

X: PC

REPORT ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY CAMPAIGN RALLY IN NEW YORK 10/24/76

On October 24, 1976 the CP featured a Hall-Tyner-Aptheker campaign rally at Felt Forum (Madison Square Garden). The rally had been publicized for at least six weeks through Daily World and Young Worker Ad, paid radio announcements on WBLS (a Black Radio station in NYC), leafletting on the campuses, 1199 Hospital workers delegate assemblies, street corner leafletting, street rallies, and stickers put up throughout the NY subways. The rally was an East Coast event with buses from Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

About 3,500 people attended the rally. Of these, over 1,000 were over 50 years of age. There were about 1,000 youth, 2-300 of which were under 15 and appeared to be children of CPers and their periphery and not necessarily YWLLers. There were about 600 Blacks and Puerto Ricans (only about 40 Puerto Ricans, and 5 Asians). About 300 of the Blacks and Puerto Ricans were youth, only about 150 of which appeared to be in the YWLL. There was a contingent of about 15 Greek students (in NY the CP dominates a Greek Student Federation).

Tickets cost from \$5 to \$1, but many were given away free. The high priced seats were in the front, resulting in the segregation of the audience. There were about 1,500 whites and 50 Blacks in the front, the balcony was more Black and Puerto Rican and youth.

Angela Davis opened the rally and chaired it. She reported on the states the CP will appear on the ballot and the ballot fights that they had had. She also talked about : death penalty, women's rights, Wilmington 10 (calling for release on bail), South Africa, Chile, and Palestine (which received notably less applause, primarily from the front of the audience). She was followed by a skit by a rented group- Teatro Popular, ~~which did a skit~~ on US colonialism in P.R.

Herbert Aptheker, CP candidate for US Senate spoke next. He talked about the injustices of capitalism, from E.G. Flynn, to the Rosenbergs, to the charges against Angela Davis. He focused on the decline of anti-communism and that a vote for the CP would "deal a smashing blow to American capitalism." This was followed by another skit on the NY crisis and the role of Big Mac.

Angela Davis then did a 15 minute fund pitch. Her presentation was three minutes and it was followed by the Hall-Tyner singers. They circulated envelopes and a bucket and at least in the balcony, only got a minimal amount of change. The envelope even offered free subs to the DW and YW, but only a fraction filled out the envelopes.

Jarvis Tyner followed next. In a very low key fifteen minute talk, he assailed the white "facists in South Africa". He mentioned desegregation in Boston only in one sentence. The thrust of his speech was to convince the audience, and especially the CPers not to vote for the lesser evil this time. He said that it was important especially now not to vote for the lesser evil because of the "thrust of the U.S. to fascist dictatorship." He said: "We must re-establish the policy of struggle in the Communist Party" His speech was meant to convince CPers that the witch-hunt is over, that they can come out now and be active, that the first thing to do is to vote CP and then

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keep on working openly. Fewer people applauded Tyners speech and rose for an ovation then when he was introduced. The Blacks and Puerto Ricans and poorer whites in the back responded less enthusiastically.

Gus Hall was the last speaker. He spent about ten of his 45 minutes making jokes about the debates. He said that Ford and Carter were both evils and that communists could not support them. He talked about redlining and the CP's proposals to end the economic crisis: strengthen detente (which would mean more jobs), cut the fat in the social service programs instead of the programs, and cut the fat out of the bloated corporation profits. There was nothing about nationalizations, workers control, but implied that if the cuts were made in the corporation and program bureaucracies, then it would be OK. Hall said that "socialism is a popular mass issue." He said that "we" must get rid of the mirage of the lesser evil, that there is none. He said that some people thought wrongly that Johnson was a lesser evil. (He did not hint that the CP supported Johnson in '64, but that it was "others". For those who were still not convinced that the CP was changing its line, he said: 'I do not want to have you embarrassed by your children or your friends when in a few years someone asks you if you voted for Hall instead of Carter. So don't be ashamed of yourself in three or four years, vote Communist.' Hall said that a big CP vote will influence the government, and help to stop the cutbacks. He then said that the CP campaign was an example, that more workers should run for public office, and that this would help lead to the creation of a new peoples party. He ended by encouraging everyone there to join the CP. This ended the rally. During Hall's speech however, about 100 people, mostly Blacks walked out of the rally.

The speeches were primarily directed at the CP and YWLL membership in trying to convince them to vote CP this year and to drop all the "lesser evilism. Anti-communism is no more and we can be open once again. The response of the audience was interesting. It was clear that many of the youth were "dragged" there by their parents or were given free tickets. There was a group of about twenty black youth near me, mostly women, who did not applaud or stand during the entire rally, but laughed and joked around. There is a clear heterogeneity to the YWLL. I recognized a number of the YWLLers from the NY campuses. The YWLL had a table and about 15 names of people who wanted more information. YWLLers passed out free Young Workers but were not aggressive, nor did they actively ask people to join.

The SWP campaign distributed 1,500 open letters to Gus Hall from Camejo, 500 Bill of Rights, 500 camejo rally leaflets. There were surprisingly few hostile responses, primarily from the old timers. The youth were quite receptive, a couple told me they were voting for Camejo. Other groups that intervened were: October League, YAWF, Spartacists, Revolutionary Socialist League, Chile Solidarity Ctte., United Farm Workers, P.R. Solidarity Ctte., Patrice Lumumba Coalition.

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