CALL FOR THE TWENTY-SEVENTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

May 4, 1975

TO ALL LOCALS, BRANCHES AND MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Pursuant to the provisions of the party constitution, the National Committee hereby calls the Twenty-Seventh National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party to convene in Ohio at 10:00 AM on Sunday, August 17 and continue through five days (August 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21, 1975).

AGENDA

The National Committee proposes the following agenda for the convention:

World Political Situation Report
World Movement Report
Political Resolution
Black Liberation Resolution
Political Reports
Organizational Reports
Youth Report
Election of National Committee

PRECONVENTION DISCUSSION

The party preconvention discussion is formally opened May 4, 1975. The Discussion Bulletin is open for all party members on the subjects listed in the agenda or others which they may wish to present for the consideration of the party. As authorized by the party constitution, the Political Committee has set a deadline of August 2, 1975, for acceptance of preconvention discussion articles for the bulletin.

Branch membership meetings shall be arranged for discussion of the various subjects on the agenda. Our traditional provisions and safeguards for the adequate and free presentation of all points of view shall govern all discussion.

CONVENTION ASSESSMENT

As authorized by the party constitution, a convention assessment of $10.00 per member is hereby levied, the payment of which is obligatory for every member not totally unemployed.

BASIS OF REPRESENTATION

1. Representation from the branches shall be as follows: One delegate for the first 15 members or less, and one additional delegate for each 15 additional members or major fraction thereof (8 or more constituting a major fraction).

2. Delegates are to be elected by branches in accordance with the actual number of members in good standing who have been admitted to the party prior to May 4, 1975, and who have paid their convention assessment, as certified by the branch executive committee on the day of voting.

3. Branches organized after May 4, 1975, are entitled to send fraternal delegates as provided by the party constitution.

4. Members admitted to the party after May 4, 1975, are entitled to voice in the party discussion but no vote on resolutions or in the selection of delegates.

5. Absentee votes on political resolutions and in the election of delegates shall not be permitted except in clearly established cases of occupational necessity (for example, regular night workers, etc.). In all such cases the votes must be submitted in writing and recognized by motion at the branch meeting at the time of the branch voting.

6. Members transferring from one branch to another within the same locality subsequent to May 4, 1975, must vote in the branch from which they transferred.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

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 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 there are two counterposed political positions, the delegates are apportioned between the majority and the minority in proportion to the vote each receives. The percentage of the vote received by the majority, multiplied by the number of delegates the branch is entitled to, is rounded off to the nearest whole number to give the number of delegates going to the majority. The remainder are assigned to the minority.

2. If there are three or more positions, those positions which received too few votes to possibly get a delegate are eliminated first, beginning with the smallest. That is, if the percentage of the vote received by a position is multiplied by the number of delegates the branch is entitled to, and the result is "0" when rounded off, this position is not considered and its votes are subtracted from the total vote. After such positions have been eliminated, the delegates are apportioned to the remaining positions, beginning with the one with the highest vote. Using the new vote total, the percentage received by the position with the highest vote is multiplied by the number of delegates the branch is entitled to and the result is rounded off to the nearest whole number, to give the number of delegates going to this position. The same procedure is repeated with the position receiving the second highest vote, and so on, until all the delegates the branch is entitled to have been apportioned.

CONVENTION ATTENDANCE

The National Committee proposes that all party members in good standing may attend the convention as visitors, and that friends may be admitted to the sessions provided they have been invited by a branch.

Fraternally yours,

NATIONAL COMMITTEE
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Jack Barnes
National Secretary

CONCERNING THE METHOD USED TO DETERMINE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN THE ELECTION OF BRANCH DELEGATES TO THE CONVENTION

BY Barry Sheppard

The method to determine proportional representation in the election of branch delegates to the convention we have used in the past runs into certain difficulties as the party grows.

The method laid down in past convention calls is the following: a minority has to get 1/n of the vote to get one delegate, where n is the number of delegates the branch is entitled to. It has to get 2/n to get two delegates, etc. For example, if a branch is entitled to 5 delegates, a minority must get 1/5 of the vote on conflicting resolutions in order to get 1 delegate. There is another provision, that in the case where the number of delegates a branch is entitled to is even, a minority which gets 40 percent of the vote will get half of the delegates.

This method guarantees that a majority will always receive at least the proportion of delegates as its proportion of the vote among the branch membership, except in the special case when the number of delegates a branch is entitled to is even and a minority receives at least 40 percent of the vote. In most cases, the proportion of delegates going to the majority will be greater than its proportion of the vote among the branch membership. Minorities in a branch under this system often receive less delegates than what would be proportional to their vote among the branch membership.

In the situation where we had a relatively low ratio between branch membership and the number of delegates a branch is entitled to as the basis of branch representation to the convention (one delegate for every 7 members, for example), this method worked out to be close to proportional, and the strength of minorities was represented at the convention in fairly close proportion to their strength in the branches.

As the party has grown, it has become necessary to raise the ratio of branch membership to delegates. We have gone from a ratio of seven members to one delegate to 15 members to one delegate. This was done in the interests of the democratic functioning of the convention itself. In addition, new smaller branches have been built, and larger branches have been divided to establish locals. All these factors increase the discrepancy between a minority's real strength in a branch and the proportion of delegates it receives under the method we have used up until now.

Some examples will show this. The first two concern the effect of increasing the membership-to-delegate ratio. The third shows the effect of dividing a large branch into two smaller ones.

Example 1. A branch of 75 members would be entitled to 11 delegates if the delegate ratio was seven members to one delegate. This was the delegate ratio at the 1971 convention. A minority would have to get 1/11 of the vote to get one delegate, 2/11 to get two, 3/11 to get three, etc. If all the members of the branch voted, a minority would have to get 7 votes to get one delegate, 14

votes to get two, etc. A minority of 25, for example, would get three delegates; it would have 33 percent of the vote and receive 27 percent of the delegates.

If the membership-to-delegate ratio is raised to 15 members for each delegate, the branch would be entitled to 5 delegates. A minority would have to get 1/5 of the vote to get one delegate, 2/5 to get two, etc. If all the members of the branch voted, a minority would have to get 15 votes to get one delegate, 30 votes to get 2, and so on. A minority of 25 would get 1 delegate, or 20 percent of the delegates although its vote was 33 percent of the branch membership.

Example 2. In a branch of 48 members, if the delegate ratio was one delegate for every seven members, the branch would be entitled to 7 delegates. A minority would have to get at least 1/7 of the vote to get one delegate. If all 48 members voted, then a minority would have to get at least 7 votes to get one delegate, 14 votes to get two delegates, etc. If a minority had 10 votes and the majority had 38, the minority would get 1 delegate and the majority would get 6. The minority would have 21 percent of the vote among the branch membership and 14 percent of the delegates.

If the delegate ratio is increased to 15 members for one delegate, then the branch is entitled to 3 delegates. A minority of 10 would receive no delegates, since it needs 1/3 of the vote to get one delegate, at least 16 votes.

Example 3. A branch of 100 members is entitled to 7 delegates if the delegate ratio is one delegate for every 15 members. If all the members voted, then a minority would have to get 1/7 of the vote to get one delegate, or 15 votes; 2/7 to get two delegates, or 29 votes, etc.

If this branch is divided into two branches of 50 each, then each branch is entitled to 3 delegates. A minority must get at least 1/3 of the vote in a branch to get one delegate, or 17 votes. Thus a minority of 15 would have received one delegate in the undivided branch, but would not receive any delegates after the division, even if all its members were in one branch. A minority of 25, although it represents 25 percent of the vote in the undivided branch, would receive 1 delegate in the undivided branch or 14 percent of the delegates. A minority of 25, if it was divided 10 in one branch and 15 in the other after the division, would receive no delegates from either branch.

* * *

There is no way to devise a proportional system that will guarantee that the proportion of delegates a minority receives is exactly equal to its proportional strength in the branch membership, unless fractional votes are assigned to the delegates. To assign fractional votes to the delegates, however, would make the voting power of each delegate at the convention unequal. This would violate the principle that the convention delegates are not bound by previous positions, but together as the convention comprise the highest body of the party. Thus each delegate must have one vote.

NEW METHOD OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

The proposed change in the method of proportional representation can be summed up as follows: to apportion the delegates the branch is entitled to between a majority (or plurality) and any minorities, as close as possible to their strength in the branch membership.

This method will often result in the same apportioning of delegates as the old method. In other cases, it will apportion delegates among conflicting political positions closer to their actual strength in the branch membership than the old method did, and at the same time it will guard the democratic principle of majority rule. Like the old method, it is based on the principle that the convention delegates represent the branches as the basic units of the party, and is therefore a system for apportioning delegates from a branch and based on the proportion of the vote conflicting resolutions receive in the branch membership, not in the party membership as a whole.

When there are only two counterposed political positions, the new method is relatively simple. The percentage of the delegates received by the majority should be as close as possible to the percentage of the vote in the membership received by the majority. This can be determined by multiplying the percentage of the vote received by the majority times the number of delegates the branch is entitled to. The answer will generally be a fraction, and must be rounded off to the nearest whole number, because we want to avoid fractional votes for delegates. This gives the majority its number of delegates; the remainder go to the minority. Under this system, the minority will also get a percentage of the delegates that is as close as possible to its percentage of the vote, in most cases. (Since ".5" is rounded off to "1" calculating the majority's delegates first gives it a slight edge. For example, if a branch is entitled to 5 delegates, and the majority receives 70 percent of the vote, then .70 x 5 is 3.5, which rounded off is 4 delegates for the majority. The minority gets 1. If the minority position was calculated first, we would have .30 x 5 is 1.5, which is 2 when rounded off.)

Let's look at some examples of how the new method would compare with the old one, assuming a membership-to-delegate ratio of 15 to one.

Example A

Branch size: 68
Delegates: 4
Majority: 52, or 81 percent of the vote
Minority: 12, or 19 percent of the vote
Abstentions: 4

Old Method	New Method
Minority would have to have 1/4 of the vote to get one delegate. Total vote is 64. 1/4 of 64 is 16 -- minority is too small to get one delegate.	$\frac{52}{64}$ x 4 equals 3.25, or 3 when rounded off
Majority: 4 delegates, 100 percent Minority: 0 delegates, 0 percent	Majority: 3 delegates, 75 percent 1 delegate, 25 percent

Example B

Branch size: 76
Delegates: 5
Majority: 46, or 61 percent of the vote
Minority: 30, or 39 percent of the vote

Old Method	New Method
To get one delegate, the minority would have to have 1/5 of the vote, or 16 votes; to get 2 delegates, 2/5 of the vote or 31 votes.	.61 x 5 equals 3.05, rounded off is 3
Majority: 4 delegates, 80 percent Minority: 1 delegate, 20 percent	Majority: 3 delegates, 60 percent Minority: 2 delegates, 40 percent

Under the old system, there is a provision that if the number of delegates a branch is entitled to is even, then a minority which gets 40 percent of the vote gets half the delegates. The new system avoids the necessity for such a provision. Under the new system a minority of over 25 percent gets one vote if a branch is entitled to 2 delegates; a minority of over 37½ percent gets 2 delegates in a branch entitled to 4 delegates; but a minority must get 42 percent to get 3 delegates in a branch entitled to 6 delegates; and almost 44 percent to get 4 delegates in a branch entitled to 8 delegates.

Thus the 40 percent rule can over-represent minorities, as the following examample shows:

Example C

Branch size: 85
Delegates: 6
Majority: 51, or 60 percent of the vote
Minority: 34, or 40 percent of the vote

Old Method	New Method
The minority received 40 percent of the vote; therefore it gets half the delegates, 3.	$\frac{51}{85}$ x 6 equals 3.6 or 4 rounded off
Majority: 3 delegates, 50 percent Minority: 3 delegates, 50 percent	Majority: 4 delegates, 67 percent Minority: 2 delegates, 33 percent

The new proposal for dividing the delegates when there are two counterposed political positions can be summed up in the following formula: If the majority receives M votes, the minority N votes, and the branch is entitled to D delegates, then $\frac{M}{M + N}$ x D rounded off to the nearest whole number is the number of delegates the majority gets.

The situation when there are three or more positions is more complicated. If we were to proceed in exactly the same way as in the case where there are two positions, the existence of very small minorities can make it impossible to apportion all the delegates a branch is entitled to. The following example will show this:

Example D

Branch size: 77
Delegates: 5
Position A: 38
Position B: 23
Position C: 10
Position D: 6

Position A: $\frac{38}{77}$ x 5 equals 2.46. . ., rounded off is 2.

Position B: $\frac{23}{77}$ x 5 equals 1.49. . ., rounded off is 1.

Position C: $\frac{10}{77}$ x 5 equals .649. . ., rounded off is 1.

Position D: $\frac{6}{77}$ x 5 equals .38. . ., rounded off is 0.

Thus only 4 of the five delegates is apportioned.

This problem can be avoided by first eliminating those positions which are too small to possibly get a delegate. This is done by starting with the smallest position and testing to see if, when its percentage of the vote is multiplied by the number of delegates the branch is entitled to, the result is "0" when rounded off. If it is zero, the votes of this position are not counted and are subtracted from the total. The same test is made of the next smallest position, using the new vote total (it is possible that a position will pass this test after the votes for the smallest position have been subtracted, but would fail if the original total is used). This is repeated until the smallest remaining tendency passes this test. This establishes a new total vote. In the example above, Position D fails this tests. Its votes are subtracted from the vote total, leaving 71 votes. Position C is tested:

$\frac{10}{71}$ x 5 equals .70, which rounds off to 1.

Thus position C passes the test, and there is a new vote total of 71. Using this new vote total, the delegates are then apportioned, beginning with the largest position:

Position A: $\frac{38}{71}$ x 5 equals 2.6. . ., rounded off is 3.

Position B: $\frac{23}{71}$ x 5 equals 1.6. . ., rounded off is 2.

Since all five delegates the branch is entitled to have been apportioned, none go to Position C.

This method of apportioning the delegates favors the larger positions, because it begins with the assumption that in any case

the proportion of the delegates going to the largest positions should should be as close as possible to the percentage of their vote. This can mean that some smaller tendencies do not get a percentage of delegates as close as possible to their percentage of the vote.

If we were to start the other way around, and begin by apportioning the delegates to the smallest positions, then it is possible to drastically reduce the percentage of delegates going to the largest position, even to the point of making a majority get a minority of the delegates. The following examples shows this:

Example E

Branch size 62
Delegates: 4
Position A: 35
Position B: 10
Position C: 9
Position D: 8

If we began with position D:

Position D: $\frac{8}{62}$ x 4 equals .51. . ., rounded off is 1.

Position C: $\frac{9}{62}$ x 4 equals .58, rounded off is 1.

Position B: $\frac{10}{62}$ x 4 equals .64. . ., rounded off is 1.

Position A: There is only 1 delegate left for Position A.

Done the other way around, we first test Position D. It passes the test. Then we begin with apportioning delegates, starting with Position A:

Position A: $\frac{35}{62}$ x 4 equals 2.25, rounded off is 2.

Position B: $\frac{10}{62}$ x 4 equals .64. . ., rounded off is 1.

Position C: $\frac{9}{62}$ x 4 equals .58. . ., rounded off is 1.

This apportions the 4 delegates, so Position D does not get a delegate.

The proposed new system can run into difficulty if there is a tie -- although the old system can also. Any problems resulting from a tie should be referred to the convention, because different solutions can be proposed, depending upon the exact situation, and we wouldn't want to tie the hands of the convention with a formula concerning exactly what to do.

The old system can also run into trouble in a branch where there is no majority. The following example will show this:

Example F

Branch size: 40
Delegates: 3
Position A: 15
Position B: 14
Position C: 11

Old Method

A minority must get 1/3 of the vote, or 14 votes, to get a delegate. Position A and B each get one delegate--the remaining delegate is not apportioned.

Position A: 1 delegate
Position B: 1 delegate
Position C: 0 delegates

New Method

$\frac{15}{40} \times 3$ equals 1.1. . ., rounded off is 1

$\frac{14}{40} \times 3$ equals 1.05. . ., rounded off is 1

$\frac{11}{40} \times 3$ equals .925, rounded off is 1

Position A: 1 delegate
Position B: 1 delegate
Position C: 1 delegate

POLITICAL COMMITTEE PROCEDURAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
1975 NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

1. To approve the following procedural recommendations:
   A. That in cases of procedural disputes, discussion be limited to two speakers, one for and one against, and that each speaker be limited to two minutes.
   B. That general discussion be limited to ten minutes per speaker and that no one speak twice until all who wish to speak have already done so.
   C. That the Presiding Committee consist of the Political Bureau (Barnes, Clark, A. Hansen, Horowitz, D. Jenness, Lovell, Sheppard, Thomas, Waters).
   D. To designate Eidsvik and Rupp as secretaries.
   E. To invite as observers: Control Commission members, heads of national departments, members of the youth NEC, branch organizers, campaign committee officers, and special guests.
   F. To give voice to organizers and department heads who are not members of the National Committee during discussion of the Tasks and Perspectives report and Youth report.
2. To approve the following agenda and reporters:
   1. World Political Situation - Horowitz
   2. Political Resolution - Barnes
   3. Black Struggle Resolution - Thomas
   4. Youth Report
   5. Tasks and Perspectives Report - Sheppard
   6. World Movement Report - Waters
   7. Election of Political Committee - Barnes
   8. National Committee Perspectives - Barnes
   9. Election of National Officers - Lovell
   10. Convention Call - Jenness
3. To approve the following schedule (see attached).

NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM SCHEDULE

Thursday, May 1

10:00 - 10:15 Organization of Plenum (1/4 hour)

10:15 - 11:30 World Political Situation Report (1-1/4 hours)

11:30 - 12:30 Discussion (3 hours)

12:30 - 2:00 Lunch

2:00 - 3:00 Discussion

3:00 - 3:30 Summary, World Political Situation Report (1/2 hour)

3:30 - 4:45 Political Resolution Report (1-1/4 hours)

4:45 - 6:15 Discussion (3 hours)

Friday, May 2

10:00 - 11:30 Discussion

11:30 - 12:00 Summary, Political Resolution Report (1/2 hour)

12:00 - 1:30 Lunch

1:30 - 2:30 Black Struggle Resolution Report (1 hour)

2:30 - 4:30 Discussion (2 hours)

4:30 - 5:00 Summary, Black Struggle Resolution Report (1/2 hour)

5:00 - 6:30 Party Tasks and Perspectives Report (1-1/2 hours)

6:30 - 8:00 Dinner (YSA serving)

8:00 - 10:00 Discussion (3 hours)

Saturday, May 3

10:00 - 11:00 Discussion

11:00 - 11:30 Summary, Party Tasks and Perspectives Report (½ hour)

11:30 - 12:30 Youth Report (1 hour)

12:30 - 2:00 Lunch

2:00 - 3:00 Discussion (1 - 1/2 hours)

3:00 - 3:45 Summary, Youth Report (1/4 hour)

3:45 - Break for faction meeting

Sunday, May 4

10:00 - 10:45	World Movement Report, LTF (3/4 hour)
10:45 - 11:30	World Movement Report, IMT (3/4 hour)
11:30 - 12:30	Discussion (1 hour)
12:30 - 12:45	Summary, World Movement Report, IMT (1/4 hour)
12:45 - 1:00	Summary, World Movement Report, LTF (1/4 hour)
1:00 - 2:00	Lunch (YSA serving)
2:00 - 3:00	Election of Political Committee (1 hour)
3:00 - 4:30	National Committee Perspectives (1-1/2 hours)
4:30 - 5:00	Election of National Officers (1/2 hour)
5:00 - 5:15	Convention Call (1/4 hour)