
THE NEW YORK CITY ELECTIONS

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COMRADES: The November 2 elections hold great lessons for our party, for the labor movement and for all who place victory in the war above all other considerations.

November 2 was a day of great achievement for the patriotic forces of New York City. But our exhilaration over the outcome of the Councilmanic race must not lead to intoxication. We must not forget that the 320,000 plurality given General Haskell in the City of New York was insufficient to stem the Republican avalanche that rolled down from the upstate counties, electing Dewey's man Hanley as the Lieutenant-Governor of the Empire State.

Both the victories and the defeats must be examined soberly if we are to extract from them those lessons that will make possible a victory for the policies and candidates supporting our Commander-in-Chief in the crucial Presidential and Congressional elections of 1944.

The lesson that Haskell could have been elected and that the Republican victories scored this year can be reversed next year is to be

drawn from the results of the Councilmanic elections in this city.

In these elections the voters generally showed a high degree of political awareness. They consciously supported those candidates, irrespective of party label, who symbolized the fight for unity and victory. Of course, not a few old party wheelhorses were returned to the Council. But in the main the machine-picked candidates were roundly rebuffed. Even those who were re-elected were returned to office with the smallest popular vote of their careers.

The new mood of the electorate can be seen in the great popular tribute paid Stanley Isaacs by the voters of Manhattan. Two years ago Isaacs was dumped by the leadership of the Republican Party because of his consistent and courageous defense of democracy during the days of the anti-Gerson witch-hunt. This year Isaacs received 83,000 votes, the largest total popular vote of any candidate in the city.

In Manhattan this rising political awareness is especially expressed in the victory of our own Benjamin

J. Davis, Jr., as successor to that fighting progressive, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who will seek a Congressional seat from Harlem in 1944. The election of Ben Davis is a great victory for national unity. It is a tribute in the first place to the growing political consciousness and unity of the great Negro people. It is a tribute also to the large numbers of white progressives without whom this victory could not have been possible. The election of Ben Davis this year, following the election of Powell two years ago, bids fair that there will never again be a City Council in New York that does not contain at least one representative of the Negro people.

Brooklyn two years ago made history when it elected the first Communist Councilman, Peter V. Cacchione. This year Brooklyn did more than merely repeat history. It gave Pete the largest first choice vote of any candidate in the city—53,545, and a total, with second choices, of 68,836. This compares with 34,657 first choice votes two years ago and a total final vote of 48,536.

The same trend was apparent in the Bronx. Michael J. Quill, fighting leader of the transport workers, received 47,600 first choice votes—more than any other candidate in his borough. In the Bronx, the two reactionary Red-baiting Democrats, Joseph Kinsley and Louis Cohen, went down to defeat.

In the Councilmanic elections our party scored a great advance of far-reaching consequence. If correctly appraised and followed up, it may well mark the turning point in the

relationship of our party to the main forces in American political life—the beginning of full integration of our party in the camp of national unity.

The candidates of our party polled the largest vote in our history in New York City—a total of 106,438 first choice votes. This, despite the fact that in the Bronx our candidate, Isidore Begun, did not register his full strength, much of his vote being absorbed by candidate Quill.

In Queens, even though we did not elect a Councilman, our candidate Paul Crosbie increased his vote by more than 33 per cent, from 3,948 in 1941 to 5,249 in 1943.

It is important to note that the larger party vote was not obtained at the expense of the American Labor Party. In Manhattan, A.L.P.-er Eugene Connolly increased his first-choice vote from 17,967 two years ago to 29,850 this year. The combined party and Left-wing labor candidates polled a total of 211,371 first choice votes. When to this are added the Queens and the Right-wing labor candidates in Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx, there is a grand total of 329,714 first choice votes cast for labor candidates throughout the city.

If the official A.L.P. representation in the new Council has been reduced, it is not therefore due to the fact that too few votes were cast for labor candidates, nor is it the fault of Proportional Representation. It is only due to the failure to achieve unity in the ranks of the A.L.P. Had there been such unity, at least two more A.L.P. candidates would have been elected *on the*

basis of the actual votes cast. This was obviously the case in Brooklyn.

Think, comrades, what the political situation in New York City would be if there were unity in the ranks of the American Labor Party. This would not represent a mere arithmetical addition of so-called Right and Left votes. It would represent a qualitative change and like an irresistible magnet would draw to the A.L.P. tens of thousands of new voters who today remain repulsed by the internecine warfare in labor's political camp.

The need for unity in the A.L.P. is therefore one of the main lessons to be drawn from this election, especially in view of the bigger political battle looming for 1944. Let us hope that the gentlemen at the helm of the state A.L.P. will draw this lesson, will not permit their factional bias and blindness to stand in the way of building this great political arm of labor.

For some time now the state leadership of the A.L.P. has rejected the Hillman proposals for the unification of the New York labor party. They have argued that labor unions cannot deliver votes on election day and that the Left Wing is a negligible factor in New York politics. Victor Riesel, Labor Editor of the *New York Post* and one of Dubinsky's sidekicks, wrote before the final returns were in that the A.L.P. state leaders were looking to the Council elections to confirm their claims. These are the exact words he used. I quote from the *New York Post* of November 5:

"A.L.P. men are now waiting for the City Council vote tabulation to indicate the votes the local C.I.O. Council was able to deliver to energetic campaigners such as Mike Quill, and the Brooklyn Left-wing nominees. If these candidates are elected or roll up sizable votes the A.L.P. leaders will be proven wrong in their estimate of their opposition's strength."

That they have been proven wrong goes without saying; but I am afraid these gentlemen do not have the courage to admit it. For suddenly this afternoon the *New York Post* blossomed forth with a special editorial and a feature article by Mr. Riesel—calling for unity in the A.L.P.? Oh, no! They call for the abolition of Proportional Representation!

Ten days ago Mr. Riesel admitted that a large vote for the C.I.O.-endorsed candidates would prove the A.L.P. leadership wrong in its estimate. Now that the large vote has been recorded, Proportional Representation is to blame—for how could David Dubinsky ever be wrong! Such is the integrity of these people.

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To what can the victories in the Councilmanic elections be credited?

First, they must be credited to the impact of world events, which like a huge juggernaut are smashing through the long-erected Chinese wall of lies and prejudices. The old machine politicians and their Red-baiting Social-Democratic cronies can only explain what happened in mumbo-jumbo double-talk. They

conveniently forget that New York is still part of the world and is still influenced by the logic of world events. Like the old Kansas farmer, they asked the cyclone to go around their barn. But it didn't! The Red bogey is not yet dead; but it is rapidly dying, and on our part we wish it godspeed.

A second factor of great importance in this victory is the quality of the candidates put forth, their records and the crusading fashion in which they brought the major issues of the day to the people. These candidates came out of their corners swinging both fists, landing uppercuts to the jaw of their opponent instead of gentle slaps on the wrist. They minced no words as to where they stood on the war and the President's program. They fought against every form of discrimination and race prejudice, against high prices and war profiteering. They pointed to the record of the present City Council and exposed those Councilmen who have been doing everything in their power to weaken the foreign and domestic policies of the Commander-in-Chief.

Compare this with the artful dodging of issues that typified the official Democratic Party campaign for Haskell. One would think they were participating in a Viennese waltz instead of a political battle of first magnitude.

Our enemies have in recent days paid high tribute to our ability to organize. Yes, our success is indeed greatly due to good organization. But one cannot separate politics from organization. It was the kind of political fight that the pro-

gressive labor movement conducted that made possible the highest degree of organization, because it aroused the voters, mobilized their most advanced sections and raised the whole campaign to the level of a crusade.

The third reason for these victories is that the progressive candidates did not place their dependence upon the old corrupt political machines. They placed their reliance in the first place on the people and built their own special electoral machinery. Stanley Isaacs received the Republican designation this year, but to the Republican Party does not go the credit for his victory. The same is true of Genevieve Earle in Brooklyn. As for Michael Quill, the progressive labor movement built its own election machinery for him. Our party candidates, of course, had the party behind them at all times, but, in addition to our party, very effective non-partisan committees were established that did heroic work. Likewise, our party campaigned, not exclusively for its own candidates, but for the victory of all win-the-war candidates.

Compare this with the position that Haskell was in. A novice at politics, poor soul, he placed himself at the tender mercy of James Aloysius Farley. Jim, on the other hand, reciprocated by conducting the kind of campaign that would not have elected a dog-catcher in Kalamazoo, let alone a Lieutenant-Governor in the State of New York.

But Jim is not only guilty of omission; for whatever may be said about him, no one has ever called

him slovenly or lazy. Jim had an objective. It was to defeat Haskell—and he succeeded. Haskell was betrayed by the Democratic Party machine at every turn. This can be seen in Queens. The Democrats there piled up a lead of about 25,000 for their Councilmanic candidates, and yet Hanley, the Republican, carried the borough by 23,500! That is how the Queens Democratic machine got out the vote for Haskell—in reverse.

Between Jim Farley's stiletto and Mike Kennedy's Costello, Haskell didn't have a chance.

An important lesson from the third reason for the victories therefore emerges: the need for a complete regeneration of the Democratic Party in the state. The time has come for all the true Roosevelt supporters in the Democratic Party to clean house. The paralyzing grip of Jim Farley must be broken! The corrupt machines must be smashed! Without these there is grave danger that the President will be betrayed in his own party next year.

Side by side with the need for cleansing the Democratic Party, is that of labor building its own independent political machinery. What the New York City C.I.O. Council and unions so brilliantly accomplished this year must become the property of the entire labor movement. The C.I.O. Council by its work has once and for all belied the claim that trade unions cannot enter the political arena with success. Imagine what can be done next year if all sections of the C.I.O. and all sections of the labor movement in our city and state partici-

pate in the elections in the same way!

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What, comrades, is the special meaning of the large party vote?

We must answer this question soberly, modestly and objectively. Failure to do so will only lay us open to new dangers. It will repulse and drive away the thousands who voted for our candidates precisely because they saw in them not petty partisans, but champions and symbols of unity. It will frighten many of our friends. It will feed the reactionaries, who are swiftly recovering from their state of shell-shock and opening their big guns to destroy Proportional Representation and to weaken and damage the growing prestige of our party in the eyes of the people of this city.

To understand why we got the large vote and what it represents, let me take a few moments to trace the background of our most dramatic victory, that of Ben Davis.

Two years ago we were among the first to support the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., for the City Council. This year we favored the unity of all the Negro people and white progressives around another unity representative of the Negro people. We did not rush to nominate Ben Davis. We were ready and anxious to support the Negro candidate who could best achieve the broadest unity of the win-the-war forces around his personality. Powell was urged to run. When he declined, we were ready to support Channing Tobias, who had been

given the nomination by the Republican Party. But at the eleventh hour he too, withdrew. It was then that the white Communist candidate, Carl Brodsky, breaking all tradition, withdrew in order to enable Ben Davis to make the race.

It is obvious, therefore, that when Ben Davis became the candidate it was already apparent to all that this was no attempt on the part of the Communist Party to seek partisan advantage. With no other prominent Negro leader in the field, Ben Davis carried the ball, plunging through to a touchdown. But Ben and our party made the run as part of a unity team. Ben's victory is therefore a victory of that team as a whole.

Without this consistent record of fighting for unity, Ben Davis, the Communist, could not have become the candidate that united the Negro people and a good portion of labor and white progressives.

The same could be said of the other candidates. The people saw in our candidates the best fighters for victory and for the unity necessary to achieve victory. It is in this field of struggle for anti-fascist peoples' unity that our party has made the greatest name for itself in the past year. We helped to forge the unity of the great Negro people which found its high expression in the outpouring of Negro and white masses to the historic June 7 Madison Square Garden Rally. We helped to build the unity of the Jewish people and contributed to the success of that great outpouring to greet Mikhoels and Feffer at the Polo Grounds. We have consist-

ently fought for Italian-American unity. We have consistently fought for labor unity and for a united American Labor Party. All these great struggles left their imprint on the people of this city. They all played their part in making our victory possible.

That is why our candidates were endorsed by dozens of labor and people's organizations. Comrades Cacchione and Davis received the unanimous endorsement of the C.I.O. Council. They were also endorsed by A. F. of L. unions, by church organizations, by fraternal societies, by women's clubs and even by small-businessmen's groups.

We can therefore summarize this point by saying that the large vote given our candidates was not a vote for the party, *per se*. It was not a vote of Communists for Communism. It was a vote of the most progressive section of the electorate for anti-fascist unity—for the Communist policy and fight for unity—and for the inclusion of Communists as equal members in the camp of national unity.

This is the special meaning of our vote. Let us be sure that in the days ahead we do nothing to mar the record of our party as the selfless champion of the anti-fascist unity of the American people.

Of course, the vote did not come of itself. You comrades know that. It had to be fought for, organized, delivered on election day and protected after election day. Our party did a magnificent job. I want to take this opportunity—in the name of our State Committee, to pay tribute to each and every one of you,

and to the thousands and thousands of our comrades who are not here tonight. I want to pay tribute to those comrades who helped guarantee the registration, to those who climbed stairs every evening after long hours of work, to those who unstintingly gave of their Saturdays and Sundays, to those who worked among their fellow workers on the job and in their unions, to those who did the thankless clerical work—the addressing of envelopes and the licking of postage stamps.

To you comrades, and to our splendid candidates, belongs the real credit for this victory.

This year we learned from our mistakes of a year ago. We were better organized. We concentrated our efforts. We were closer to the people. Our literature was concrete, simple and interesting.

Our enemies cannot understand our party. They do not know what it means to have thousands of workers give freely of their time and energy without expecting monetary remuneration. One Manhattan politician told a comrade in the armory at which the vote was being counted, that Ben Davis must have spent \$10,000 on election day alone. Little did he realize that it is highly possible that not \$10 was spent on that day because our watchers gave of their time for a noble cause and not for a few paltry dollars.

I want to pay special tribute to the *Daily Worker* and *The Worker*, without which we could not have mobilized our own forces, let alone others. The *Daily Worker* was not only an agitator and propagandist; it was an organizer of the highest

quality; and it is only fitting that we should let the editorial staff of the *Daily Worker* know how much we appreciate the job done.

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Comrades, the electoral victory has altered the relationship of political forces in our city. It has opened up new perspectives and opportunities for our party; it has also brought in its wake added responsibilities and dangers.

The eyes of the city will be upon us—also the eyes of the nation. This is the only city in the country in which two Communists hold elected public posts.

We must not only continue but intensify our efforts for the unity of the American people behind our Commander-in-Chief. We must press for international trade union unity to parallel the unity of the United Nations. We must press for the adoption of the Marcantonio Anti-Poll Tax Bill, which the reactionaries in the Senate intend either to filibuster or to emasculate. We must rally the people for the subsidy program of the President as the means by which to establish the unity of the workers, middle classes and farmers against the price boosting monopolies and war profiteers. We must in everything we do realize that the 1944 election struggle has already begun and that the labor and progressive forces cannot wait a single day before they organize and prepare for that showdown.

For our party this means raising our sights all along the line. We must aim at greater objectives and

score better hits. But we must do this without being ostentatious; without crowing. We must work more modestly than ever before. We must not forget that while we have left the bush league, we are not yet in the major league.

There is a new spirit in the party; a renewed confidence in its policies and leadership; a greater confidence in the masses. Our party must not rest on its laurels. It must throw aside all slovenly methods of work. It must rise to new heights,

comparable with its new responsibilities.

Comrades, these are some of the conclusions that can be drawn from the November 2 elections in our city. You have proven that it can be done. Let us make November 2 only a beginning. Let us fulfill our new great responsibilities in the spirit of the decisions of the historic Moscow Conference whose speedy execution will hasten victory in the war and a better day for world mankind.