

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 4, 1976

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

Attached are two items. One is a translation of a speech that Jose Angel Gutierrez gave at the Texas state La Raza Unida Party convention on Nov. 29, 1975. It was printed in the Jan., 1976, issue of Caracol, published in San Antonio.

The other item is a report on a Colorado Chicano conference recently held.

Comradely,

Olga Rodriguez

Olga Rodriguez
SWP National Office

"RAZA UNIDA -- HOW THE AIR WE BREATHE CONCERNS US ALL"

Speech on the 1976 Elections by Jose Angel Gutierrez

TO FORM A STRATEGY -- Now I see that it is very necessary to review the history of our party because there is a fundamental problem, and the problem is that it hasn't been decided what it is we want to do with the party in the coming year.

WHEN THE PARTY BEGAN -- I also refer to 1970, when we began and I remember that we began with an idea exactly like the one we are discussing now: to choose the counties where there is a majority of Chicanos, where there is a structure, and where there is an atmosphere of motion. At that time, there were only three counties: LaSalle, Dimmit, and Zavala. Frio and Hidalgo were just getting started. It was just four counties that put the party on the ballot in 1970: LaSalle, Dimmit, Zavala, and Hidalgo. From 1970 to 1972 the idea of the party gained force throughout the state of Texas and the U. S. as well. For many, the idea of an independent political base began to seem like a good one.

1972 AND THE URBAN CENTERS -- By the time we got to 1972, support picked up in the urban centers. I am saying all of this as a constructive criticism, I am not pointing the finger at anyone that spread the idea. The urban centers arrived at the 1972 convention with a lot of people and destroyed the idea of working in small counties: the idea that we had to run candidates statewide to be a statewide party emerged. There was no consideration for the lack of structure, resources -- nothing of this kind. Well, we didn't even have candidates. But the idea that we wanted to have a statewide party came out on top. We achieved a semblance of structure and resources and some candidates and we went along. We gained a semblance of visibility. But we failed because we made such a scandal and did such good work that we frightened the gringo power.

THE DEFEAT OF 1974 -- So, in 1974 the gringos changed the law on us. They raised the requirements for us to destroy us as a statewide party. In 1974 we had the same forces, speaking in terms of the percentage; in terms of numbers of votes, we dropped a lot, but all the parties did. We maintained the same percentage. But we didn't add to our structure, resources, and the number of our candidates fell.

THE SMALL TOWNS -- We are still under the influence of the urban centers who want to have a statewide party. Well, at the three conventions of 1970, 1972, and 1974 there was a minority that ascertained that we had to put the emphasis on small towns. This is a point of view that never has been listened to. So, the first thing that has to be resolved, and this is the state-wide convention, is this thing of a state-wide party. This is a recommenda-

tion that has to be decided here. I say this because there are a lot of people with the idea of a state-wide party, and if it's like that, then it's best that we go home, because this is not the time to find out about this. We have to wait until 1978.

THE MOVE FOR GOVERNOR -- Remember that the move to run a candidate for governor was simply because that is what the law said -- that the whole future of your party is based on the number of votes your candidate gets for governor. No one had the illusion that we could win the position for governor, but we only ran someone because that is what the law said. Now, the gringos have changed this law on us. There doesn't have to be a candidate for governor until 1978. So, we don't have to concern ourselves on that account.

THE SENTIMENT AGAINST STATEWIDE CANDIDATES -- I am of the opinion, and this is something personal, that we are not going to gain anything by running a candidate for Senate or Railroad Commission. Absolutely nothing. We are going to get out of it the same thing that we got out of it the last three times, which is a little bit of publicity, visibility, (people will still know the party is around), and, in a few places, a few more will come out in support of Raza Unida because they heard a candidate for Senate or for Railroad Commission. But in terms of structure, membership, and resources we are going to use up more than we are going to receive. For me, the idea of a statewide party is something that is useless. What we have to think of now, first of all, is to reanalyze our position favoring a statewide party; because we are not one and why be stupid about it. Secondly, if we still want to be alive as a party in 1978, the only alternative, the only correct road is to run candidates locally in 1976, so from there we can begin to recruit members, resources and power to form a structure that will work for us in 1978. That is, we have to think about changing the plan of attack now.

ACTIVITIES IN THE SERVICE OF THE PARTY -- Now, the last thing that I want to say is that not all of the activity of the party has to necessarily be running candidates. We always hear from Austin, Houston, Dallas, Waco, El Paso and Corpus Christi that they can't run candidates because they don't have the votes to win. At any rate, each one of them made an attempt. But what's involved is not only running candidates. There are many types of activities they can carry out. For example, Frio County has been talking about all kinds of things they can do with gerrymandering, lawsuits, injunctions. Well, all of this work can be done by whoever wants to do it. The fights against the school boards

can be carried out everywhere they exist. The whole fight for city services, for example, the lack of paved streets, lack of school playgrounds, lack of parks. Whatever you want. They were just telling me that they went to the court house here and didn't see a single Mexican working there. Those are good issues. There is also revenue sharing, for example, which has to be renegotiated this year again for the coming year. Now is the time to hit all the counties, all the cities that receive revenue sharing because they can't discriminate there. And you file complaints. If you don't know where you have to send those complaints, write to me: Jose Angel Gutierrez, County Judge, Zavala County, Crystal City, Texas. I'll send you the address. But in revenue sharing, they are obliged to hire people. There is a lot of work that can be done.

COPS OF SAN ANTONIO -- I don't know if you've heard of the organization COPS of San Antonio. It's a good model. They don't get involved in running candidates. They go to meetings of agencies, for example, that make plans to build a park, golf courses, swimming pools, streeting paving; all of this work that provides services for the community; and they attack, and the whole group goes (50, 60, 70 people). And they're just there putting on the pressure each time there is a meeting of that group, COPS is there like lions on top of them. It helps them a lot that people are seeing them in action. Even though people don't participate with COPS, they are at least seeing them and they pay attention to them, and they are going to win a lot of respect. These are ways in which people can see that you can organize; the people have to see that you are fighting for them, that you're doing something. There is the work that you have to do. We can't go on saying that there is nothing to do, it's just that there are times when one doesn't know how to get into it.

WE ARE TRULY GOING TO WORK POLITICALLY -- I would like to see the majority of people who don't have serious plans to run candidates get involved in these things, for the meantime. This coming year is very important because in April the majority of all the cities you live in will have elections for City Council, School Board, and Jr. College Trustees. And then in May, there will be the primary. Who knows, but I think that we are going to win the fight around the primary. All this means is that we won't have any money to run elections. That's all it means, and that it is going to be a little more difficult to bring a lot of people at a particular hour to have a convention. But besides that, there isn't any other problem. And then we also have the elections in November. So, we don't have to complain for work to do.

BUILDING THE LOCAL ORGANIZATION -- The majority of the time we haven't decided to build a local structure. We meet and decide to run candidates, but there is

no base, which I already mentioned earlier here. We have discussed trying to organize Familias Unidas (United Families), Ciudadanos Unidos (United Citizens) or Mexicanos Unidos (United Mexicans); to organize centers and other things. All of these ideas are very good, but we haven't done it with a general plan that everyone has to carry out. Everyone does it when they want to. There hasn't been any leadership on the part of the board of directors that says, "This has to be done." Well, I daresay that no one knows who the members of the Raza Unida are. I'll bet you no one knows who they are. Because not even this basic work has been done in each town, county, and precinct to develop those who are with us and those who aren't. Only when there's a convention or a rally, all of a sudden people appear from everywhere. If you just look at the board here. The majority of people are young people. Well, if we are only going to depend on the vote of the youth, then we are going to lose the majority because the majority of young people don't vote. It's as simple as that. The majority of people who go to vote are going to be our parents and uncles and aunts, who are ten to twenty years older than us. They do vote.

THE PROBLEM OF REGISTERING EVERYONE AGAIN -- Now we are getting to the problem we have to resolve this year. All the registrations have already expired. No one is going to be registered for the coming year. That registration law is now tied up in court, and we have to fish around with little time when it is resolved, and all of us have to be re-registered. Now, what the majority of counties are going to do is send letters with the registration to those who are still registered. What does that tell us? That the majority aren't going to be registered because they weren't registered to begin with. So, our work will also be to go from house to house, persuading and registering people. We have to prepare ourselves at once, because there isn't going to be a lot of time to register people. For now, our apparatus has to get the poll list of last year, examine how many votes there are in each precinct to know how many we lack.

NEW VOTES FOR THE RAZA UNIDA PARTY -- Because remember that the boys we ran last time who were just turning 18 are now 20 years old. They are no longer kids. And we also lack much more; all that generation that at that time were 16 years old and were in high school and no one paid attention to, well, now they have already graduated or are just about to get out of school. There we have a mountain of people that we haven't even spoken to about the Partido. We have a lot of work ahead of us.

SO THE PARTY WILL BECOME STRONG, WE HAVE TO WORK VERY HARD -- Now, I want you to remember that also at each convention in '70, '72, and '74 we came to a vote that we were going to help Cotulla, Pearsall, Cristal, Robstown, and Kingsville. We voted, but we haven't done anything. Here we all raise our hands and

we say yes, but when we leave, there it ends. So hopefully we won't vote again; instead we'll look for some other way to force the people who commit themselves to do their work. We have to be honest in what we are saying and do more work on what we say we are going to do. We don't have to waste time trying to find "Target Counties" if we are not going to resolve all these problems.

(Caracol editor's note: Target Counties are those counties with a majority of Chicanos and where there exist a sufficiently strong party structure to win elections.)

YES WE CAN -- And yes, we can resolve these problems. What we have to do is get serious and take the necessary time for the tasks of the Raza Unida Party.

Report on Colorado Chicano Conference

by Olga Rodriguez, January 30, 1976

On January 16-17, a conference, called by the Adams State United Mexican American Students (UMAS), was held on the campus in Alamosa, Colorado. According to the call issued by UMAS, the purpose of "La Conferencia Del Ultimo Paso Para Nuestra Liberacion" ("Conference for the Last Step of Our Liberation"), was the unification of the Colorado Chicano movement.

The conference was built in less than a month, and 350-400 Chicano activists participated. The bulk of the participants came from campuses in Colorado, with a number of Chicano students from New Mexico, and a couple of Chicanos from Los Angeles.

There was also a delegation of Chicano community activists from Alamosa, as well as several Chicano High School students from the area. The Denver-based Crusade for Justice, which had not participated in the organization of the conference, had about 25-30 people at the conference.

Since we found out about the conference only a few days before it began, our participation was limited. We were also not sure whether it was just going to be statewide or national in character. I attended as a reporter for the Militant, and a Chicano comrade from the Denver YSA also attended. We were able to sell 15 Militants (all we took), 2 subscriptions to the Militant, and 1 subscription to the Young Socialist. Unfortunately, we couldn't set up a table. After having received permission before we left Denver, the invitation was rescinded by the conference organizers when we arrived. They told us that another socialist group (they didn't say which), had been denied their request for a table, so it was only fair that they deny our request. However, at the conference itself, there were tables set up by the October League, a Maoist group from Greeley Colorado, and a Maoist group from Los Angeles.

Opponents

As far as I could tell, there were no members of the Communist Party present. The opponents in evidence were the October League; a group of Chicano Maoists around José Calderón in Greeley, (Calderón, the former co-chairperson of the Colorado Raza Unida Party, left the RUP about a year ago); and at least two Maoists from Los Angeles who are members of the August 29th Movement -- a Maoist organization that appears to be based on the remnants of the ex-Labor Committee of La Raza Unida Party. All together, I would say the organized Maoists numbered about 25.

Conference Discussion

The conference consisted of two sets of workshops. Friday's workshops were on the Chicano Student Movement, the American Indian Movement, and Political Parties '76. A workshop on the farm workers movement had initially been scheduled but was cancelled because, according to the conference organizers, no one from the UFW was able to attend. On Saturday, there was a second

set of workshops which were on the U.S. Grand Jury, Political Prisoners and Activists on Trial, the Land Issue, and local issues.

The major political discussion occurred in the Political Parties '76 workshop on Friday. More than 100 people attended and discussion basically centered around the relationship between nationalism and socialism. The only people scheduled on the panel in the workshop were José Calderón and Rudy García of Denver, who, like Calderón, describes himself as an "independent Marxist Leninist." The Raza Unida Party had not been invited to participate on the panel, but Crusade activists, who are also activists in the Raza Unida Party, spoke after Calderón and García.

The discussion was very heated and confused. The presentations by Calderón and García concentrated on the following points: (1) Chicanos have to help build a revolutionary vanguard party, based on Marxism-Leninism, Mao-Tse Tung Thought; (2) there is a need for mass political "organizations" like La Raza Unida Party, but this is a different formation than a revolutionary party; (3) Chicanos won't win anything today from the kinds of struggles we waged in the 1960s, because the struggle has to be on a "higher level" and the struggles of the 1960s gained nothing for Chicanos; (4) Chicanos must recognize they are part of the working class and that white workers are also "oppressed;" (5) the struggle for community control by Chicanos in the 1960s failed to move the Chicano liberation struggle forward, and "created a whole class of people" who think that the way to win Chicano liberation is to create Chicano businesses, and get elected to school boards and city councils. This was also an attack on the Texas RUP in general and Gutierrez in particular.

The Raza Unida Party spokesperson was Eddie Montour, a leader of the Crusade for Justice, and cochairperson of the Colorado RUP. He concentrated his remarks on the following points: (1) The RUP has been active for seven years in Colorado and it is the only revolutionary party for Chicanos; (2) Reies, López Tijerina and José Ángel Gutiérrez have "sold their ass down the road" because they "lacked character and compromised;" (3) Corky Gonzalez, the principal leader of the Crusade for Justice, has never compromised and has character; (4) the RUP is a tool to politicize the Chicano people, and it does that through nationalism; (5) Marxism-Leninism is a tool, but not for Chicanos; (6) those who left the RUP did so because they lacked character.

None of the panelists said a single word about the 1976 elections or put forward any perspective for Chicanos this year. The RUP didn't take up any of the remarks the Maoists made against running candidates.

The discussion lasted for over four hours and was extremely confused. Several Chicanos, apparently unaffiliated with any organization, asked the RUP spokesperson and the other speakers what they proposed Chicanos do in 1976. Nobody answered them. A number of Chicanos raised questions about RUP running candidates,

saying that to run in the elections was simply getting Chicanos trapped into the politics of the system. Others argued that welfare and social security were token concessions of the Anglos designed to pacify Chicanos and should therefore be opposed. There were a lot of questions and discussion around the RUP's lack of activity around issues affecting Chicanos. Most of these questions came from Chicano activists who were not Maoists, or supporters of any other tendency in the workers movement.

The RUP did not respond to most of these questions, or adequately answer the ones they did respond to. As a whole, their role in the workshop and the entire conference was very sectarian. They reacted defensively to genuine questions on their activity, using personal attacks and slander against those expressing differences with the RUP as it is presently constituted.

The discussion, in my opinion, represented an attempt on the part of the conference participants to grapple with problems confronting Chicanos in Colorado and the Southwest. It also indicated a great deal of interest in socialism, which was a positive side of the discussions at the whole conference. However, since the Maoists were the only organized tendency intervening in the discussion, this important debate and discussion around the relationship of Chicano liberation and socialism was distorted and confused.

The discussion also demonstrated the serious lack of leadership in the Chicano movement in Colorado. The questions and discussion around the lack of activity of the Colorado RUP was a real indication of this. The Colorado RUP at this time is basically the Crusade for Justice in Denver and its supporters in Pueblo. Little has been done to build the party, the RUP has not run in any elections to help build the party, and Chicanos at the conference equated the RUP with the Crusade. Thus, much of the sentiment expressed against the RUP, in my opinion, was mostly opposition to the Crusade's sectarian attitude toward drawing in Chicano activists into real activity around issues immediately affecting their lives. I was rather surprised at how isolated the Crusade was at the conference.

This isolation was evident at the workshop when the Crusade proposed that the conference recognize the RUP as the only revolutionary party for Chicanos. The RUP itself tabled the motion, because it became clear after a little discussion on the motion that it would have been defeated.

Because of the confusion, and the deep division in the workshop, no concrete proposal dealing with the 1976 elections came out of it. In fact, the only proposal to come out of the political parties workshop was a proposal that the conference go on record in support of all political prisoners.

When this proposal came before the general assembly Saturday night which was to vote on workshop proposals, the discussion began anew.

At that point, the RUP cochairperson, Montour, read a prepared statement, which basically reiterated that the RUP was the only revolutionary party for Chicanos. The statement also attacked those "Raza Unida Party organizations and leaders" who had deviated from the revolutionary goals of the RUP. It also labeled as "provocateurs" and "counterrevolutionary forces" anyone who had left the RUP in Colorado. These attacks were obvious references to the Texas RUP, Gutiérrez, and José Calderón. The RUP statement ended with an invitation to anyone at the conference who wanted to continue the discussion to attend a statewide conference of the Colorado RUP to be held in the next couple of months. No date was announced.

Other Workshop Proposals

All of the other workshop proposals were passed unanimously, but none of them were very concrete. Among those worth taking note of was the proposal from the Chicano student workshop to set up a coordinating committee of Chicano student organization leaders to reorganize and coordinate the Chicano student movement on a statewide basis. Proposals from the Political Prisoners workshop were passed to support Veronica Vigil, a Chicana activist now in jail for her refusal to testify before the grand jury on the Boulder bombings of 1974; support to Juan Haro and Anthony Quintana, two Crusade activists on trial for allegedly plotting to bomb the Denver Police station; support to Olga Talamante, a Chicana activist in jail in Argentina, and others. There was also a proposal passed from the AIM workshop calling for a boycott of all bicentennial activities and to organize counter-activities. Anti-bicentennial sentiment was deep at this conference.

In addition to the workshops, there was a presentation by a Maoist from Albuquerque on the Chinese Revolution -- a slide show. There was a march from the campus to the Alamosa courthouse -- to protest the bicentennial and the Colorado centennial, as well as to hear speakers on the case of "Kiko" Martinez, a Chicano activist being sought by the police in connection with the Boulder bombings; and a speaker from the land issue fight in the area.

Although no concrete proposals for action around issues like bilingual education and others immediately affecting Chicanos in Colorado came out of the conference, the conference was very important. It was seen by the Chicanos there as an important attempt at unifying the Chicano movement in the state, and many of the differences that have divided the Chicano movement were raised there and there was the beginnings of a discussion around them.

The interest in socialism was very high. I and our comrade from Denver were able to have a number of discussions with participants and they were very open to our ideas. There is a lack of understanding about the difference between the various tendencies, but none of the activists there were closed to discussions. The Maoists were able to sell quite a bit of literature, but I think that had we had a literature table, we would have done a very brisk business. This was the first Chicano conference of this

kind that I have been to where being a socialist was an asset. People who talked to me, when they found out I was a reporter for the Militant, wanted to know about our ideas, what we thought of the conference, how we saw the fight for Chicano liberation.

Another state-wide conference will be taking place on March 26-27 in Pueblo. This conference is being built as a Chicano student conference. We will keep comrades informed as we get more information.