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May 13, 1971

NATIONAL OFFICE

Dear Joel,

Things are going pretty well here. We just had a good branch T & P and morale is very high. Five people joined at the meeting before last (bringing us up to 42) and a few more are ready to join. We expanded the size of the new E.C. slightly to make sure there would be some comrades left here in the Fall who had been on an E.C. and to include the layer which will be part of the next primary leadership team.

One question came up around our upcoming E.C. elections that comrades want clarified by the N.O. The out-going E.C. recommended that the branch elect 9 people to the new E.C. and that we ask the YSA to select a rep to sit on the branch E.C. for purpose of coordination (this could be one of the 9 elected by the branch or someone else). This has been the procedure here for the past few years, so that our collaboration with the YSA, which covers so many areas of branch work, can be consciously organized in such a way that even the newest YSAer has a clear picture of the relationship between the organizations at this time. We changed from a tactic of assigning the party comrade whom the YSA selected as its organizer to be "youth director" and coopting to the branch E.C. if the person was not on it already because of the nature of the relationship between the SWP and YSA as it has developed so far. We felt it important for the development of the YSA as an independent Trotskyist youth organization in which party members collaborate with non-party members on a comradely basis, rather than functioning as a fraction, that the form we use for coordinating our work with the YSA reflect this fraternal attitude, not an interventionist one.

A comrade objected to this procedure in the T & P discussion, moving that the branch elect the whole E.C. and assign the YSA rep. She finally withdrew that in favor of moving to request advice on the question from the N.O. before next Tuesday's meeting when the election occurs. Her objections were based on two arguments: That the YSA might select a non-party member as its rep, making the E.C. decisions not formally those of a body democratically elected by the branch, and that since the party is autonomous, no other organization can decide its policies or the make-up of its committees.

I had some worries along these lines when we originally changed our procedure, since problems could arise if the form we proposed were applied when the relationship between the organizations is different. I think the real question is whether the tactic we proposed is undemocratic or threatens the autonomy of the party in the current situation.

Please give this problem some thought and let us know if the procedure we proposed is consistent with our current organizational norms. Whatever form we adopt in this case, the outcome will probably see the same people on the E.C. but we want to do it correctly. I'll call you Tues. if we haven't heard from you on this.

Comradely,

s/Fred Stanton

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

May 17, 1971

PHILADELPHIA
Fred Stanton

Dear Fred,

The procedure that the out-going Philadelphia executive committee recommended for the upcoming E.C. elections is the one we normally use in branches. That is, leaving a slot open for the YSA itself to elect a representative. This recognizes the independent existence of the YSA and it also recognizes the special relationship that the SWP has to the YSA. It is more than the relationship that we have with other organizations whom we have fraternal collaboration with. It is a special and unique relationship between the revolutionary party and the revolutionary youth organization. We, of course, do not ask other organizations that we have working relationships with, or fraternal relationships with, to elect a representative to our executive committee or to our leading bodies.

The worst procedure would be for the branch, or some subsection of the branch (like a fraction of the party members in the YSA), to elect or appoint this person to the party executive committee. Then it ceases being a representative of the YSA as such, including its non-party members, and becomes instead the appointee of a section or subsection of the party itself. Your reasoning on this is totally correct because of the relationships we have with the YSA in this period.

The only question of democracy involved is that the branch democratically decide to do this.

The YSA representative could possibly be a non-party YSA comrade and could cast the decisive vote in a disputed question in the branch executive committee. In practice, this is a little bit far-fetched at this time since it's hard to imagine the YSA appointing a non-party person as the representative. Once a comrade in a major YSA local has become a central leader they're almost always in the party.

I should point out that we have a similar procedure on the Political Committee. That is, the Political Committee is elected by the plenum with a slot open for the YSA representative with voice and vote. This person is elected by the YSA NEC. There are no restrictions that it be a party person.

The important thing is that the YSA representative to party bodies be a genuine YSA representative, and not a representative of a party fraction or the party organization.

I hope this clarifies the questions you raised. If there's anything further, please drop me a line on it.

Comradely,

s/Jack Barnes
Organization Secretary