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Letter from Steve Chase

Cambridge, Mass.
July 16, 1969

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
873 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10003

Dear Comrades,

I would like to clarify the points raised in Comrade Gloria Goodman's letter of June 18, and answer the questions in Comrade Barnes' letter of June 25.

There exists no "fraction" in the accepted sense of the word of party members in the Boston YSA. That is, the party-youth comrades do not work under the direct control and discipline of the branch in their day to day work in the youth.

However, the party comrades in the youth do meet occasionally to discuss various questions. These include the election of a youth representative to the branch executive committee, the discussion of recruitment to the party from the youth, and discussion of development of new youth leadership. These meetings occur at most two or three times a year.

A youth representative, usually the YSA organizer, is elected to the branch executive committee to insure organizational co-ordination between the branch and the YSA. The YSA organizers in the past few years have generally been relatively new to the party and it is unlikely that they would have been elected from the floor. This method of functioning is made even more necessary by the fact that the YSA holds elections at least three times a year and the branch usually but once.

The party youth also discuss at these meetings those youth comrades who have expressed interest in joining the party and those who they feel should be asked to join the party. They then make recommendations to the executive committee and to the branch.

We attempt, through discussion of what fields of work are most important, to limit the proportion of party members on the YSA exec. This is in reaction to very real problems in developing youth leadership that is truly reflective of the youth local.

In previous periods our policy has ranged from actually drawing up a slate of candidates that party members support, to doing nothing. The first of these methods is incorrect and the second is inadequate.

Through past experience we know that having a YSA local leadership composed of mainly party members tends to strangle internal life of the local. Almost all decisions have already been made

and discussion in the organization has an artificial character.

For the exec to function well it should be composed of various layers of recruitment. Unfortunately, new members are usually hesitant about asserting themselves in an election against more experienced comrades.

The policy we have worked out involves all party-youth members who discuss which party members should run depending on their assignments and situations. The only alternative to this procedure would be selective, informal discussion among members urging some comrades to run. Our feeling is that this can be truly "manipulative."

In Comrade Goodman's letter she says that she discussed this question with the national secretary of the youth. On the branch floor Comrade Roger Sheppard said that Charlie Bolduc thought our procedure to be incorrect. Earlier on the same day that Roger spoke with Charlie I had mentioned the "fraction" to Comrade Bolduc, albeit in passing, referring to a discussion held at one of our "fraction" meetings. At that time he raised no objection or question. Unless he has been misquoted, it would seem proper for him to have communicated any views on incorrect procedure to the branch leadership.

We feel that our procedure is not in contradiction to the party policy as outlined in the document by Comrade Kerry which is referred to in Comrade Goodman's letter. This "fraction," for want of a better word, has existed for at least eight years. Its meetings have been reported in the branch minutes which were sent to the national office, yet the branch was never informed that it was operating incorrectly.

Several years ago Comrade Gus Horowitz raised similar objections. He informed the branch exec that he had received correspondence from the national office saying that the branch's procedure was in order. Unfortunately, the correspondence on the matter was never made available to the exec or the branch.

When charges such as "manipulation" are bandied about I think it is the duty of the comrade(s) involved to make the charges very concrete. No one in the branch, to my knowledge, has ever suggested "that the party youth should function inside the YSA in the same manner they would function inside any other outside organization."

Comrade Gloria's letter raises other questions: Does the branch have the right to even make assignments to party-youth members that involve youth work? Is not the 27 year age limit for party-youth members "manipulative," "paternalistic," and even -- unnatural?

In the delicate field of party-youth relations it is im-

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possible, to quote from Kerry's document, "...to codify a set of 'rules' applicable on all occasions...."

I have tried to outline the functioning of party-youth members in order to clarify the points raised in the letters of Comrades Goodman and Barnes. Any objections or suggestions for improving our work would be appreciated.

Comradely,
s/Steve Chase
Boston Organizer