

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014

May 22, 1971

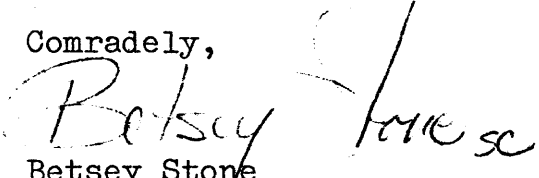
TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORK DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a report adopted by the Political Committee on May 11, which deals with the proposed national abortion action campaign. The contents should be shared with all members of the branch, most importantly, comrades involved in women's liberation work. Enclosed are several extra copies to facilitate this.

In the near future you will be receiving a follow-up report on the progress being made in launching this campaign, and the tasks which the branches will need to carry out to make the campaign a success. Please keep us informed as to the situation in your area, and the thinking of leading comrades on the campaign.

Comradely,

  
Betsy Stone  
Women's Liberation Director

At the plenum last month we discussed the need for a nationwide abortion action campaign, which could unite the various state abortion struggles, and which could provide a vehicle for involving large numbers of new women in struggle for feminist demands. Such a national campaign would provide an opportunity for the women's liberation movement to take the next important step forward toward becoming a real political force, fighting in an effective way to meet the needs of women.

During the past period, although the feminist movement has grown in absolute numbers, there has been a tendency on the part of many feminist groups to become ingrown, and to refrain from new steps toward developing a strategy capable of involving broader layers of women in actions. A nationally coordinated struggle for the unconditional right of women to decide on and obtain abortions would be a tremendous aid in overcoming this.

According to the polls, a majority of American women now support the right of abortion. A national abortion action campaign, in which feminists would play a leading role, would bring many of these women into contact with feminism for the first time and would help give masses of women a better understanding of the potential power of an organized women's movement. It would show clearly that the women's liberation movement is capable of championing and fighting effectively for demands which represent the desires of masses of women.

It is more clear than ever that abortion is an issue that has come to the fore as the center of national debate and action. This is an issue around which tens of thousands of women all over the country have begun to develop strong opinions on and take action. It is also an issue which is now up for debate and action in the legislatures and courts of the country. The fact that Nixon felt compelled to make a statement attacking the right of abortion is one of the clearest indications of the national impact the abortion issue is having. It is now up to the feminist movement, not only to fight for further gains, but also to answer Nixon's attack, and the attacks of other anti-abortion forces. What is needed is an organized show of force, making the position of the majority of women in this country clear.

One of the things which has stood in the way of building a strong campaign around the issue of abortion has been the fact that the struggle thus far has been waged only on a state by state basis. A correctly organized national campaign would in no way contradict the various efforts taking place now on a state level. It would complement these struggles by making a national show of force on an issue around which women are now struggling in separate states across the country.

The need for such a unification of efforts is clear, and the question of how this can be done is already being discussed within the movement. A group of women in New Haven, for example, has issued a call for a March on Washington next October to repeal all anti-abortion laws. At this time, we and other women in New York who support the launching of a national abortion action are also discussing how and when we can call a gathering of all women around

the country who would like to meet together to plan such a campaign.

A national campaign to abolish laws which apply restrictions to the right to abortion would place the responsibility for the repressive abortion laws squarely with the federal government. Abortion is not only a matter of concern on the state level. The federal government has every obligation to guarantee every woman in this country the basic right to control her own body.

There are a number of ways in which the federal government could, immediately, in one stroke, legalize abortion in every state in the union. It could do this through a Supreme Court decision. Or, it could do this through a law in Congress which would supersede present state laws. Or, an amendment to the Constitution could be passed which would void any laws which interfered with the basic right of a woman to make her own decision as to whether she wants to bear a child or not.

In launching a national campaign, the women's liberation movement will have to investigate the various legal options for legalizing abortion and it will have to decide what legal moves should be supported. Already, Senator Packwood from Oregon has proposed a law which would abolish all existing anti-abortion state laws, and there are indications that there will be other members of Congress who would be willing to introduce such a law or amendment.

Regardless of whatever national legal measures a national movement for abortion might decide to support, the main thrust of the campaign would be toward a clear demand on the government to abolish every law restricting the right to abortion now. It should be pointed out, again and again, that it is possible for a congress that cares about the rights of women to move on this immediately. This would mean repealing both the so-called "reform" laws which do not allow for the right of women to decide (that is, those laws which stipulate that the physical or mental health of the mother must be threatened, or that she must have been raped, before she is "entitled" to an abortion and the more restrictive laws which do not allow for abortion under any conditions except if the life of the mother is threatened.

In the case of the few states with laws which have lifted many of the restrictions on the right to abortion along the lines of making it the decision of the woman, the role of the national campaign would be to fight all proposed and existing restrictions on the right of abortion, being careful to distinguish the campaign from the anti-abortion forces who call for "repealing" the laws legalizing abortion. In these states, the need for making abortion available to women on demand through the establishment of abortion clinics could also be raised.

This campaign would thus be aimed at mobilizing all those who want to take the first important step of legalizing abortion, to make it possible for women to have abortions without being considered criminals. In a number of states, the demand for "free abortion on demand" has been raised as part of the campaigns around abortion, and the SWP has been among the strongest supporters of this demand.

For a certain period there was grudging assent from members of NOW and other reformist groups within the feminist movement to this demand.

In the past months, though, concrete experience in the women's liberation movement has made it clear that there are many more women who support a move to repeal abortion laws than support the demand "free abortion on demand." We have reports from a whole series of areas where it is clear that if we insisted on the "free" as the basis for organizing abortion actions we would split existing coalitions for abortion repeal, and would not be able to draw in some of the broader forces which are needed to give the necessary breadth to the struggle.

The question of which demand is put forward is not a principled one. Both demands -- that is the demand to legalize abortion, and the demand to make abortion free -- are principled, and organization and struggle for both represent big steps forward in the struggle for women's liberation. The key tactical point is that at this time the struggle to legalize abortion is the most important next step on the national level, the step around which we can focus the greatest amount of attention and mobilize the broadest forces, and around which we can best confront the government with the clearest ultimatum for action. We want to put the capitalist government in the position of having to deal with our demand, so that this demand is either fulfilled, or the government is clearly exposed as not responding to the most elementary needs of women.

We see the struggle to legalize abortion in and of itself, which would have a profound effect on the entire situation of women in this country. A victory around this issue would show the potential power of women and would lay the basis for and raise confidence in the ability to win other struggles around other issues.

Within the context of a broad struggle to abolish anti-abortion laws, the Socialist Workers Party, along with other militants within the feminist forces will continue to raise the slogan of "free abortion on demand." We can use the national campaign to talk with broader masses of women about the fact that, if we are to gain complete control of our bodies, abortions must be available for all women, whether they have the money to pay for them or not. If not, the right to control one's own body becomes a fraud. In addition, we, and many others, will also continue to educate and agitate around other issues raised by the feminist movement, such as child-care and equal pay. The campus feminist groups will continue to play an important role in this regard. In addition, a national abortion action campaign could help to spark and reinforce various feminist struggles taking place on the campuses and in the high schools, such as the struggle by high school students in New York to make contraceptives and abortion available to high school students.

If a national campaign to abolish abortion laws is going to be big enough to really have an impact on this country, and to reach out to large numbers of new women, it will be important to include women from many different kinds of organizations, such as the unions, the YWCA, the churches, as well as groups such as Planned

Parenthood which has supported abortion for some time. We will even be able to get the support of prominent individuals, politicians, union officials, etc. who have not spoken out in favor of legal abortion before. The more we can get such figures to endorse this campaign, the more it will be possible to obtain the resources and organization with which we can reach out to many thousands of women.

In order to build a large-scale campaign, broad coalitions will be needed which clearly state the objectives of the campaign. Already, broad abortion coalitions exist in many parts of the country, and these coalitions can be expanded to relate to this national campaign, or they can function as organizing nucleuses for the building of bigger, broader coalitions.

In three different cities we have helped to build coalitions which have been based on more than one demand. In New York and Chicago, these coalitions are based on the three demands of August 26. The Boston-centered New England Coalition is based on these three plus several more. In all three of these coalitions, there have been recent splits and divisions, where some of the reformist forces have pulled out of the coalitions, both because they became nervous over what they considered were very radical stands being taken by these coalitions, and because they wanted to focus their attention on work within the Democratic Party. In Boston, they objected to the fact that the coalition was based on such "socialist" demands as "free abortion on demand," and "free, 24 hour child-care."

A national campaign around abortion should be able, through the fact of its concentration on the fight to legalize abortion, and through its sheer size, to bring groups such as NOW back into participating in mass action. Coalitions built to carry out such a campaign would, of necessity, be broader and more clearly based on a specific goal than the coalitions which were built around August 26.

We should be conscious that the August 26 action, and the coalitions which built it, played a specific role in the development of the feminist movement. August 26 was the first nation-wide demonstration of the women's liberation movement, and as such it represented the first public show of force by that movement. The fact that the demonstration was defined clearly as being around three basic feminist demands was very important in gaining support for August 26, and in helping concretize the meaning of feminism for large numbers of new women. The demands were widely publicized, and many women participated on the basis of those demands.

At the same time, many women marched on August 26 because it was their first opportunity to show in a visible way their identification with the feminist struggle in general. August 26, the anniversary of women's suffrage, was widely publicized as "women's liberation day" in the press. In this context, the demands represented the preliminary putting forth of goals of the feminist movement, and it was understood by most of those marching that the government would not immediately act on that program. The main function played by the demands was that of projecting to masses of women the nature of the women's liberation movement, of enlisting the support

of women for the necessarily long-term struggle around those demands. It was this -- that is the fact that August 26 was the first feminist outpouring around concrete demands, and the fact that the press publicized it widely -- which was responsible for the large demonstrations which occurred.

A national abortion action would play a different role from that of August 26. That is, it would pick out the one issue that has come to the fore, and concentrate on that and attempt through the mobilization of masses of women, to put the government on the spot on this issue. By concentrating on the abortion issue, and by forcing the government to deal with it, actual concessions and victories can be won which would be a tremendous inspiration and impetus to the feminist movement as a whole. It would help to undermine the whole existing ideology which says that women are not capable of organizing themselves as an effective political power.

A national abortion action campaign, culminating in a show of force by women around this issue, will also be a powerful alternative to both the sectarians within the feminist movement who do not understand the necessity of reaching out to and mobilizing the power of masses of women through struggles around concrete demands, and the reformists who shun mass action and continually press for lobbying and electoral activities.

A common expression of sectarianism within the feminist movement is the tendency to discount actions taken by women who are not conscious feminists. This is similar to the tendency in the antiwar movement to discount participation in actions against the Vietnam war by demonstrators who do not yet understand the full nature of imperialism.

A victory resulting from massive mobilizations in struggle for abortion would be an important step forward in the struggle for women's liberation and for socialism, regardless of whether all those participating in that action would be conscious of this or not. Moreover, by participating in an abortion campaign, many women who are not yet feminists will be brought into contact with the feminist movement, and through their participation in such a campaign they will gain feminist consciousness. And many feminists will be fighting side by side with socialists and will, as a result, become open to socialist ideas.

The recent success of the women's contingent for April 24 was a good example of how this process can take place. The contingent was not organized on a basis whereby it was necessary for a woman to be a conscious feminist to take part. Rather, it was open for all women who were opposed to the war, and united women around that issue. But the contingent was an expression of feminism, in that it expressed the need to show the power of women, as women, in taking part in the mobilization to end the Vietnam war. It was an expression of feminism in the same way that the Chicano moratorium was an expression of Chicano nationalism. And, because the antiwar movement

is already bigger and broader than the feminist movement, through the sales of feminist literature, and through such things as the speech given by representatives of the women's contingent, many new women were introduced to and brought around the feminist movement for the first time. One of the clearest expressions of this was the large numbers of women's contingent buttons being worn by the demonstrators.

The women's contingent was built without a great deal of time and effort being put into it on a national basis, and the success which it had can be an important lesson for the movement. We saw how enthused women became -- many who had not had any contact with the feminist movement before -- through their participation in an all-woman contingent of an action focused on an issue around which women are concerned.

In addition to fighting sectarian and ultraleft tendencies within the movement, the supporters of a mass-action abortion campaign will also have to fight the reformists on a whole number of important issues. One of these will be the attempt by reformist groups such as Zero Population Growth and Planned Parenthood to tie in the abortion issue with the issue of population control. We will have to take them on about this, because we do not want the abortion issue and the population issue to become confused in any way. This is a principled question because it relates to the right of the woman to decide. Many population groups advocated forcing or pressuring women to restrict their child-bearing, and the abortion movement should not be identified with this.

One of the ways the ruling class attempts to split the abortion movement is precisely by holding up the specter of "genocide" for Black people. They discourage participation by minority groups by implying that the abortion issue is related to the population issue. They also attempt to deal with the problem of poverty by raising the reactionary utopian notion of dealing with it through capitalist population control. Recently, laws have been introduced into several state legislatures which have proposed requiring the sterilization of welfare mothers.

The proposals for such laws, along with the widespread racist conception that the way to "solve" the welfare "problem" is by keeping Black people and poor people from having more babies, are the basis for the fears within national minority communities over the question of forced sterilization and forced birth control. By raising the population issue along with the abortion issue, the reformists only serve to perpetuate such practices and such fears.

Instead, the abortion movement should be fighting against forced sterilization and seeking to get more information to expose the reality of forced sterilization in America. We should try to determine more accurately just how broadly forced sterilization is practiced in hospitals in this country. And we should explain the close relationship between the struggle against forced sterilization, and the struggle for abortion, since both are based on the concept of the right of the women to decide.

Another area where the reformists may pose some problems is over the question of whether or not the decisions about the basic strategy and demands to be raised in an abortion campaign should be made by women. We think that any meeting or conference called to plan a nation-wide abortion campaign should be composed of women only, since it is an issue which affects women so directly, and an issue around which women have the most to lose and the most to gain. This would not mean that men could not be enlisted as supporters of the campaign. As a matter of fact, men, and organizations which include men, should be encouraged to support the campaign, to give their suggestions, to give money and to help build and participate in the actions so that the broadest, biggest possible movement for abortion repeal can be built.

It would be best if a national abortion campaign could be launched in time to have an action in the fall, so that we will not have to wait too many months before showing the power of women over this issue. Already, the right wing is having a significant impact in its counter-abortion campaign. If the women's movement does not decisively respond we will not only pass up an important opportunity, but we will see more steps backward such as New York Governor Rockefeller's recent attempt to cancel welfare and medicaid funds for abortion.

A possible time for a national meeting, or conference, of women from various parts of the country to plan a campaign would be the weekend July 17-18 which is the anniversary of the first Seneca Falls (1848) Convention. This would give enough time to get out the needed literature, and to mobilize for a really big action in the fall. To mobilize these broad forces, any conference or meeting called to launch such an abortion campaign should be clearly defined as such, that is, not as a women's liberation conference, but as a women's abortion-action conference. This will make it possible to include women who are not as yet necessarily conscious feminists and limit unnecessary factional wrangling or accusations of drawing women together under false pretenses.

In order to mobilize large forces, both the reformists and the more militant, mass-action oriented feminists must take part. In this regard, the campus feminist groups -- which contain the most consistent supporters of mass action around feminist demands -- will be of great importance. The building of feminist groups on campus will receive tremendous impetus from any national mass abortion actions, and the campus groups will, in turn, provide an important building base for such actions.

In the coming period, we should continue to help build the state abortion campaigns around the country as well as help to unite these efforts through a national campaign. And we must continue to help build campus feminist groups. It is through participating in both these areas that we at this time can contribute most to building a mass feminist movement.



COPY

COPY

COPY

3861 Montevista Road  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44121  
April 26, 1971

Jack Barnes  
National Organization Secretary  
New York, New York

Dear Comrade Barnes,

In the forthcoming pre-convention discussion in the branches, we (the authors of "For a Proletarian Orientation") would like to present an argument in favor of our document to any branch that would like to hear us. Thus we intend to write to the organizers of the various branches to tell them that we are willing to speak on our document.

Unless we hear otherwise from you, we assume that this is correct procedure during a pre-convention discussion.

Comradely,  
s/Barbara Gregorich

COPY

COPY

COPY

14 Charles Lane  
New York, New York 10014

May 3, 1971

CLEVELAND

Barbara Gregorich

Dear Comrade Gregorich,

It is unusual for the authors of an article submitted to the pre-convention discussion bulletin to ask the national office what the correct procedure is to inform the branches that spokespersons for their article are available. This request in your letter of April 26 and the character of your co-authored document, raises several questions that must be clarified.

Does this mean that the authors consider the document "For A Proletarian Orientation" a counter-resolution to the political resolution submitted to the pre-convention discussion by the National Committee? Do the authors consider themselves part of a tendency or a faction? Is the platform of the tendency or faction the document "For a Proletarian Orientation?"

Comradely,

Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: Bill Massey - Oakland-Berkeley  
John McCann - Boston  
Phil Passen - Cleveland

3861 Montevista Road  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44121  
May 7, 1971

Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary  
New York, New York

Dear Comrade Barnes,

In regard to your letter of 5-3-71, we do not consider it "unusual" to ask the national office "what the correct procedure is." The history of the SWP is fraught with examples of comrades who had political differences with the party leadership but who did not proceed correctly in presenting their differences. It seems to us that the splits, expulsions, cliques, unprincipled combinations, etc., in the party's history clearly point to the necessity of anybody with political differences to proceed correctly. Political differences must be discussed, argued, and voted on as such -- those with political differences must proceed correctly in order to keep the discussion on the political differences, not on incorrect organizational procedures.

While the party has "how to" articles on Militant sales, branch finances, press conferences, etc., we do not have any such compiled information on how to proceed with political differences. Yet the questions of which path the party shall take, which program the party shall have, which tasks the party shall set for itself are the most important of all questions. It is the over-riding importance of these questions that heightens the necessity of proceeding correctly in presenting political differences. Because we want to proceed correctly and because there are no clear examples or instructions on how to do so, we must, when we are uncertain, ask somebody how to proceed. It does not strike us as "unusual" that we end up asking the national office. It does strike us as strange, however, that instead of receiving an answer, we receive a series of questions.

In regard to the first of your three questions, we, the authors of "For a Proletarian Orientation," consider our document an alternative political line to the NC's political resolution. In her letter of 3-16-71 Comrade Gregorich said that we view our document as "a clear alternative to present party policy." We feel that the line presented in our document should be accepted by the party. Since this is a different political line than that in the NC's political resolution, we feel that comrades cannot vote for both of these documents at the same time. If this is what you mean by the term "counter-resolution," then we consider our document a counter-resolution.

Your second question is: "Do the authors consider themselves part of a tendency or faction?" When Comrade Gregorich wrote to you on 8-19-70, informing you of a forthcoming document on the question of sending comrades into the industrial proletariat, you responded (9-21-70): "Whether or not your views on the subject are a valid basis for the formation of an organized tendency will be determined

5-7-71

in the course of the discussion itself." (our emphasis) Discussion is, at this point, less than seven days old. Moreover, we have not yet heard what the party leadership has to say to our call for a proletarian orientation.

It is, in our opinion, most likely that the discussion will reveal that a tendency should be formed. However, if and when we issue a call for the formation of a tendency, we shall issue it through the normal channels of pre-convention discussion, not in secret.

Let us assure you, once again, as Comrade Gregorich did in her letter of 10-4-70, that we are not a faction and do not intend to proceed in a factional manner. Why do you insist upon dragging the term "faction" into our correspondence? Such continual implications on the part of one in your position can only harm the party. Every time you publish correspondence in which you imply we might be a faction you indirectly encourage the readers of that correspondence to judge us on what we might be rather than on our political ideas. In an answer to Pivert, Trotsky wrote: "Patience and loyalty toward the opposition were among the most important traits of Lenin's leadership." And, "From the standpoint of Bolshevik ideas on party democracy. I would consider it an outright scandal to accuse an opponent, who happened to be in the minority, of employing 'factional' methods, instead of engaging in discussion with him over the gist of the question." (our emphasis)

In regard to your last question, if and when a call for the formation of a tendency is issued, the tendency's platform might be around one single document ("For a Proletarian Orientation") or around several documents -- this is part and parcel of "letting the discussion decide."

We hope we have answered your questions. We would appreciate a quick response to our original question since we would like to write to the branches as soon as possible.

If you have published your letter of 5-3-71, we would like you to publish this reply.

Comradely,

s/Barbara Gregorich  
Bill Massey  
John McCann  
Phil Passen

COPY

COPY

COPY

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
May 11, 1971

CLEVELAND

Barbara Gregorich

Dear Comrade Gregorich,

This is in response to your letter of May 7, 1971.

You misunderstood the first sentence of my letter of May 3, 1971. What was unusual about your request of April 26, 1971, was not the fact that you sought information on party procedure but your desire to send to the branches representatives to speak for the resolution "For a Proletarian Orientation."

While there is no general rule governing such requests it has been our experience that only when tendencies or factions are engaged in organized political struggle around an alternative line or platform that the request to send speakers to party branches is made.

You will recall in earlier correspondence prior to the drafting of "For a Proletarian Orientation," I pointed out that "the bare statement of the subject upon which you plan to write does not constitute a proper basis for the formation of an 'ideological tendency.'" Later when you raised the question of a Convention vote on your document I wrote you "It might be useful to the pre-convention discussion for you to indicate at the beginning of your document your intention, if I understand your letter correctly, to submit this document as a line resolution to the party." You did not respond to this.

Before informing the branches of your desire to send representatives of your grouping to their meetings, it was important that the questions I raised in my letter of May 3, 1971, be clarified. The branches should know as clearly as possible to what end and on what basis you wish to present this counter-resolution to them. This is for clarity to which the membership as a whole is entitled, and to maximize concentration on political issues by avoiding organizational confusion and minimizing cause for grievances.

The constitution requires only that the national office print and circulate to the membership all written contributions to the pre-convention discussion. However, in order to facilitate the fullest opportunity for you to present your views to the party, and for the party to have the fullest political discussion, we are sending the enclosed letter to the branches. Please note the procedures outlined in it.

Comradely,

s/Jack Barnes

Organization Secretary

cc: Massey -- Oakland-Berkeley, McCann -- Boston, Passen -- Cleveland  
enc.

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
May 11, 1971

TO ALL BRANCHES

Dear Comrades,

The authors of "For a Proletarian Orientation" have informed the national office that they consider that document a resolution containing an alternative political line to the National Committee political resolution. They would like to present an argument in favor of their counter-resolution to any branch that would like to hear it.

If a branch wants to arrange for such a presentation they should write the national office. We will inform Comrade Gregorich of this request and she will communicate to the organizer the time of arrival of the representative.

The form, timing, and time limitations of the presentation is up to the branch. It can be a presentation to the branch by the representative of the Gregorich grouping or be in the form of a political debate.

All expenses for such a trip are to be paid by the Gregorich grouping, not the branch.

Comradely,

 *Jack Barnes*  
NB

Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

April 15, 1971

Dear Comrade Barnes,

At last week's Branch meeting, Comrade Wulp gave a summary of your report to the Plenum. Since there was considerable discussion and the hour was quite late, I did not conclude my remarks. I decided that since Plenum reports were to continue the following week, I could finish my remarks then. This procedure had already been followed for the International report given at a previous meeting.

When I informed Comrade Wulp of my intentions before this week's report, he informed me that it was out of order and that I would have to put a specific motion before the Branch requesting a re-opening of the discussion on the political report. I might point out here that there was never a formal closing of discussion at the previous meeting. Not even a motion to accept or approve. The majority voted against my motion, apparently on Comrade Wulp's advice that pre-convention discussion would be opening soon and I could say what I wanted then.

It didn't seem to matter to him that I felt it was important to say what I had to say before pre-convention. Neither did it seem to matter that this was 180° departure from previous procedure. I think it should be pointed out that the discussion which had taken place at past meetings, while there were disagreements, was calm and deliberate. The discussion was not heated and in no way contributed to any disharmony in the Branch. Quite the contrary, I think the recommendation of the Branch leadership and the decision on the part of a majority to follow it, has done more harm than any serious thoughtful discussion could.

Last winter, on the advice of Comrades Wulp and Camejo, a similar mistake was made by the Branch. These two comrades said that the Plenum reports were non-discussable. We were told only questions of information could be asked. That decision was reversed by the NO. I think this decision should be also. What I wanted to say at the Branch meeting becomes insignificant at this point. The issue now, which is vastly more important, is whether or not discussion can be arbitrarily cut off.

The "discussion" of Plenum reports which the NO ruled permissible last winter becomes a joke if it must be confined to the few minutes between the business meeting and adjournment.

I hope I will hear from you before next Tuesday's meeting.

Comradely,

s/John McCann

cc to Farrell Dobbs

COPY

COPY

COPY

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014

April 19, 1971

BOSTON  
Dave Wulp

Dear Comrade Wulp,

Enclosed is a copy of a letter we received today from John McCann. We have not yet received the minutes of the branch meetings to which he refers. We would like your comments on the facts of the matters Comrade McCann raises.

Comradely,  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: Peter Camejo  
Larry Trainor



COPY

COPY

COPY

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014

April 19, 1971

BOSTON  
John McCann

Dear Comrade McCann,

This is to acknowledge receipt today of your letter dated April 15, 1971.

I have sent a copy of your letter to the Boston branch organizer and have requested from him the minutes of the meeting you describe and his comments on the facts of the matters you raise.

Comradely,  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: Peter Camejo  
Larry Trainor

COPY

COPY

COPY

295 Huntington Ave.  
Boston, Mass. 02115  
April 28, 1971

NEW YORK

Jack Barnes

Dear Comrade Barnes,

I am sorry for the brief delay in answering your informational request. I was asked to take and accepted an assignment in Washington D.C. in preparation for April 24. As a result, I never received your letter until April 27, when I returned.

By now you will have received the minutes of the April 13, and probably the April 20, branch meetings. In looking at my copy of the April 13, minutes, I find there was no mention of the motion which Comrade McCann presented that he be allowed to speak to "amplify" his remarks on the political report (which had been given on April 6) -- simply the notation that during the educational portion of the meeting, the anti-war plenum report was given. On April 20, five days after Comrade McCann sent his letter to you, but before I had any knowledge of it, those minutes were read to the branch, with Comrade McCann in attendance, and they were accepted as read.

Since there is no information in the minutes, let me indicate what happened. On April 6, I presented an outline report to the branch of the political report and discussion which had taken place at the plenum. After my presentation, several comrades asked questions or expressed their views on the report including Comrade McCann. In Boston, unless otherwise stipulated, we have an automatic five minute limit on all discussion. This rule was in force for the discussion. Of course, comrades can always ask for extensions, and almost without exception they are granted. Comrade McCann was the second speaker after the conclusion of the report. He did not ask for an extension in order to "conclude" his remarks. The hour was not late. The discussion went on for a good forty minutes after the conclusion of Comrade McCann's remarks.

On April 13, Comrade McCann came to me just as the branch meeting was beginning. He said he had done some research during the week and had some quotations to back up and "amplify" his remarks of the preceding week. Furthermore, he felt that he should speak before the anti-war report was given. I reminded him that, as I had told the branch the week before, the anti-war report was conjunctural -- aimed totally at preparing the party for April 24 -- and that I felt it was necessary for the branch to have the information it contained in order to put into context the actions we had been taking locally in the anti-war movement up to this point. I also reminded him that the pre-convention discussion was scheduled to begin officially in less than three weeks and that he would have

ample time to present his views to the branch at that time. He was told that, for those reasons, the agenda for the educational section of the branch meeting would begin with the anti-war report and that it would not include the opportunity for him to "amplify" his remarks, but that he could present a motion to the branch that he be allowed to speak just before the presentation of the antiwar report. At that time Comrade McCann did present such a motion, and the branch rejected it.

In his letter, Comrade McCann refers to a Boston branch decision which was "reversed by the N.O." Later, he mentions, "The discussion of the plenum reports which the N.O. ruled permissible last winter." Again he is factually inaccurate. Neither the P.C. nor any other national body reversed any Boston branch decision. There was also no ruling by any national body of the party regarding post plenum report discussion.

What Comrade McCann may have been referring to was a discussion in the Boston branch regarding post plenum report "discussion". A motion passed by the Boston branch at the time of the 1970 plenum reports emphasized the informational nature of the plenum reports leaving the impression that only questions could be asked during the discussion period following the report. The next week, the branch passed a second motion clarifying the intent of the first by stating that although line discussion is inappropriate after plenum reports, comrades are free to make any comment they wish as well as to ask questions during the discussion period.

As to the question raised in Comrade McCann's letter of closing plenum reports by "accepting or approving" them, the branch did and should have done neither of those two things because these are reports of the deliberations and decisions of a higher body than the branch and are, when reported to the branch, basically informational in nature. To say the branch accepts or approves a plenum report implies that it can reject or disapprove such a report as well. This would, of course, reduce our party to a federation of branches and cut across our Leninist conception of a centralized vanguard party. After plenum reports are given, comrades are free to ask questions and make comments, but it is clear that these reports cannot be used as a pretext for initiating a line discussion on political differences. It is unfortunate and ironic that this incident has taken place so close to the beginning of the pre-convention discussion which is the place to raise political differences.

Comradely,  
s/Dave Wulp, Boston

cc: P. Camejo  
L. Trainor

COPY

COPY

COPY

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
May 7, 1971

BOSTON  
John McCann

Dear Comrade McCann,

There is nothing in your letter of April 15, Dave Wulp's letter of April 28, or the Boston branch minutes to indicate that the Boston branch was out of order in rejecting the motion you described making at its April 13 meeting.

It is not our practice to restrict in any way the critical character of a comrades remarks during a branch discussion of a report of a National Committee plenum. But neither is it incumbent on a branch to organize extensive discussion under any given report on the plenum's decisions, especially when the branch pre-convention discussion which will fully air the disputed political questions is so near.

I am confident there will be a full and democratic pre-convention discussion in the Boston branch. I am equally confident the branch leadership will organize the discussion in such a way that you will have ample opportunity to present fully your views on the disputed political questions before the party.

Comradely,

s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: P. Camejo  
L. Trainor  
D. Wulp

enc: copy of Dave Wulp letter of April 28, 1971.

COPY

COPY

COPY

April 26, 1971

Jack Barnes, Organizational Secretary  
Socialist Workers Party  
14 Charles Lane  
New York, New York 10014

Dear Comrade Barnes:

Since the pre-convention discussion period for the 1971 SWP convention will be opening soon we, as at-large members of the SWP, are requesting permission from the P.C. to conduct pre-convention discussion among ourselves and to be represented by one delegate at the coming convention.

We had planned on functioning in the Milwaukee branch but since the perspective for the branch has been delayed we are, therefore, requesting the above alternative. All of us will be transferring out of Madison and Milwaukee, as suggested by Joel Britton, before the end of the summer but probably not until after Oberlin.

We recognize that there probably is no precedent for our request, with the possible exception of some of the Maritime comrades on board ships during the 1945-1946 period, hence we are not sure that our request is a correct procedure but would nonetheless appreciate having the request presented for consideration by the P.C.

Comradely yours,  
s/John Barzman  
Martha Quinn  
Patrick Quinn  
John Van Hying  
Jim Wysocki  
SWP At-largers  
Madison/Milwaukee

COPY

COPY

COPY

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014

May 1, 1971

John Barzman  
Martha Quinn  
Patrick Quinn  
John Van Hyning  
Jim Wysocki

Dear Comrades,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of April 26, 1971 which you request be presented to the Political Committee. I will place it on the agenda of the next Political Committee meeting.

Comradely,  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

COPY

COPY

COPY

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014

May 11, 1971

John Barzman  
Martha Quinn  
Patrick Quinn  
John Van Hyning  
Jim Wysocki

Dear Comrades,

A national convention of the Socialist Workers Party is the highest governing body of the Party and its decisions are binding upon the entire membership. The convention is delegated from the branches which are the basic units of the party. The pre-convention discussion bulletin is open to all members, including at-large members. All party members in good standing may attend the convention as visitors.

We do not understand the analogy between yourselves and comrades working in the maritime industry. All comrades working in the maritime industry are members of a branch of the party. There is a provision in the convention call for absentee balloting by branch members who because of occupational necessity are absent from the branch meeting at which voting on political resolutions and the election of delegates is held.

Since all of you comrades were admitted to the party prior to the date of the convention call, April 19, 1971, you would have the right to vote on the political resolution before the party, and vote and stand for delegate, in any branch you transfer to prior to the convention. As you know from your discussions with Comrade Britton we urge each of you to transfer to a branch to take advantage of the summer school and the organized pre-convention discussion.

If any of you are unable to do this it would be valuable to arrange to attend as an observer as much as possible of the pre-convention discussion of the Chicago branch, which is the branch nearest Madison. I am sending a copy of this correspondence to the Chicago organizer, Pearl Chertov. If you would drop her a note I am sure she would send you a copy of the Chicago branch pre-convention discussion schedule.

Comradely,

s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary  
for the Political Committee

cc: Chicago Branch Organizer -- Pearl Chertov