

July 5, 1978

TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

The Milwaukee branch has proposed that we give critical support to an SP candidate running for state senate in the fall elections in Wisconsin. Attached is a report on this proposal given to the Milwaukee branch, a piece of SP campaign literature, and a report by Wendy Lyons on a recent convention of the SP.

We will be taking up the question of critical support to the SP candidate at the PC meeting this Thursday.

Betsey

1X Political Committee

JUN 19 1978

REPORT TO THE JUNE 11, 1978 MEETING OF THE
MILWAUKEE BRANCH ON CRITICAL SUPPORT
TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY STATE SENATE CAMPAIGN

This is a report on a recommendation from the executive committee that our branch give critical support to the Socialist Party campaign of Joel A. Miller for State Senate in the Wisconsin Ninth State Senate district. We've already had discussion on it in the campaign committee and the exec., and if the branch approves the endorsement, a report will go to the Political Committee of the party in New York.

We can use this opportunity to educate ourselves on this issue of the tactic of critical support. For many of us in the branch, this is the first time we're dealing with this question. I urge comrades to read this "Education for Socialists" bulletin called, Aspects of Socialist Election Policy, especially the last few articles that deal with critical support. I learned a lot from reading it. Then there's a really good article in last week's ISR section of the Militant that discusses critical support in relation to how revolutionaries work within and outside the British Labor Party. Also, in Trotsky's writings of 1939-40 there are twelve or so pages on discussions between Trotsky and leaders of the party on the question of endorsing the CP's preidential campaign in 1940.

For many years, in different parts of the country, the party has used the tactic of critical support. We've endorsed the campaigns of the Raza Unida Party in the southwest many times. In Milwaukee just a couple of years ago, in 1975 and 1976, the branch endorsed the United Black Community Council's

independent campaign of Michael McGee for Common Council.

Some of the SPers know that we're considering giving them critical support but we should keep this discussion strickly internal until the final decision is made by the Political Committee.

What is critical support? We're calling on the working class and the population as a whole to cast their vote for the parties that we recommend but not to hold any illusions in these parties, most of which are reformist betrayers. We criticize them and point out the shortcomings of these parties and their programs. We're not running anyone for state Senate in this election and we think workers should vote for Joel as an alternative to the capitalist party candidates.

What are the political reasons for giving critical support? First, it's a maneuver on our part, a means for us to get close to the ranks of the party we're supporting, to create a discussion and to carry out an educational campaign. It's a weapon that we use to develop a critical attitude in the ranks of these parties toward their reformist leaderships and to win over the revolutionary-minded members within these parties. Second, one of the purposes of giving critical support to candidates of other tendencies who are running against the capitalist parties is to help promote a break with capitalist politics on the part of the working class, and of course to advance our own ideas, our own program and our own party. It's a unilateral action on our part. We don't negotiate with the party to which we give critical support; we do it for our own

reasons and not for theirs.

There are two basic aspects to take into account when considering critical support: Principles and Tactics. They are two separate questions but we need both of them before deciding to give critical support.

If it's unprincipled to support Joel or any other candidate, then there's no point in discussing the tactics. Any tactical advantage that could be gained by supporting such a candidate would be far outweighed by the negative results of the damage done to our principles. The basic principle we're guided by is that we don't cross class lines in politics. We never support a bourgeois party in any shape or form. We're for independent, working-class, anti-capitalist political action against the capitalist parties. The question we have to consider is whether the Miller campaign falls into that category.

There are three basic criterion that we have always use to determine whether it is principled to call for a vote for one or another political party. First, what is the class composition of that party? If a party is by and large a party of workers and is of mass character, this is one consideration as to whether we would call for a vote for them in the elections. The Socialist Party, USA is not largely working class in composition nor mass in character. So it fails here. Second, is the question of political control. Who controls the party? Is the party controlled by mass organizations of the working class? The British Labor Party and the Canadian labor party, the NDP, are workers parties based on the trade unions. The SP is not

controlled by mass organizations of the working class, so it fails in this criterion also. Third, does the party have historical ties to the working class? Yes, the SP has ties to the social democratic International—the Second International—so here it would be principled to endorse them.

Now once we establish that it would be correct to endorse the SP's campaign according to our principles, we should discuss whether it would be tactically reasonable to do so.

The executive committee thinks that we can get something out of this endorsement.

First, we already said that by endorsing Joel's campaign we would be able to explain more clearly our principled position of independent working-class political action—that would be the basis of our support.

Second, we also said that by endorsing their campaign we would gain a hearing amongst the rank and file of the SP for our criticisms of their program and thus would advance our program.

Third, by endorsing the SP campaign we would be able to reach people who are attracted to the campaign.

Fourth, we would win support for our own state campaign.

Fifth, we would put the SP on the spot to endorse our campaign. Comrades remember that the SP was supposed to decide who to run for governor at their state convention last month and since the convention was such a mess and deep political divisions took place, they didn't nominate anyone. Later they took a poll of their membership to decide whether or not

to run a campaign for governor and they decided not to.

So by endorsing their campaign we would be pressuring them to endorse our campaign. We would look real good as far as being non-sectarian and if the SPers don't endorse our campaign they'll have a hard time explaining over and over again to their periphery that they're not going to endorse our candidates when we endorse theirs. They'll come off looking like the sectarians.

I'll pass around a couple copies of Joel's program for those comrades who haven't seen it. Program is generally not one of our considerations when deciding whether or not to give critical support. The program that Joel is running on is not the decisive question in determining whether or not we can give him critical support. Program is not the decisive question in determining whether or not we can give critical support to any candidate. If it were, we could only support candidates adhering to the revolutionary Marxist program, that is, ourselves. We could never support any other candidates, because we alone have the program which is in the long-run historic interests of the working class.

The only time that program becomes a criterion is when the party we're considering endorsing is small and not a factor in the labor movement and if a reactionary part of their program assumes a greater importance than popularizing the idea of independent political action. For example, if the SP said in their program that the U.S. should send troops to Africa and was waging a campaign to get U.S. troops to Africa or was help-

ing to break a strike. This would outweigh the advantage of using the campaign to popularize the idea of independent political action on the part of the working class. It would confuse people. Thus in a few cases, program would prevent us from critically endorsing a campaign.

So, we almost never support other candidates for their program. We use the tactic of critical support for the purpose of attacking their program.

Now usually we probably wouldn't bother to endorse a campaign like this. These kinds of campaigns by groups like the SP are usually insignificant—they don't put much money or work into publicizing their campaigns. Take the Socialist Labor Party. They run candidates every time there's an election and it would be perfectly principled to critically endorse them but we never bother because it wouldn't do much for us tactically. The SLP hasn't had much of a periphery or wing that we would want to influence. Although the Socialist Party has a history in Wisconsin, Joel's campaign, like many of this kind, are not very well known. It's because of the internal movement going on right now in the SP that we think we may be able to make some gains out of our endorsement. Comrades know about the fights that went on in the SP at their state convention between the younger Miller wing and the older reformists. They've also had some resignations since the convention over political disagreements. So it's this internal direction that's going on inside the SP that makes our critical support important.

How do we want to use critical support in this campaign of the SP? What do we want to get out of our critical endorsement? We can set up some goals and see if we achieve them:

One, we want to get the SP to endorse Adrienne and Bill's campaign. We know that Joel is impressed with our campaign and we want him to lead a fight in the SP to endorse our campaign.

Two, we want to drive a wedge between the more revolutionary-minded SPers and the reactionary Zeidlers, Harts and Kissels who won't want to endorse our campaign. Our program is too radical for them, and besides, they don't want us to influence their ranks.

Three, we want to influence the periphery of the SP, anyone who would be attracted to Joel's campaign, and bring them around us.

Joel and some of the other SPers would consider our endorsement as a friendly gesture of solidarity. They're always saying that the left is generally sectarian and that the left should get together. When I mentioned to Joel that our endorsement was possible, he said that that would be very "comradely" of us. I think that we'll want to use this positive atmosphere that we'll be creating, if we vote to endorse Joel's campaign, to have some serious discussions with the politically healthier SPers.

Now the degree of support or criticism is something we'll have to discuss right away. How much support do we want to give to Joel's campaign and what degree of criticism do we want to employ? I think that we would want to be taken seriously by the SPers. We want them to know that our support is sincere.

We don't want this to appear as a maneuver to them. We want them to know that we think it would be a positive thing for Joel to be elected.

In the next couple of weeks the exec. will be discussing exactly how we would go about supporting Joel's campaign. When we put out a statement on our critical support we should be more positive than negative. This would be crucial to begin to win over any of the SPers. We would start out very positively, emphasizing the areas we agree on. We want to explain to workers and the general public what we think is the central question in American politics today—the urgency of working people to break with the parties of the banks and corporations. A vote for Joel is a vote against the capitalist parties.

We may want to put out two different statements, one for the general public emphasizing the main point we see in this campaign and other positive aspects with some of our major criticisms as well. Another statement we could use to give to leftists and the SPers which would be a more detailed criticism of their program. We would point out the drawbacks and shortcomings of his program. If you look at it, it's obviously a very reformist program. No where do they discuss the need for socialism. On energy, banks and runaway shops they have nothing on nationalizations. Instead they talk about worker-consumer management of the industry. They have something in there about the creation of a state bank which would leave state banks untouched.

A comrade would be assigned to write an analysis or two of

their program which we would put out as a statement giving critical support to the campaign. Another thing we can do is invite the SPers to our summer school on the Transitional Program. We would have an opportunity to show them how the Transitional Program is counterposed to their program.

Critical support will advance our program and our party and it will hurt the SP and its program. We'll have lots of ways to engage in important discussions with them. Critical support is the tactic which will give us this opportunity.

The motion from the executive committee is that we recommend to the Political Committee that the branch extend critical endorsement to the Socialist Party campaign of Joel Miller for Wisconsin State Senate.

Discussion.

Approved unanimously.

Alexandra Topping
Campaign Director, for the Exective Committee,
Milwaukee Branch

ABBREVIATED PLATFORM OF THE SOCIALIST FOR STATE SENATE COMMITTEE. As approved June 3, 1978.

1. Worker-consumer management of the energy industry in the State. Take the profit out of energy and return the savings to the consumer. Expanded use of alternative technology on a state-wide basis through the research and development initiatives of a publicly owned energy enterprise.
2. Creation of a State bank as in North Dakota. Such a bank would function cooperatively with communities in the State. It would lend money for socially useful projects at low interest rates. Middle and low income people would have expanded savings and borrowing opportunities. This would provide protection against red-lining older communities.
3. Social ownership and democratic operation of the Telephone service. Provision of services at lowest possible costs. This has already been done in Manitoba, Canada.
4. Recognition of the right of public employees to strike and organize in labor unions. State government must never use its resources to break a strike or other job action.
 - **Prohibition of the use of the military and police forces to break strikes,
 - **Prohibition of scabbing,
 - **Abolition of injunctions as a means to break strikes,
 - **No State purchases from firms where a strike is taking place,
 - **No discrimination against strikers in need of welfare assistance,
 - **Prohibition of the employment of private detectives and detective agencies in labor disputes,
 - **Prohibition of the use of lockouts by employers to curb organizing efforts of workers.
5. Six hour work day, thirty hour work week for forty hours pay.
6. The State should not be afraid to take legal action against corporations that damage communities by leaving them and their people unemployed. The State should set up worker managed productive and distributive cooperatives that would become self-sufficient and autonomous after a period of time.

Laws on both the State and federal level must be passed controlling runaway shops.
7. Support of the gay community in their struggle against police harassment and in the effort to attain ordinances banning discrimination against gays in housing and employment.
8. Equal access to all forms of medical treatment including the right of low income women to abortion.
9. Parent-worker managed day care facilities should be expanded throughout the State for working women, *funding by whom? private?*
10. End the practices of sterilizing poor and minority women without their consent.
11. Recognition of Native American sovereignty.

12. End the harrassment of undocumented workers. Full access to social programs for undocumented workers. Opposition to efforts like AB 353 which encourage employment discrimination against undocumented workers.

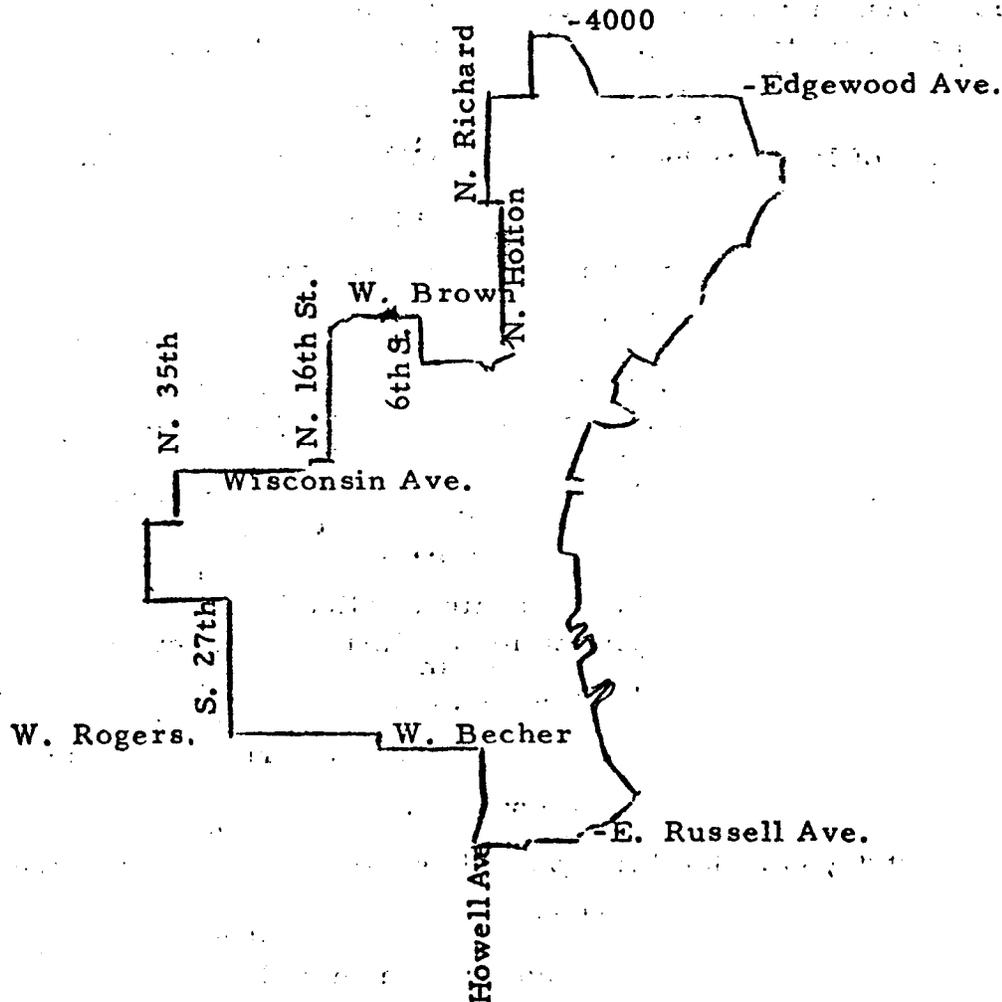
13. Moratorium on all nuclear plant construction until the public can be assured of the safety of such facilities.

14. All persons serving on the governing boards of public authorities, commissions, etc., that levy taxes should be subject to direct election. At the present time the governing officials of the Metropolitan Sewerage Commission and the Milwaukee Area Technical College School Board are unelected. Both of these bodies levy taxes.

THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY JOEL MILLER AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE SOCIALIST FOR STATE SENATE COMMITTEE, Rm. 325, 135 W. Wells St. Milwaukee 53203. Or call 276-0773.

Joel A. Miller is the candidate of the Socialist Party for State Senate in the 9th State Senate District. He will be running in the November general election against the Democratic and Republican nominees. You will find him in the independant column on the ballot.

THE NINTH STATE SENATE DISTRICT



JUN 3 1978

Minneapolis
May 30, 1978

Dear Comrades,

This is a report on some developments taking place with the Socialist Party. The SP is the group that ran Frank Zeidler for president in the 1976 elections. Zeidler served as a known social democrat as mayor of Milwaukee from 1948 until 1960.

The SP grows out of a split that took place shortly before the 1973 split that shattered the old SP into the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) and the Social Democrats USA (SDUSA.)

The present SP is composed of people who disagreed with the realignment (working in the Democratic party) policy of the old group and also radical pacifists who opposed the pro Vietnam war stance of the old SP. Dave McKeynolds belongs to this group.

They appear to have 200 or so members. In Milwaukee, which the national leadership says is their strongest local, they claim 50 members. Comrades report that many of these are not active. They have recruited a number of young people over the last couple of years and recruited a number of teachers out of the Racine Wisconsin teachers' strike last year.

Their national headquarters is in Milwaukee. While the older members of the group are stone reformists and quite hostile to us, there is a group of young people in Milwaukee who consider themselves revolutionary Marxists. Comrades in Milwaukee have found themselves working with these young people on a range of activities. Most recently we worked closely together on anti Bakke activities. There has been cooperation on antideportation activity, support actions for the ERA and abortion rights, and work around Southern Africa.

A number of these young people read the Militant closely. Their local chairperson, Joel Miller, worked on a job with one of the comrades for several months and has been influenced by our ideas. Their national secretary, Tom Spiro, has been ~~influenced~~ over to comrades houses for political discussions. He is in his late twenties. There are about ten people we've had friendly contact with in one way or another.

The SP's paper the Socialist Tribune has begun to come out more regularly. Spiro and Miller seem to have a lot to do with the line of it. (See enclosed copies) Note articles that Spiro wrote on Blanco and Marroquin. A recent issue cited Intercontinental Press as a source for an article on the Mideast.

A few months ago the Milwaukee group invited James Weinstein (editor of In These Times) to speak at a forum. Bob Schwarz and I attended. There were about 35 people there. The young CPers were disgusted with Weinstein's defense of working in the Democratic party and raked him over the coals in the discussion period. We ~~went~~ ^{met} out for drinks with them afterwards and they were quite interested in talking politics with us.

Will Reissner and I attended the Wisconsin State Convention of the SP held in Madison May 13-14. All members who were paid up in dues were eligible to be delegates. There were about 25 people there through the weekend.

The first item of business was a discussion on ~~whether~~ whether or not we should be allowed in as observers. The young people from Milwaukee were not there yet. The state secretary, Ken Kissell, from Madison opposed us being seated on the basis that we have been "trying to destroy the SP ~~ever~~ since the thirties."

Zeidler argued that even though we are a totalitarian party and ~~oppose~~ ^{oppose} everything the SP ~~stands~~ ^{stands} for "we should be let in because it would be undemocratic to bar us."

William Osborne Hart, a longtime figure in the Madison SP also spoke for seating us on the basis of democracy. The only opposing vote was Kissell.

Kissell, who is in his twenties and lives in Madison, gave a dismal report on the accomplishments of the State Executive Board in the last two years. He said they were not able to get a quorum more than a few time. During the discussion it came out that there has been no financial accounting in the state organization in two years.

At one point during the discussion Hart, who we knew from Madison years ago leaned over to us and said, "Just between you and me, you are witnessing the dissolution of the Wisconsin SP. Maybe you can pick up some pieces."

The first political debate centered around a proposal by Zeidler to send greetings to a retiring Democratic state legislator. Several members objected with the comments, "We can't afford to waste time on capitalist politicians," "We shouldn't play footsie with capitalists after we go to the trouble to organize a socialist party," "It was Harrington's support of the Democrats that kept him from opposing the war when he should have."

By the afternoon about eight of the young people from Milwaukee arrived and a debate began around a proposal by Zeidler to condemn "terror as a method of social change."

Joel Miller proposed an amendment that would define terror as minority violence (terrorism) distinguishing it from the violence that took place during the American and French revolutions or recent unspecified revolutions.

Hart argued that the violence of Cuba in Angola is as bad as the US violence in Vietnam was.

Zeidler said he would accept Miller's amendment because the purpose of his motion was to condemn terrorism per se in this particular case. (It was right after the Moro incident) He went on to say "There is a division in the party--some are ~~in~~ using force to win our point and others are not. The party will have to confront the question of violence in the near future. We have a pacifist wing and an almost Leninist wing."

The convention then proceeded to debate a proposed state platform draft by Kisell paragraph by paragraph. Miller had introduced a counter platform in a workshop which we got part of. (See enclosed.)

The next substantive debate took place around the conception of the party. Miller proposed that the SP oppose electoral laws forcing all parties to have open primaries where anyone who registered SP could vote on who the party's candidates could be. He argued that only members--those in ideological agreement with the SP-- should have the right to vote for its ~~candidates~~ standard bearers.

Zeidler and Hart and others opposed this as undemocratic. The debate extended to whether the candidates of the SP must be responsible to it, run on its program, and whether locals of the SP should have to actively back candidates of the party. Zeidler characterized the debate as "against those of you who are moving in a democratic centralist direction."

Miller's amendment was defeated as were most of the proposals of his grouping.

Other areas of debate:

A young member from Milwaukee proposed that the SP support the striking farmers and go on record in favor of 100% parity. This was opposed on the basis that it would mean higher prices.

An amendment to oppose attempts to repeal gay rights ordinances was voted down on the basis that it would oppose a democratic process--referendums.

There was a debate on whether or not to oppose marijuana laws.

The most heated discussion took place over the issue of gun control. Hart introduced an amendment to a section of the state platform opposing SWAT squads that would favor outlawing handguns.

The young people from Milwaukee were especially furious at this. All of them took the floor to speak to the issue as a class question. They talked about the violence of the police and how working people have to have the right to self defense and the right to bear arms. ~~Several of them said:~~

Miller said, "This puts the blame for violence on working people instead of where it belongs. Why is it that this party never discusses the violence against Indians, of the INS against undocumented workers, the violence of the police against people in ghettos, and the violence by the guards in prisons?"

The pro gun control amendment passed 15-7. Miller then introduced an amendment in favor of disarming the police and military in order to expose the argument that the SP should oppose all violence. It failed.

The last point on the agenda was the question of running a gubernatorial campaign. Miller proposed that they not run this year on the basis that there were too many divisions in the party. Zeidler agreed at first. Hart then threatened to run on the SP ticket even if they voted not to run. He then said he was resigning from the SP and walked out. He gave statements to the press that he walked out because of the pro terrorist alternative lifestyle wing of the party.

After he walked out a proposal to take a statewide membership poll as to whether to run him for governor passed. If they don't run him they will not run.

Joel Miller is running for state senate and the convention went on record endorsing his campaign.

After the convention Tony Prince and I went over to their national offices in Milwaukee. Tom Spiro who was not at the ~~same~~ convention was there. He was quite cold and obviously nervous that I had been to their convention. He had been quite friendly last time I met him. He did offer the information that in his opinion there was a Marxist wing and pacifist wing in the SP and that they were headed for a big debate at their national convention this fall. I invited him to Oberlin.

The comrades in Milwaukee are ~~thinking of~~ continuing to think of ways to work together with the SP. We have already launched a campaign for Governor and Lt. Gov. in Wisconsin. Adrienne Kaplan who is very widely known in the women's movement there, and Bill Breihan a steelworker who ~~was~~ ~~an activist in the Sadlowski~~ was a leading activist in the Sadlowski campaign are the candidates. ~~At the convention~~

If the SP doesn't run for Governor our campaign will look quite attractive to Joel's grouping. He had indicated enthusiasm for it. ~~Regarding the~~ In the meantime the comrades will discuss giving critical support to Joel Miller in his campaign for state senate.

Comradely, Wendy Lyons

Wendy