

THE RACE FOR MAYOR: FOUR TWEEDLE DUMS, ONE TWEEDLE DEE

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In a political party as diverse as the Democratic Party, in a city which has just dumped a man who dominated its political life for almost a decade, and in a mayoralty primary in which there are four bona fide, big time candidates, you would expect a wide range of approaches to the city's problems and a heated campaign, right? Wrong! The four major Tweedle Dums in the Democratic column have their differences on the issues, but you have to search to find them. And the Tweedle Dee on the Republican side sounds like an echo of his opponents.

RIZZOISM OUT OF FASHION

The one positive feature of the present campaign is the absence of the politics of Rizzoism. In the wake of Rizzo's defeat in the charter change struggle, all the candidates are scurrying to the high ground, tripping over each other in their denunciations of "divisiveness." On stock-in-trade Rizzo issues like Whitman Park and police brutality, no major candidate has defended a Rizzo position. This is part of the tribute the two party politicians are being forced to play to the new strength of the Black vote.

It is also a recognition that Rizzoism no longer automatically galvanizes a big white vote. Al Gaudiosi, the nearest thing to a Rizzoite by virtue of his historical association with Rizzo, is the weakest candidate in the field, commanding only 6% of the vote according to a recent poll. Gaudiosi put the finger on his problem when he mournfully admitted: "I've got the Rizzo monkey on my back and I can't seem to get it off."

But do any of the candidates offer a real alternative? Do they stand for solutions to the city's problems that will benefit the masses of working people? Everybody knows campaign promises roll off a politician's tongue with the greatest of ease. But after election time, holding them to these promises is harder than trying to catch a greased pig at a county fair. Still a candidate's platform and stand on the issues gives us some clue to where the candidate is coming from and what sort of direction he or she will move if elected. So it's worth looking at where the current crop of mayoralty hopefuls stand on the important questions facing the people of Philadelphia.

Here is where the major candidates line up on some of the key issues.

HOUSING AND DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

All the candidates pledge to do

nothing to prevent the construction of Whitman Park, which falls short of being a positive commitment to desegregated public housing, but is at least a big improvement over the stand of the present Mayor. Bowser, Klenk and Gaudiosi all are on record as disagreeing with the Rizzo doctrine that when a neighborhood doesn't want a project, it shouldn't be forced to accept it, although none of them has hit at the racism underlying this notion. Green and Marston have both hedged on this issue. Green has made it clear that while he will not stop Whitman Park, he doesn't favor the project and counterposes rehabilitating housing in existing neighborhoods to it.

All the candidates say they favor increasing the share of community development funds that go for housing, and all have made some criticism of the "recycling" policies of the Rizzo administration. On the question of giving priority to the neighborhoods or to the downtown business district, only Bowser gives a clear answer, saying he would shift the priority to the communities. The others all plead for even-handedness. And even Bowser fails to call for concrete measures, like stopping construction of the center city commuter tunnel.

ON THE SCHOOLS

Bowser, Green and Gaudiosi all favor continuing the separation of the school system from the city government while Klenk and Marston favor a merger. On the question of whether the school board should be elected, an obvious condition of a genuinely independent and accountable school system, Bowser and Green are in favor and the rest opposed.

As to canning Rizzoite school superintendent Michael Marcuse: Green, Klenk and Marston say yes; Bowser says no because it would violate the city charter; and Gaudiosi says put him on probation. The candidates have largely sidestepped the question of desegregation although Bowser has made it clear that he thinks the present voluntary plan is inadequate and favors a tougher approach. None of the candidates has challenged banker control of the educational system and made a real issue out of the cutbacks that John Bunting and company forced on the schools.

CITY FINANCES

While Bowser has pledged to increase city services and all the candidates make vague promises about improvements, all of them are prepared to operate within the framework of fiscal austerity demanded by big business and the banks. For

that reason none of their promises around expanding needed programs can be taken very seriously.

Klenk, Gaudiosi and Marston say they will refuse to raise taxes under any circumstances. (Where have we heard that before?) Bowser and Green argue that an increase cannot be ruled out. Both stress that they will lay-off city workers before taking this step. In fact whomever gets elected, it looks like it's going to be a rough time for city workers and for those of us who depend on them for necessary services. All the candidates are stressing the need for higher "productivity" (in other words, speed up) and a "streamlining" of city government including lay-offs.

The only difference here between Rizzo and his would-be-successors is that the present candidates all say any lay-offs will affect police and firemen as well as non-uniformed personnel. It is a sign of all the candidates' subservience to big business that the only alternatives they see are cutbacks or higher taxes on working people. None, for example, have proposed the restoration of the corporate net income tax, abolished when Rizzo took office.

POLICE BRUTALITY

Here too, the waning fortunes of Rizzoism are making themselves felt. Joe O'Neill is out as commissioner. All the candidates acknowledge the existence of police abuse as a real problem in contrast to the present administration. However all the candidates stress new internal procedures at the roundhouse and a new commissioner as measures to correct the problem. None of them support the creation of a civilian review board which would make the police directly accountable to the community.

What emerges from this brief survey is a group of candidates who for the most part share a consensus on what needs to happen in Philadelphia. Rizzo-style polarization is out. A few cosmetic changes and reforms are needed — but fundamentally the city cannot afford any real change. To appease big business we'll just have to bite the bullet for four more years. While some will argue that we should dutifully go to the polls and choose our brand of lesser evil, the *Organizer* thinks it makes more sense to sit this one out and look to building independent candidates for the fall.