

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

25 July 1994

[To a National Spiritual Assembly]

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 28 June 1994 concerning the extraordinary behavior of one of the delegates at your recent National Convention.

How to deal with this situation would depend to some degree upon the believer in question; for example, whether he is a new and inexperienced Bahá'í or a long-time believer who would be expected to know better. This is a matter within your jurisdiction, but if you require any further advice from the Universal House of Justice on the specific case, you will need to provide it with more detailed information. In general it would, of course, be desirable for you to try to clarify the principles for this friend and help him to understand his responsibilities. At the same time you will wish to try to ascertain the reasons for his behavior so that you can assist him to overcome his problems.

To assist you in consulting with this friend, we enclose a few extracts from passages relating to the responsibilities of delegates to a National Bahá'í Convention.

Of all the responsibilities resting upon a delegate, that of voting for the members of the National Spiritual Assembly is clearly the most weighty. In carrying out this duty, the delegate must, prayerfully and conscientiously, vote for those whom he judges best fit the qualifications that the beloved Guardian has outlined for those who are to serve on Spiritual Assemblies and, in making this choice, he must be left free from every external influence by either individual believers or Bahá'í institutions. If he states that he has difficulty in thinking of nine Bahá'ís who measure up to the high standards mentioned, he could be referred to the following passage written on behalf of the Guardian to a National Spiritual Assembly on 24 October 1947:

In regard to your question about qualifications of delegates and Assembly members: the qualifications which he outlined are really applicable to anyone we elect to a Bahá'í office, whatever its nature. But these are only an indication, they do not mean people who don't fulfill them cannot be elected to office. We must aim as high as we can. He does not feel the friends should attach so much importance to limitations—such as people perhaps not being able to attend Assembly or Convention meetings, because if they do, then the fundamental concept of everyone being willing to do Bahá'í service on administrative bodies will be weakened, and the friends may be tempted to vote for those who because of independent means or circumstances in their lives are freer to come and go but less qualified to serve.

For a delegate to walk out of the convention hall at the time of the election would seem to indicate a disdain for the electoral process and a public abdication of his responsibilities, which would be quite improper. It is entirely within the authority of the National Spiritual Assembly to inquire the reason for such extraordinary behavior, inasmuch as it has the responsibility for the proper conduct of the Convention.

Furthermore, one of the responsibilities of a delegate is to report back from the Convention to the district by which he was elected. If this particular delegate does not explain to his electors the reason for his failure to vote, your Assembly would be fully entitled to report the occurrence to them.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Department of the Secretariat

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