

POLITICAL BUREAU

Number 3

June 4, 1973

Present: Barnes, Britton, Hansen, Jones, Morrison, Rose, Stone

Visitors: Horowitz, Scott, Seigle, Waters

Chair: Hansen

Agenda: 1. Massey Correspondence
2. Pittsburgh
3. Membership
4. Representative to Youth Plenum

1. MASSEY CORRESPONDENCE

Barnes reported (see attached correspondence from Massey and Chertov).

Discussion

Agreed to draft answer for the Discussion Bulletin to Massey correspondence setting straight the record concerning the world movement and reaffirming the party's organizational principles and practices.

Motion: To send the proposed letter to all branches (see attached).

Carried.

2. PITTSBURGH

Stone reported.

It has become clear that steps can be taken immediately to investigate the possibilities for building a branch in Pittsburgh. Fred S. is available to move to Pittsburgh in the coming week and other comrades will be able to go there soon. A report of Comrade Lovell's recent trip to Pittsburgh confirms the importance of taking advantage of the openings there.

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Jones reported on the recommendation of the Minneapolis branch to readmit G.B. into membership in the party and the recommendation of the Los Angeles branch to readmit A.R. into membership in the party.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Minneapolis branch to readmit G.B. into membership in the party.

Carried.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Los Angeles branch to readmit A.R. into membership in the party.

Carried.

4. REPRESENTATIVE TO YOUTH PLENUM

Jones reported.

Discussion

Motion: To designate Morrison as representative to the youth plenum.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

AN OPEN LETTER OF PROTEST

by Bill Massey (Internationalist Tendency), Chicago Branch

Chicago, Ill.
May 20, 1973

The Political Committee
The Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, New York 10014

Dear Comrades,

This letter and one appendix, Comrade Barry Sheppard's letter to Comrade Tom Kissner dated April 21, 1973, are presented for publication in both the SWP Discussion Bulletin and the International Discussion Bulletin.

The purpose of this letter is to raise a protest concerning (1) the failure of the Socialist Workers Party to schedule a special convention dedicated to the International Questions (see Appendix) and (2) the all-time high apportionment for delegates to the SWP convention.

1) Upon the request of the International Minority Tendency the United Secretariat voted to postpone the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International for the third time, until December 1973. This was done in order to allow for the broadest, most democratic discussion of the issues currently in dispute in the world movement. This would also ensure that the world congress and the International leadership it elects have the utmost confidence from the ranks of the movement as a whole. It is only within this framework of a fully democratic and fraternal discussion, traditional to the world movement, that the Fourth International can benefit from the current tendency struggle and go forward with the utmost unity in action to build our movement in the coming period. In this regard the United Secretariat as a whole is to be commended in reaching this decision.

With the above in mind, it is with the gravest concern and disappointment that we view the failure of the Socialist Workers Party leadership in not scheduling a separate convention late this year to take up the International discussion and decisions and elect the fraternal observers who will attend the world congress. First of all, the regularly scheduled convention of the Socialist Workers Party is to be held in the earliest part of August, four months prior to the world congress. That is four months prior to the close of the International discussion period. We have already pointed out elsewhere, that the SWP leadership delayed the opening of the International discussion in this party until well after it was opened up in the sections of the Fourth International. It is also a fact that the leadership of the SWP and the International Minority were able to fraternally participate in the discussions in other sections and sympathizing groups prior to opening up the discussions in the SWP. It is also true that the leadership of the SWP has been conducting a systematic and concerted one-sided polemic against the positions of the Majority of the Fourth International for well over a year. This has taken place thru the vehicles of "plenum reports," "educationals on the history of the Fourth International" and "educationals on the differences in the IMG" and other assorted topics. The 1972 Socialist Activists and Educational Conference was a convention-type gathering, without the benefit of delegates or

majority-minority points of view, just the view of the SWP leadership which conducted a series of prepared "educationals" attacking every position of the leadership of the International. Those comrades who disagreed had no way of intervening or getting time to refute the positions of what now constitutes the views of the International Minority Tendency. The participation of Comrades Barnes and Camejo in this procedure confirms the fact that this whole series of planned one-sided discussions were the worked out policy of the SWP leadership in lining up this party before the discussions were even opened to the ranks to participate. Finally, our convention discussion period was scheduled to open on May 7, yet in most of the branches of the party it was not opened until 10 days, or more, later. For instance in Chicago it opened on May 20. In Houston it has been delayed to allow for a routine task and perspectives report; these examples are typical. Thereby the amount of discussion open to the ranks is even further limited. (Requests to the national leadership, to ask their help in having the branches comply with the convention call opening discussion on May 7 and not May 20, are fruitless as I found out from calling Comrade Barnes. We are told that the branches may decide themselves when to open discussion. Perhaps we should be grateful that discussions are opened at all, but even a charade must have a certain cover to be a success.) The rationale for delaying the opening of discussion in most areas is to allow for the giving of plenum reports. However, when you understand that these "Plenum Reports" are for the most part totally politically indistinguishable from the Political Reports of the International Minority you realize that this viewpoint is being given time to make two reports on its positions in every branch in the party. (The fact that the plenum received unanimous support from the National Committee is not surprising since for the past ten years [10 years] our National Committee has been unanimous on every report, that is major political report, and secondly since the Proletarian Orientation Minority which constituted over 10 percent of the party at the last convention was denied any place on the National Committee, because the Majority of the SWP did not consider it a "serious" minority. Left to the considerations of what the SWP leadership considers serious minorities I could safely predict 50 more years of unanimity on the National Committee.)

With this information in mind the decision not to call a special convention late in the year to take up the International Questions is a travesty. It is totally undemocratic and a breach of not only the rights of the Minority within the SWP but a breach of a correct fraternal attitude toward the Majority of the International as well as Trotskyists throughout the entire world. It does not take much insight to observe that fraternal observers elected to attend the world congress, midway in the International discussion period, at the beginning of August, will not necessarily reflect the thinking of the ranks or the relationship of forces within the party at the time of the world congress. Further to halt the discussion in this party while it goes on in the International is a violation of democratic norms of a "Leninist-Trotskyist" movement.

2) The Convention Call of the Socialist Workers Party states:

"1. Representation from the branches shall be as follows: One delegate for the first fifteen members or less, and one additional delegate for each 15 additional members or major fraction

thereof (8 or more constituting a major fraction)."

Further the Call states:

"In case of political differences defined by conflicting resolutions, the election of delegates in the branches is to be on the basis of the vote on resolution or resolutions voted on at the meeting at which the delegates are elected.

"Members voting for a given resolution are entitled to designate the delegate or delegates to which they are entitled on the basis of proportional representation laid down in this call, the designations to be ratified by the branch. Abstentions in no case count as votes.

"1. If a branch is entitled to one delegate, the delegate goes to the majority of those present and voting at the time of the election.

"2. If two delegates, a minority with 40 percent gets one.

"3. If three delegates a minority with $33\frac{1}{3}$ percent gets one.

"4. If four delegates, a minority with 25 percent gets one delegate, but a minority with 40 percent is entitled to two delegates.

"5. If five delegates, a minority with 20 percent gets one.

"6. If six delegates, a minority with $16\frac{2}{3}$ percent gets one delegate, a minority with $33\frac{1}{3}$ percent two delegates but a minority with 40 percent gets one-half the delegates.

"In general, if a branch is entitled to n delegates then a minority is entitled to x delegates if it receives at least x/n of the votes, with the one exception that if n is even, a minority receiving at least 40 percent of the vote is entitled to half of the delegates."

The ratio of 15 votes per 1 delegate is more than double the ratio used at the 1971 convention, that is seven votes per delegate. The growth of the party in that same period of time is in no way comparable. The actual size of the party at that time was (and we use the various figures that we are given at different times) probably 900- (in 1971 the figure of 1000 was the more common one used to point out the smallness of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, now we are told that it was 800 in order to emphasize the growth of the party since 1971). Whatever the case, the size of the party today is given as 1,200 (perhaps the demand to open the books would not be out of place in this regard). The growth reflected in these figures in no way justifies the jump from 7 to 1 up to 15 to 1 unless it is understood as a means of keeping a Minority within the SWP from being able to put forth its proposals in a meaningful manner.

This figure is the highest apportionment per delegate in the history of the party and that includes periods of the party history when the numerical strength was greater than at the present time.

It also must be pointed out that this is the highest delegate ratio of any Trotskyist group in the world including the Ligue Communiste which is more than twice the size of the SWP.

The ratio per delegate in 1969 was five per delegate, the

ratio in 1971 was seven per delegate, the ratio in 1973 is fifteen per delegate. To justify this on the basis that it will allow for a more democratic discussion can only be understood as an example of Orwellian logic. This ratio cannot be justified on the basis of administrative expediency particularly when it's main accomplishment will be to reduce the participation in the convention of minorities (including a minority which politically supports the positions of the International Majority). The leadership is aware that our particular Minority is spread throughout the party and that this ratio of 15 per 1 is tantamount to gerrymandering us out of participation in what is the highest body of the party. The use of a mechanical majority to infringe on the political participation and clash of ideas in this body is a disgraceful action and an extremely dangerous precedent that should send alarms throughout the ranks. If this is not changed it will in effect invalidate the decisions of the convention and make it just another Socialist Activists and Educational Conference 1 week with only one side being presented.

To avert this dangerous situation which is already having its effects in taking away from the leadership of the party the respect that it is necessary that it command, and in order to eliminate the cynicism that these decisions cause among all the ranks of the party we concretely propose:

1. That an additional convention to deal strictly with the International Questions and decisions be held in November of this year. (The Thanksgiving weekend would prove feasible even for worker comrades as well as students and party functionaries.)
2. That written and oral discussion remain open until the time of this convention.
3. Reduce the ratio per delegate from the provocative fifteen to one to a more reasonable ratio of 5 to 1 and/or allow Minorities to elect their delegates on a basis of national strength of the Tendency thereby eliminating a certain gerrymandering of a Minority. (This would allow a Minority whose actual strength is 10 percent of the party to have 10 percent of the delegates at the convention.)

In regard to the world congress the International Minority Tendency made the following point:

"A preferable course would be to postpone the congress until the nature of the crisis we face has been more clearly defined, the issues at the bottom of the dispute have been fully clarified, the documents have been published, translated and disseminated, and the ranks have had full opportunity to discuss them and make their own contributions." (IIDB Vol. X No. 3, p.4.)

Comrade Juan speaking for the International Minority Tendency at the December IEC meeting had this to say after making the point that administrative and technical considerations must take second place to the political priority of a fully democratic world congress:

"The decision, of course is up to the comrades of the majority. I hope they will watch the matter carefully and decide that it is worth providing more time to help counter the possibilities of a split and to help ensure that the coming congress will be a democratic one and thus one with authority in the eyes of the world movement." (IIDB Vol. X No. 6, p. 25.)

A democratic world congress cannot take place if the discussions in the sections of cothinkers are abruptly cut short. A representative world congress cannot take place if minorities within the sections of cothinkers are gerrymandered out of adequate and fair representation. An authoritative world congress cannot take place if the congresses or conventions of the leading sections of cothinkers lack authority. "Splits" cannot be prevented by words alone or advice given for export or factional gain, while the opposite method is practiced within the section of cothinkers where one is the majority rather than the minority.

For our part there will be no split -- however the actions of the leadership of the party, unless reversed, warn us that they are on a split course -- and that these latest acts plus a whole series of others are meant to provoke the minority in this party to split or be driven out of the party under the weight of these administrative type methods, which were not learned in the school of Leninism or Trotskyism.

On the nature of the allegations that we have made here, I would be quite willing, if the party thinks it necessary to give evidence to their factuality before a Control Commission made up of International cothinkers -- if the SWP leadership feels this is necessary.

Comradely,
s/Bill Massey
National Co-Ordinator
Internationalist Tendency

copy to: International Majority Tendency
United Secretariat

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
April 21, 1973

PORTLAND

Tom Kissner

Dear Comrade Kissner,

This is in reply to the questions you raised concerning party procedure regarding discussion of matters before the world movement.

Concerning the discussion on the international plane, that is, the discussion in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin, this is controlled by the United Secretariat. The majority of the United Secretariat has decided that contributions on international questions from tendencies formed around support to documents before the movement as a whole, within sections or sympathizing groups have to be approved for printing by the Political Committee of the section or sympathizing groups, with the right of appeal to the United Secretariat.

Each section or sympathizing group, in addition to the discussion in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin, has its own discussions on the international questions, which are regulated by each section or sympathizing group. Many sections (most of the European sections), hold a special convention devoted to the international questions, and may restrict their discussion on these questions to the preconvention discussion period for that special convention. Our procedure is different. The SWP almost always includes discussion of international questions as part of its regular preconvention discussion, and usually the first points on the convention agenda are devoted to these questions. This has been the case for the past two conventions, for example, where reports were made on the issues in dispute in the International, and votes taken that set the line which the leadership of the SWP has followed in the course of the international discussion.

This summer the SWP will hold a convention. As usual, all points before the International are up for discussion and vote at our convention. Every member of the SWP has the right to participate in this discussion, to form tendencies or factions based on support to the line of specific documents, and to vote for the line of whatever documents they support. Delegates are elected on a proportional basis where divisions exist, and the convention delegates make the final decision at the convention. (You refer to a "tendency formed for the purpose of contributing to the international discussion." I would like to point out that tendencies are only recognized if they are formed around support to the general line of written documents placed before the membership as a whole.)

Because of the importance of the international questions facing the SWP and the International, the National Committee decided to open the literary discussion on these questions prior to the opening of the regular preconvention discussion. This has already opened, and a number of contributions to it have already been printed. Included in these is a declaration of tendency by Comrades Massey, Smith and Shaffer. The oral discussion in the branches on

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these and all other questions before the party will open early in May, and each branch will be responsible for organizing the oral discussion on the various points before the party.

Comradely,

s/ Barry Sheppard

cc: John Studer

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2602 North Burling
Chicago, Illinois 60614
May 22, 1973

Comrade Jack Barnes, Nat'l. Secretary
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, New York 10014

Dear Comrade Barnes,

I write to you to raise certain problems that you should be aware of concerning the present tendency struggle in the Party.

1) Our Tendency which will be supporting the positions of the International Majority Tendency, will have a Natl. Coordinator--myself. I will in the course of the preconvention period have to travel extensively and therefore I wish to inform you of this fact. Realizing that this is not the normal procedure I assume you would agree that the pre-convention period (and in addition pre Congress periods) are not the "normal" times and therefore we can not adopt a routine attitude toward them. I will of course allow the Branch Organizer here to know my schedules.

2) Finances--during the course of the tendency struggle the question of funds (and of course expenses) becomes a concrete reality. Travel to other branches to give reports, exchanges of views among comrades who share basic political agreement prior to the submission of a document (s) to the preconvention discussion, national coordination of the tendency struggle, etc. co-thinker tendency responsibilities etc. all of these cost money. During the course of the preconvention period members of our tendency will, unless an alternative approach is presented have to take on these political responsibilities, and other obligations, such as their current sustainers, will temporarily suffer. To avoid this I would propose for your consideration that the SWP adopt the methods of the Ligue Communiste--that is that the National Office of the Party bear the expenses incurred by both the majority tendency and the minorities in getting all the points of view in dispute to the Party as a whole. This would not only mean the documented or written material, an obligation that our Party has traditionally fulfilled, but the oral presentations to each of the branches. In this regard it would also be my proposal that the Party as a whole take on the joint expenses of the International Majority and Minority Tendencies as they affect the participation of our Party comrades in relation to these Tendencies (as co-thinkers of course since as you know the reactionary Voorhis Act forbids our full participation in international bodies). To be specific meeting such as Santiago or meeting in Brussels cost funds but are necessary in working out the positions and actions of the Tendencies. Travel expenses for bringing comrades from other areas to present either of the Tendency positions to the Party here in the course of the preconvention or pre Congress discussion, should be borne by the Party as a whole. If this is not done, then an alternative solution is necessary and the sustainer base of the Party cannot go unaffected since we are not alchemists and possess only limited resources. I raise this problem not for public debate at this time but for consultation on your part--the problems are already real.

3) In the Convention Call the agenda refers to "World Movement Reports" and "Political Reports" as well as to a "World Political Situation Report" and a "Political Resolution." As the coordinator of a Minority in the SWP and supporter of the International Majority it is certain that the Party leadership represented by yourself do not share our conjunctural analysis at least and this will be reflected not only in the "World Political Situation Report" and the "Political Resolution" but in the "World Movement Reports" and the "Political Reports" as well I assume in the Organization Reports and Youth Report. Therefore in order to prepare the presentations of our ideas to the convention and in order to adjust this presentation to the form of the convention, we must have further clarity on what the leadership plans. The agenda in the Call is too ambiguous. We cannot under the present circumstances adequately prepare our presentations to the convention--please clarify.

I do not submit this letter for publication at this time, if you wish to do so I would like to be consulted prior to your doing so--in order to make gramatical (editing changes). Please reply at the earliest possible date. By the way should you need it for anything my phone is 312-871-3277 (for instance if you should be in Chicago and need someone to assist you in killing off a fifth of Daniels).

Comradely,

s/ Bill Massey

cc: L.M.T.
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Chicago, Illinois
May 30, 1973

Dear Comrade Jones:

As you may have noted, the Chicago branch's financial situation has been improving steadily. Comrades are really interested in the progress that the branch is making. Furthermore, the response to the sustainer drive, which began May 9, 1973, was excellent. Comrades thought it out, and no one pledged sustainer ~~raises~~ that won't be met.

One problem that the Chicago branch has to contend with is the organized drive on the part of the Massey Tendency to reduce their individual sustainers to the branch. The first formal sign that we had of a difference in our branch regarding membership financial responsibilities and party functioning was a bit prior to the May 9 report to the branch kicking off the sustainer drive report, when Don Smith told me that Alain Krivine had said that the Socialist Workers Party had stopped all material support to the work of our cothinkers four months ago. This remark did not take me by surprise since several comrades had told me about this same statement being spread in the corridors.

At the May 9 branch meeting under the agenda point on finances, Diana T., the branch financial director, motivated the branch sustainer drive. Although the report was positive, Diana stated that some comrades had lowered their sustainers.

During the discussion, Comrade Bill Massey stated that comrades would be more inclined to raise their sustainers if the Socialist Workers Party would meet its international financial responsibilities...that the Socialist Workers Party had stopped material support to its responsibilities as part of the world movement four months ago.

On May 16 under the agenda point "Minutes," a motion was made to delete the reference to those who lowered their sustainers. The motion was defeated overwhelmingly.

Again, on May 23, under the agenda point on finances, a discussion ensued after a great progress report on the sustainer drive. During this discussion, Don Smith read excerpts from a Tendency letter to Jack Barnes. It described the exceptional circumstances that they find themselves in which prohibits them from taking any other approach to party finances. The excerpt referred to the expenses that the Tendency has for traveling around the country, and other expenses that have to be met.

The only action the Executive Committee has taken so far is to instruct the financial director to try to get a reason from comrades lowering their sustainers. (That is the normal procedure that is necessary in order to finance the building of a branch.) Therese gave the excuse that she had bills to pay to the dentist, etc. She said she has to get them paid off.

Don Smith in response to the question of why his sustainer was being lowered, said, "I need it for tendency work. The SWP ~~doesn't~~ provide money for the Tendency to support anyone on full

time. We want to send speakers around."

Polly's response was, "I can't afford it even though there's no change in my income. When the SWP starts giving material support to the world movement I'll raise it."

Ed Hoffman, again in response to Diana T., the financial director, said, "When the SWP starts its agreed on material support to the world movement again I'll consider raising it back to where it was."

The latest chart which will be sent out next week shows that they are withholding \$38.50 to the branch and that their sustainers are considerably below the norm.

Comradely,

s/ Pearl Chertov
SWP Branch Organizer

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
June 4, 1973

CHICAGO

Bill Massey

Dear Comrade Massey,

Your letter of May 22, 1973, to Comrade Barnes indicated, among other things, your tendency's desire to "travel to other branches to give reports" in favor of your counterline.

The constitution requires only that the national office print and circulate to the membership all written contributions to the preconvention 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,

Lew Jones
for the Political Bureau

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

June 4, 1973

TO ALL BRANCHES

Dear Comrades,

The supporters of the "Declaration of Internationalist Tendency" (Discussion Bulletin Vol. 31, No. 9) have informed the national office that they consider they are in "basic agreement with the general line of the December 3, 1972, Statement of the 19 IEC Members, and addendum; the Draft Thesis 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe' adopted by the IEC; and the further elaboration and clarification of this line contained in the document 'In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International'" (see IIDB Vol. IX, No. 5 and IIDB Vol. X, No. 4), and "will submit a counter-resolution on the international questions in opposition to the line of the present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party, as well as a political resolution extending the method of the Draft Thesis 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe' to the United States."

They would like to present an argument in favor of their counterline 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 Massey, the National Co-Ordinator of the "Internationalist Tendency," of this request and he will communicate to the organizer the time of arrival of the representative.

The form, timing, and time limitations of the presentation are up to the branch. It can be a presentation to the branch by the representative of the "Internationalist Tendency" or be in the form of a political debate.

All expenses for such a trip are to be paid by the "Internationalist Tendency," not the branch.

Comradely,



Lew Jones
for the Political Bureau