanation.

The number of delegates a branch is entitled to. Representation from the branches is based upon the current number of branch members in good standing who were admitted to membership in the Socialist Workers Party prior to April 19, 1971. These are the only members eligible to vote for resolutions and elect convention delegates. Such members who have transferred from one branch to another since April 19 will vote in the branch they are a member of at the time of the voting; the only exception to this rule is members who have transferred from one branch to another within the same locality, who will vote in the branch from which they transferred.

The number of delegates a minority is entitled to. Since there are political differences defined by conflicting resolutions, the election of delegates in the branches is to be on the basis of the vote on the conflicting resolutions, voted on at the meeting at which the delegates are elected. Members voting for a given resolution or block of resolutions will designate the delegate or delegates they are entitled to on the basis of proportional representation, as outlined in the Convention Call.

The number of delegates a minority receives is determined by the total number of branch members eligible to vote who are either present and voting at the branch meeting which elects delegates or have submitted an absentee ballot in writing which is recognized by motion at that branch meeting. Abstentions do not count as votes, do not count in determining proportional representation.

Thus, the total number of delegates a branch is entitled to is determined by the number of branch members in good standing who were members of the SWP by April 19; the proportion of those delegates a minority receives is based on the number of eligible members who vote for one of the conflicting lines as defined by resolutions.

For example. Let us assume branch A has 74 members in good standing, of which 71 were admitted to the SWP before April 19. The number of delegates branch A is entitled to is 10 (one for each seven members or major fraction thereof).

Let us assume 64 of the members eligible to vote attend the branch meeting to elect delegates, or submit recognized absentee ballots, and that 4 of these abstain. This leaves a total of 60 votes for one or another political line. Then a minority must receive at least 1/10 of those 60 votes or 6 votes to get one delegate. To get two delegates, such a minority must get at least 2/10 of the vote or 12 votes. If the minority receives at least 40 percent of the vote, or 24 votes, it is entitled to one half of the delegates or 5.

Let us take another example for branch A. Let us assume that 64 of the members eligible to vote attend or submit recognized absentee ballots but there are no abstentions. Then, a minority must receive at least 1/10 of the vote to get one delegate, as before, but that means it must now get 7 votes to get one delegate, since 1/10 of 64 is 6.4.

Second example. Let us assume branch B has 18 eligible members. It is entitled to 3 delegates. If 15 members eligible to vote do so, then a minority must receive 1/3 of 15 or 5 votes to get one delegate. If 16 members eligible to vote do so, then a minority must receive at least 6 votes to qualify for one delegate.

Minority and majority delegates are to be elected in caucus by those who vote for the minority or majority resolution or resolutions. The branch as a whole then ratifies the delegates so chosen. That is, it is up to the branch as a whole to make certain that democratic norms are followed in the election of all delegates, that only eligible members vote or are elected delegates, etc.

If there are any questions, call the national office.

Please send a list of the names of regular, alternate and fraternal delegates and a list of all visitors from your branch (that is, party members not part of the delegation, youth members not in the party, and sympathizers vouched for by the branch). Each organizer should also bring a copy of this list to the convention.

A delegation will not be seated unless the convention assessments collected by the branch for every comrade not totally unemployed has been paid to the national office.

Comradely,



Barry Sheppard  
Administrative Committee