

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 5, February 3, 1977

Present: Blackstock, Breitman, Hawkins, D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Lund, Miah, Rodríguez, Seigle, Stapleton, Wohlforth

Guests: Brundy, Heisler, Matson

Chair: Seigle

AGENDA: 1. New York Local Convention
2. Energy Crisis
3. Critical Support Evaluation
4. "Party Organizer"
5. Membership
6. Raza Unida Party

1. NEW YORK LOCAL CONVENTION

L. Jenness reported on the January 28-30 New York local convention.

Discussion

2. ENERGY CRISIS

(Clark, Roberts, and Zimmermann invited for this point)

Roberts reported on general line of Militant coverage of energy crisis.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. CRITICAL SUPPORT EVALUATION

(Zimmermann invited for this point)

Hawkins reported. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

4. "PARTY ORGANIZER"

Seigle reported on proposal from secretariat to begin publication of a new internal bulletin to be called the "Party Organizer." This bulletin will be published periodically. It will contain reports from the field as well as from the national steering committees and departments on our work in the mass movement as well as

on party-building activities such as sales, finances, education, and recruitment.

Many reports and letters that are now sent out to organizers and national committee members for communication to the entire membership will instead be published in the "Party Organizer." It will also include selected articles reprinted from local preconvention discussion bulletins and other material that will be of value and interest to the entire membership.

In many respects, the "Party Organizer" will be similar to the "Party Builder," which has been published from time to time in the past. Comrades in the field will be encouraged to send in reports and articles for possible use in the "Party Organizer." However, unlike the "Party Builder," the material for the "Party Organizer" will be selected and edited by the secretariat.

The secretariat proposes that Seigle edit this new bulletin.

Discussion

Motion: To approve.

Carried.

5. MEMBERSHIP

D. Jenness reported on proposal to admit R.H. and S.H. in Geneva, New York as provisional members at-large.

Discussion

Motion: To approve.

Carried.

Seigle reported on the recommendation of the Northside Chicago branch that C.D. be re-admitted to the party.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Northside Chicago branch.

Carried.

6. RAZA UNIDA PARTY

Stapleton reported on the progress of the planned suit against the FBI, CIA, and Texas state government by the Texas Raza Unida Party.

PC No 5/ pg. 3

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

Evaluation of Critical Support to General Baker

by John Hawkins, February 3, 1977

The Detroit local used the tactic of critical support with respect to the Communist Labor Party's campaign of General Baker for the Michigan House of Representatives in the 9th district. One of the factors in our decision was the CLP's size in Detroit and its composition. According to comrades' estimates the CLP has about 200 members, with a lot of them in trade unions and a sizable number of them Black.

The CLP had been talking about running an election campaign as early as May of 1976. It was our estimate that if they actually ran a campaign it would attract a number of people that we would want to reach. We also thought it would open up an opportunity to do opponents work with the CLP.

We correctly saw that they would be in a vulnerable position in relation to us in this campaign. They were running for a minor office while we were running for major offices. We had our presidential ticket as well as the congressional campaign of B.R. Washington. The federal congressional district B.R. was running in (against John Conyers) includes the 9th state district, where Baker ran. The question would be posed of who the CLP should support for Congress, Senate, president and vice-president. By extending critical support to Baker's campaign we could better force them into a discussion around the nature of independent working-class political action.

The CLP campaign turned out to be relatively large and aggressively run. They produced a lot of literature and did extensive campaigning in the area their campaign covered.

Because they actually campaigned and had a number of meetings we were able to intervene and to a limited extent raise the questions we wanted to.

We got out a statement of support to Baker's campaign in the name of B.R. Washington. We distributed this statement along with the "Bill of Rights for Working People" and other campaign literature at two CLP rallies.

In the short period we carried out this critical support tactic we had some limited impact on CLPers and their supporters. Because of the tone of our statement we caught some of their leaders off guard. They couldn't really attack us without seeming sectarian to their own members. As a result we were able to get into discussions with some of their newer members and some of their supporters.

We also tried to arrange meetings with Washington and Baker on the same platform to open this debate up more publicly. One such meeting took place at Highland Park Community College.

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It was a small meeting, attended only by our members and some sectarian opponents of ours. But the fact that they agreed to hold the joint meeting indicated the pressure the CLP must have felt to respond to us.

One of the major gains for the party was the experience of actually carrying this out. The discussions the party had in coming to the decision to extend critical support to Baker and the discussions on how to carry it out were educational for our own membership. Comrades went back and studied previous examples and got a better understanding of what was involved. It raised the level of consciousness about the need to aggressively go after the CLP, which is a major opponent of ours in Detroit.

We also got a better feel for what the CLP is all about in Detroit. While we had run into them in desegregation work and in the unions before, this maneuver brought us into closer contact with them.

Our experience with the Baker critical support tactic puts us in a better position to take advantage of some other possibilities around opponents work in the 1977 mayoralty campaign. Already the New American Movement, the CLP, and other groups are discussing some coalition of radical groups to run candidates for city council.

Obviously they are not going to run someone for mayor. We'll be the only working-class party running in opposition to Coleman Young. This will open up the same debate on independent working-class political action and we will want to go after these groups and force them to confront this issue.

REPORT ON THE USE OF THE TACTIC OF CRITICAL SUPPORT
FOR THE MICHAEL MCGEE CAMPAIGNS

by Bob Schwarz, Milwaukee Branch

(Note: This report was shown to Executive Committee members here and the general ideas have been discussed, but the report itself, in this form, has not been discussed and approved by the Executive Committee.)

In the last weeks of the period before the November 2, 1976, elections a special election was organized for the First District Common Council seat. The incumbent, Orville Pitts, had resigned to take another city job, and under the guise of making sure the district had representation during the winter months the Common Council President ordered an immediate election, probably to reduce the in-fighting in the Democratic Party that would result from a long campaign.

The First District is in the heart of the most depressed section of the Black Community and has had a Black Alderperson for some years. Pitts was reelected last April with a large margin. His opposition included several up and coming Black Democrats as well as Michael McGee, a central leader of the United Black Community Council (UBCC).

McGee waged a year-long campaign based largely on personal contact but including some confrontations with Pitts and others in the last weeks of the campaign. His program was limited to a number of minor reforms but it raised, both in position papers and in the fact that it was run by an independent community organization noted for protest activity, the concept of independent Black political action. McGee and others in the UBCC have often expressed themselves in favor of an independent Black political party.

In this campaign the Branch initially took what I now think was a sectarian attitude. We were not that involved in the community and did not really consider the campaign a serious one. Because the UBCC takes a sectarian attitude toward the desegregation struggle in Milwaukee, counterposing community control of the schools, we concluded, without much consideration, that we should oppose the campaign, or more accurately we ignored it. Little or no investigation was done to see if it was really independent.

Members of the UBCC attended the YSA convention here, were impressed, and tried to get us to support their campaign in January of 1976, a month and a half before the non-partisan primary which would knock McGee out of the race. After a debate in the Branch we finally decided to recommend to the PC that we give critical support, which recommendation was approved. Just before the primary our mayoralty candidate issued a statement of support and we wrote a Militant article on the campaign. We tried to get McGee to speak at our wind-up campaign rally which he tentatively agreed to but was unable to make because of other commitments. We followed up the election with a discussion with him and several

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other leaders which was interesting but didn't lead to any immediate activity.

The November 2 election found us more prepared to make a serious approach to the campaign but with even less time. Since the election was organized only weeks ahead of time, McGee launched his campaign only a little before the actual vote. We had expected several months before the election, but that proved not to be the case.

Under the circumstances our application of the tactic of critical support was limited. We tried several things, all aimed at getting to talk with and influence members of the UBCC and those around it, but none of these were particularly successful.

The first things we did was interview McGee for another Militant article, which made it possible for me to have a discussion with McGee and gain his endorsement for the Camejo-Reid campaign. I inquired about the possibility of working with their members on campaign work, meetings, etc., but they indicated that the only activity they were carrying out was door to door canvassing. Participation in the UBCC itself is limited to Blacks so we are hampered in our relations with them by the lack of any active Black comrades. We issued a statement, some copies of which were left at their headquarters and we distributed about 500 in the district during our door to door canvassing. We had originally planned to distribute their literature but decided our own leaflet, with our approach and including our candidates as well was better.

We made two attempts to involve McGee in meetings with us. The first was to be at Milwaukee Area Technical College, a local trade school with a heavily Black student body. The new YSA chapter agreed to organize it and McGee was contacted but indicated he could not speak because of a family emergency.

Following the election McGee agreed to speak at a forum with myself on the results of the election. However, the day of the forum he came down with the flu and had to cancel out.

Giving critical support to both campaigns has not directly aided us in getting closer to members of the UBCC. However, I believe that the discussion we've gone through, both with them and internally, has helped us in developing a relationship with some members of the UBCC important to our establishing ourselves in the Black community. As a result of the first contact with them about the earlier campaign I was able to meet with one of their leaders and arrange for a meeting they organized and built that included Willie Mae Reid speaking to a largely Black audience about independent politics. They have sent speakers to several of our events including the opening of our headquarters October 1 of this year. Without question our critical support for their campaign helped develop this relationship, but it did not help us work with them on the campaign, which should be the outcome as it was in the National City, California, experience.

In conclusion, I think critical support was correct but it

was not pursued aggressively enough and quickly enough to allow our members to work directly with their members. In future campaigns we should put that objective at the top of our list and discuss our work around such campaigns first and foremost from the point of view of how we can use critical support to come into closer contact with the UBCC or any other group.

December 16, 1976