

# SWP

# discussion bulletin

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## THE BERKELEY CAMPAIGN -- ITS RELATION TO REGROUPMENT

By Virginia Kaye

### Programmatic and Organizational Defects and Contradictions

In order to fully understand the Berkeley campaign, it is perhaps necessary to go into some of the background of former "regroupment" actions in the San Francisco and East Bay Area.

The group of independents with whom the party combined in the recent campaign were people who collaborated with us programmaticaly, against the CP "pro-independent" grouping that evolved from the Roberts' campaign, into the Independent Political Action Unity Conference held last summer. At the time the conference was proposed, the majority and leadership of the party were strongly in favor of extending our collaboration with the Roberts' grouping around the minimum agreement of combining to defeat Proposition 18. The idea at this time was to preserve unity with these forces. That the Roberts' campaign had been a political fiasco, with the party pushed out of all aspects of cooperation other than the "dirty work" was generally agreed.

However, there were only 4 of us in the party at this time who opposed the furtherance of this kind of confused action -- suggesting instead that we utilize this conference to clarify our differences in positions on "Independent Campaigns."

At this period a group of independents who agreed to meet with us in caucus, informed us that we would lose a substantial peripheral element that they had been working with, if we did not take a wholehearted position for socialist campaigns. This convinced the party leadership and such a line was followed, with results we are all familiar with.

From this action we recruited 3 of the independents, and gained several more peripheral allies. It was with such forces, gained on such a basis that we entered the Berkeley campaign.

A few months before the campaign, the question of tying it in with an FEPC bill for Berkeley had been discussed rather warmly at one of our branch meetings. This discussion centered around the distribution of a leaflet by our USA (United Socialist Action) comrades at an NAACP meeting. . . projecting such an action for the coming campaign, and combined with propaganda against Proposition 18. This leaflet had been distributed with the approval of a few of our comrades in the leadership, only. I am well aware that it is not expected that each leaflet distributed should have the approval of the entire branch, but I would assume that when a leaflet takes up the entire direction of the branch for the coming period that is to follow, some discussion should be held prior to the distribution. This was part of B. Kaye's position relating to the leaflet. The rest of his position was that such an action would "cross-cut" the action of the trade-union and NAACP leadership who had already turned thumbs down for a similar, local bill for Oakland, in preference for a state-wide bill. B. Kaye explained that they had taken this position because there were many rural areas in the State of California where such a bill could never be passed, otherwise.

Comrade Kaye at this time also gave a report on the history of referendums on the Negro question, and pointed out that such methods had been used time and again by reactionaries to defeat issues for civil rights for Negroes. He also criticized the young comrades for attempting to take up a question relating to trade unions and the Negro movement without consultation with our trade-union comrades.

Since the leaflet was drawn up by some of our newest comrades, at a great expense of their time and energy, the first reflex of the branch was to defend these comrades, regardless of anything else. I tended very much in this direction, at this period. However, I maintained that this incident reflected an organizational weakness of the party, locally; and the lack of trade-union direction and education. At my insistence, and backed by several of our other comrades, a trade-union conference was called and directives laid down for the expansion of this kind of work within the party and to attempt a closer integration of knowledge about this kind of work with the general actions of the branch. However, to this day, the directives laid down have not even begun to be implemented. This kind of situation not only deprives our new comrades of the valuable experience the party has to offer in such a field, it allows the trade-union comrades to drift and try to do their best, in an isolated fashion -- within their unions. . . and this weakens even the best potential trade-union comrade.

So, when the first USA meeting was called (two months later) the issue of a referendum on Negro rights, and whether or not to oppose the trade-union bureaucracy in this manner, still had not been discussed or clarified within the party, even though it had become obvious that there was a point of sharp disagreement. At that meeting, the entire membership unanimously endorsed the idea of running a full slate of socialist candidates, in Berkeley in particular, and Oakland if possible. A formulation was raised that we should do everything possible to make this a "model campaign." (Sound familiar to the New York comrades?) Along this general line the question of the referendum was presented once again, only this time in an abstract fashion, and not yet connected with any specific issue. Three different possibilities were proposed: (1) on the atom bomb and war question; (2) on smog control; (3) on an anti-discrimination housing bill. The reasons for use of the referendum, at this time followed along this line. "USA is a new group, we have no history in past struggles of any kind and we need to show the masses we are willing to do more than just talk." It was seen as a practical action which would be a stepping-stone towards a large full-blown socialist campaign. A vote was taken and the use of the referendum was passed on -- with one abstention, mine. I felt we would hurt and detract from the socialist campaign if we got derailed into a referendum action that required the gathering and processing of a couple of thousand signatures. I did not express this opinion, however, for I fully intended to take it up in our branch meeting where I was confident that both the nature of the proposed bill and its use would be discussed. Over half of the members on the committee subsequently elected to draw up the referendum petition were party comrades, and this expectation I felt was fully justified. Also, the fact that the program committee elected was made up of all party people, including myself, led me to think that in the last

analysis the cooperation of the two committees would provide me with any opportunity I needed to express disagreement. However, things were not to work this way. While the program committee was expected to work up and type no less than 10 or 15 copies of the Statement of Principles -- with triple spacing, and with wide margins for comments, corrections and disagreements -- the petition committee worked up their referendum and published their intention to file in the Berkeley Daily Gazette. The first thing either I or most of the rest of the party comrades heard about the finished product was when we received a mailed copy of such a published intention. This kind of unilateral action was justified on the basis that a "practical action" had no connection with programmatic concepts, and that they "didn't have time" for consultation.

This circumstance furnished the theoretical basis for the "schism" that developed between the party and the USA, later in the campaign.

I maintained that since the petition called for the mayor to appoint a three-man commission and that since it relied on the decision of the commission before court action could be instituted, that a definite programmatic point was at stake, namely: "Should socialists present a bill that relied on capitalist politicians?"

My opposition, combined with Comrade B. Kaye's more extreme opposition no doubt furthered the original schism into a deeper confusion and contradiction. Not only was it necessary for the majority to defend the propositions in the petition, by increasing emphasis upon the "practical" aspect of the bill, but it became necessary to obscure the political makeup of the organization we called USA. That USA relied for approximately four-fifths of its membership on the party directly was not discovered by the party comrades who were inactive in the broader organization, until way late in the campaign. This reflected on most of the programmatic discussions. The main defense of the majority at this time was that we "could not expect a program from the USA to follow the lines of the party program."

In the end result, the organization's names were used by the comrades interchangeably, we began to hear rumors of charges of a "front group," and most of the time the majority comrades referred to USA as though it were a vast regroupment arena with a life of its own. . . and completely separated in its movements from the party comrades within it. Many of our new comrades, by the end of the campaign felt more loyalty to the weakened program of the USA, and more loyalty to the organizational form of USA, than they did to the party. This served to disorient any other action of the party for the entire period of the campaign. Not one piece of party literature was sold at any time; in fact, B. Kaye was asked not to distribute literature of such a nature.

Within the party, how did this reflect theoretically, and programmatically? During the entire campaign, not one of the majority comrades attempted to formulate or present a full analysis of what kind of program they intended to follow, or what they hoped to achieve. They could not, my opposition and the rapidly ensuing

events that tended to prove my theoretical conclusions had to be dealt with, and this resulted in the position of the majority becoming completely empirical, and completely lacking in any consistent direction or aim. They resorted to what one of the new comrades characterized as "ad-man slogans" and the contention that "proposition C in its nature is so revolutionary a demand" that hair-splitting and programmatic discussion was out of place and based on petty-bourgeois fears and sectarian beliefs. "Gray is theory, but green is the tree of life," became a slogan that was used to push aside all discussion and disagreements until such a time as the petitions were actually filed.

Towards the end of the campaign -- when I let up on my opposition because it was too late to achieve any palpable results relating to a change of direction in the campaign -- one of the majority comrades in an informal discussion about the reliability of those within radical movements who use demagogic argumentative tactics stated that he wasn't "sure that such indications were always a basis for theoretical mistrust -- after all, hadn't the slogan that 'everyone is against us but the people' been used as a demagogic device quite successfully within the party?"

On Receipt of My Copy of the Intention  
to File the Fair Housing Ordinance

The following are comments to a comrade who was listed as being on the petition committee; I addressed them to him by a letter which was never sent, as a result of his rather extended vacation during this period. They were directed to him because at this time he was the only experienced comrade of the party on the said committee. I am including them, because they are the general kernel of the disagreements that I presented in the party at the beginning of my opposition.

"I am very much afraid that the petition, instead of serving as an example of exposure of capitalist control, and the real estate interests in Berkeley, will eventually serve as a battering ram against the socialists. Just WHO do you expect to support it? Obviously, since there has been no pressure from the minority people organized prior to this time, the city council is not about to pass it to keep it off the ballot. I sincerely doubt that this bill is strong enough, or that it does enough to take the initiative from the real estate interests that are represented by the mayor, that the Negro people as a whole or the NAACP will support it. Maybe the CP or the ADA will support it, as was suggested -- but that should not be our main concern. Doesn't this bill imply support to the capitalists? How can we consistently challenge them on the ballot with a socialist candidate?"

The opposing arguments, at this time were along these lines:  
(1) We had to form a bill that actually has a chance of winning some support from other radicals and liberals. On an issue like this we can't afford to be sectarian. (2) Of course you are right about the clause giving the mayor support in the over-all picture. What you don't understand is that the bill is "tactically" correct at this time. (3) What difference does it make whether you call for a "Trade Union and Minority Commission" or if you call for a mayor to appoint

the committee? If you called for the first, it would just be in the hands of the bureaucrats, anyway. (4) This is a marvelous testing ground, we are "running up the flag" and we'll watch to see who salutes it.

### The Origin of the Nature of the Petition, and Attitudes About It

At the petition "kick-off" meeting, in introducing it to radicals called to its support, one of the members of USA gave its history as flowing from the suggestion of a pamphlet titled "Where Shall We Live?" This report was written by liberals and supported by the capitalist government who subsidized it. It advocated that if any group wished to improve the rights of Negro and minority groups in housing, that they should form any new bills upon those already existing in other sections of the country. He reported that they had decided to follow this suggestion as the best way to approach the question of segregated housing.

One of the new party comrades remarked that the petition had purposely been filed under the name of an individual, in order to "remove the onus of being presented by Socialists." He added that in this way, those groups who would otherwise refuse to affiliate with socialists, could circulate the petition under their own name. At this point, one of the independents in USA, corrected him -- denying that there should be any "onus" in the title of socialist, but that it was felt, that "this action was to prevent exclusion of groups that might otherwise feel that we looked upon the petition as our exclusive province." No member of the party attempted to make any such disclaimer!

### The Beginning of Outside Opposition to the Petition and How It Was Reported

At the branch meeting, the following week a report was given on the meeting USA had arranged with the Independent Voters of California (the CP's version of independent political action), where they had hoped to get support for the petition. He reported that the bill was attacked by the CP on the basis that it was sabotaging the efforts of the Negro movement to get Negroes elected in the city. During the discussion, I asked him if this was the only basis of attack. He rather reluctantly admitted that no, it was not -- and very quickly went on to say that they also attacked it on the basis that no strong penalty was provided for breakage of the law, and that the commission was appointed by the mayor. On further questioning by another comrade it was brought out that they had also said that they felt if the bill was defeated on the ballot, locally it could subvert the FEPC bill on a state-wide basis. They asked us in general consideration of the Negro movement in the state, to withdraw the petition.

### A Motion to Withdraw the Petition from the Ballot, Temporarily

The next branch meeting, a week later was devoted to discussion of these events, and the subsequent refusal of the NAACP to support the petition. The NAACP had indicated that if we did not withdraw our petition, they would publicly oppose it in the local newspapers. B. Kaye formed a resolution as follows:

"Whereas: Placing this petition on the ballot would only weaken the state-wide housing bill, and does not call for the power of control to be in the hands of workers, regardless of their race;

"Whereas: This petition excludes any possibility for the forming of protest committees, comprised of workers, students, liberals, small business people, etc.

"Whereas: Section 4 of the petition reveals the ineffectiveness of the ordinance, as follows, 'There is hereby created a commission on equality in housing to consist of three persons APPOINTED BY THE MAYOR and to SERVE AT HIS PLEASURE. The members of the commission shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement of their necessary expenditures.'

"Therefore be it resolved: That an open letter be sent to each signer to review this petition in an open meeting, and that the labor movement, NAACP, SWP and other organizations be invited to speak for and against the reason why a housing ordinance in Berkeley at this time is or is not visible.

"And Be It Further Resolved: That the filing of this petition be held up until such a meeting has been called and all issues clarified."

This resolution was overwhelmingly voted down, whereupon I asked for the floor, and presented my position. Even though I pretty fully outlined my differences with B. Kaye, most of the comrades took our position as one, and did not even bother to vote my position down. They introduced a motion instead to declare full support for the actions of the USA to date and let the question of whether or not to file the petitions quietly die.

Position Presented at Branch Meeting, January 20, 1959 by Virginia Kaye

We are completely obligated this evening to find the answer to two main problems. (1) The most effective method to preserve and strengthen the enthusiasm and potential of our recently acquired members and periphery in the USA, who have thrown their energies, ability and time whole-heartedly into the petition campaign. (2) The methods whereby we can turn the negative aspects of the campaign into affirmative action, not only for the party and the USA, but for the Negro struggle in the state as well.

There is nothing in the content of the two main positions in the party that could begin to cope with either of these two questions. The first position is saying (the majority) We made no mistakes, whatsoever, the opposition we are experiencing is to be expected, why let it bother us? The second position is saying (B. Kaye) We made a terrible mistake, let's admit it to ourselves and the public at large, and withdraw the petition before we're defeated and harm the Negro struggle on a state-wide basis.

In essence, these are both defeatist attitudes since they both refute the necessity to cope with the opposition we have received.

I would like to present a third position, one which says: Certain mistakes were made, let's correct them, not by simply admitting them but by taking the results of the criticisms, i.e., the criticisms of the petition, and utilizing them to our best advantage in formulating further positive action.

One thing most of us have become thoroughly convinced of is that it was a mistake to expect support from (1) liberals, (2) the trade union and Negro leadership, (3) other radical organizations without first approaching them. It is doubtful if we ever would have received their support anyway, but there is a definite feeling among some of us that at least we should have absolved ourselves of the guilt of neglect in this direction.

There is also the tactical question of whether it is correct for socialists to try directly to take action into their own hands on reform issues instead of acting as a pressure group. This is a question that depends for its answer directly upon the weighing of the relationship of forces. We neglected to take time to weigh our forces. (Note: At petition kick-off meeting, someone asked what percentage of the people in Berkeley were Negro people, and no one could answer him.) We must ask ourselves if it is correct to place at the disposal of an entire community the well-being of a group of people, and reveal to the reactionary forces the weakness of numbers in the minority and radical groups by counting them up ballot-wise, on such an issue. We must keep in mind the rather larger appearing effect such groups have as a result of their determination and militancy when acting as pressure groups. The referendum slogan was originally intended (as used by radicals) to expose and reveal the unwillingness of the bourgeois forces to grant full democracy, not to expose the numerical weakness of minority groups. Some of our comrades have completely neglected to remember or point this out.

However, we have engaged ourselves in this battle. In my opinion to admit at large that we have made a tactical error and withdraw the petition is nothing but a before-hand admission of what would be proved by seeing the ballot through without a constructive program. Either of these two ways lies a victory for the bourgeois forces and their tail-enders. (NAACP leadership, IVC, and the trade-union bureaucrats.)

In my mind there is no question of change of action, to turn back now would be the worst kind of political defeatism. What can be changed is our political position, or program; on what we expect to achieve through and by this action. If we can very quickly mobilize our publicity (leaflets, interviews, and press releases) to present our action as an attempt to give the people involved in this issue, their say -- and as an attempt to mobilize pressure and protests against groups who do nothing but promise action in the "sweet bye and bye;" if we can utilize our position to expose the phony charges of the conservative leaderships, we will have achieved the most essential tasks of a socialist cadre. I have been made aware of a feeling amongst newer comrades which says: "We don't want to do things which have always been done just for the sake of tradition. We want to act -- to do, now!" But before we reject tradition too strongly, let's see what it has to say. Page 14 of the Death Agony



of Capitalism says: "If it be criminal to turn one's back on mass organizations for the sake of fostering sectarian fictions, it is no less so to passively tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or thinly disguised conservative (progressive) bureaucratic cliques."

Realizing fully that there is no revolutionary mass movement involved in Berkeley, we must still be aware that nationally and internationally we are seeing a militant rising of the Negro working class. If we can in our campaign bring into an open arena and extend the protests and pressure of the Negro working people of Berkeley to the point where they enter the general struggle at large, and at the same time solidify our contacts with this struggle, we will have achieved a great deal.

We have at our finger-tips an opportunity (if handled correctly) to expose the political features of first the landlords, then the tailist tactics of the CP, and third the real lack of concern of conservative leaderships in involving the rank and file in activities affecting them.

This could be done on one level simply by inviting officials of the trade unions and the NAACP to an open meeting to debate with us the question of "Protests and State Legislative Action -- Does One Exclude the Other?" -- and by presenting our petition campaign to the people of Berkeley as a vehicle to use as a protest against discriminatory methods and practices. If presented in this light then the question of a winning vote becomes secondary and the petition campaign can become an affirmative method of organizing pressure on an important question by socialists who spoke when others chose to be silent.

The point may be made -- "Is it honest or right for us to 'cover up' our mistakes in this manner, instead of making a general admission at large; aren't we committing the cardinal sin of the Stalinists?"

In answering this question, I want to emphasize that the cardinal sin of the Stalinists was in refusing to admit to themselves when they miscalculated or were using the wrong program, and in clinging always to their original positions, even when it meant the political injury of the working class, or of the section of radicals involved in the particular struggle.

The main concern of socialists must always be the political consciousness and ability of their allies and ranks and how to most effectively advance their desire and ability to struggle.

To ask either the USA or the Negro people who have signed the petitions to admit they "have made a mistake" is to completely destroy their faith in their ability to struggle, but on the other hand, to tell them that everything is rosy and that the charges of the NAACP "mean nothing" is to prepare them for the slaughter politically.

What we must do is point out to them how they can most effectively continue the struggle they have become engaged in, and look for

the most positive measures that are to be found. In this path alone lies even a minimum of success.

### Arguments Presented Against My Position at This Meeting

We're doing what everyone else refuses to do, we are going to the people.

It seems that everyone is against us but the people.

Since when do socialists not use the ballot? It's the main consideration in this period -- independent political action. Since when do they rely on petty-bourgeois pressure groups and lobbying?

We're involved in the highest form of regroupment in this area, it's not just a propaganda and educational campaign; but we're tying it in with a practical action.

We haven't even seen the real enemy yet!

We discussed the possibility of NAACP opposition, now that it's come up, why let it bother us?

The NAACP will have to think twice before they oppose a bill of this nature -- it would put them in a pretty bad position to publish a blast against us. It's pretty obvious their threat is nothing but intimidation.

They use the argument against us that it's not strong enough, that it will endanger the state bill on FEPC if it fails. These are not the real concerns of the "running boys" being sent to plead with us. They want Pat Brown and the state Democratic Party to get the credit. Win, lose, or draw, we're on the map! It will make the party. . . we're the first ones to try such a thing; and we'll win nothing but respect by sticking to our guns.

If we call an open meeting, we'll just be asking for defeat. With the strength of the NAACP leadership against us, we'd be politically slaughtered. They're just trying to intimidate us, when the petition is filed they won't have much choice -- they'll have to support it.

### What Happened to the Program Committee

One week after I first presented my position to the branch I submitted a letter of resignation (from the USA) to the local branch meeting, for a decision as to whether its presentation to the USA would constitute a breach of discipline. I also must admit that the letter was conceived of as a device to bring to the attention of the party branch as a whole the realization of what the true composition of membership in the USA was. By this time participation of independents in the "petition committee," which suddenly became a "steering committee," had dwindled to four or five people. That I speak of having to use devices in presenting my position to the branch speaks for itself. Even then, this attempt failed to do what I had intended. The statement was given the last point on the agenda, and having to leave the branch early due to a time limit on

my baby-sitter I left the statement in the hands of the chairman. I was informed the next day that the branch had decided that I should not turn the statement over to the USA as it might be considered disruptive. When I asked what the branch thought of my reasons for such a resignation I was told that "it was so late we didn't bother to read it aloud. . . we just stated that you had turned in a resignation."

The comrades solved the problem of my resignation by agreeing to vote all former committees out of existence at the next general membership meeting, and forming a new USA campaign committee.

The Development of a Split between the Practical Action vs the Socialist Campaign. Was it inherent from the beginning?

In the first USA election meeting, the use of the referendum was posed as an integral part of the campaign, and as a "stepping-stone" to a wider socialist campaign. However, as you have seen this attitude did not last long, either in our periphery or in the party. Within the first month of our campaign the "dual nature" of the campaign began to develop until at the height of the campaign the question arose, "Should we run socialist candidates?" This theoretical discussion that developed in my opinion was the direct result and reflection of trying to combine "Practical Actions," i.e., actions divorced from the general realm of socialist or "class line" propaganda, with the kind of educational work that we usually attempt in our socialist campaigns. The majority comrades will argue that these two kind of actions are not mutually antagonistic and that transitional demands must be considered as well as the "longer range party program;" but I believe the very form and nature that the campaign eventually took is proof positive that these two kind of actions socialists engage in cannot be successfully "combined" into one category.

In the first place, let's see how much of a transitional program the use of the referendum in this particular context -- that is related to the Negro struggle for equality -- really was. My understanding of a transitional program is one which does not raise the full demand of a change to socialism, but provides a road through the deepening of class contradictions for the working class to advance towards this end. In such a light do we see the demand for a Labor Party, the Open the Books slogan, the Withdrawal of Troops slogan, etc.

How did the newer comrades reach the conclusion (or confusion) that a practical bourgeois reform action was a transitional demand? Simply by lifting one solution or slogan -- "the referendum slogan" -- from its entire context, that is in connection with capitalist wars and letting the working class decide its own fate rather than being drafted into fighting for the boss class where it does have a "class line" content; and applying it haphazardly to the Negro question. Applied in this manner, not only does the slogan lose its class line content, but it succeeds in "raising" the entire problem of Negro rights to a "special category" and pulls it out of the general context of an "entire working-class struggle." I think it is significant that not once in the campaign was the Negro struggle presented in the light of pertaining to the general struggle of organized labor or the working class to exist in a solidified form.

As a result of this kind of revisionism many theoretical misunderstandings developed around the question of the referendum slogan and its use. One of our newly recruited comrades commented that the essential aim behind the use of the slogan was the "furthering of democracy," and that he didn't think that socialists as principled people should use it only in cases where they thought they could win.

This is a bowing to the kind of "pure democracy" that Kautsky proposed in his rout to the bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary days in Russia. Lenin's answer to this kind of approach within his party was that there could not be any "pure democracy" so long as a society based on class struggle or domination existed.

It was the complete lack of such an understanding that led these comrades into a statement on the leaflet opposing the NAACP arguments that "We should further like to go on record at this time as reaffirming our conviction that the initiative procedure is one of the mainstays of the democratic process and a precious part of our heritage from the democratic struggles of the past."

That this kind of approach contains within it a "trap," has been proved by the recent filing by reactionary NAM forces for an initiative procedure to defeat the state-wide FEPC bill in California. Are the comrades going to be able to say in this instance that the initiative is "one of the mainstays of a democratic process?" Such a "blanket approach" to even the "practical" problems of the day completely denies the class struggle involved in a capitalist system and obscures once and for all the question of "Democracy, for who?"

In the end result, the belief that the "referendum slogan" was inherently and in its own pure context a "profoundly revolutionary demand" led the comrades into formulating a petition which called for a "commission to be selected by the mayor, and to serve at his pleasure."

The circumstance that was shocking to me, was not that new comrades could "misunderstand" a revolutionary program, but that long time members of the party leadership could support and defend them theoretically in this misbelief!

In the slogan that evolved during the campaign, "Everyone is against us but the people," it was almost made to appear that those who supported the petition were rallying around the "referendum slogan" rather than a bourgeois reformist demand.

Once again, it was proved that this was not so in the course of the campaign itself when a few of our party comrades raised the question "Do we dare risk the impression that we raised this issue to merely pave the way for a socialist candidate?"

Art Sharon in his "Letter from San Francisco" posed the opposition received from radicals as "The wriggling of radicals influenced by the CP, SP-SDF line" who couldn't stand "the thought of having to take a public stand at variance with the strategy of the NAACP and so-called friends of labor."

He obviously, however, could not go into the "Wriggling of Radicals" influenced by the CP-SP-SDF line against the running of socialist candidates in connection with Proposition C. This wriggling was so intense that an entire expanded executive committee meeting, and a special-called meeting of the joint party branches in the area was required to settle the question of running a candidate in Berkeley. (The original proposition was to run a full slate in both Berkeley and Oakland.) Not only was this so, but three of our comrades had been so affected as to ask for a release of party discipline on this question! We also during these meetings found comrades saying that "no principle was involved in the running of socialist candidates -- the principle was in not supporting capitalist candidates; and that "so long as the regroupment aims of gathering a periphery was served through the 'Practical Action,' no principle was involved in the running a socialist candidate." Last but not least, one of our NC members in the area said that as long as "an essentially revolutionary demand had been raised by the use of the referendum slogan, there was no principle involved in running a candidate."

As far as the principle involved in not supporting capitalists, this too was later brought into question through and by the "logic of the practical action." A question was raised of critically supporting both Roy Nichols and Bob Martinson, on the basis of their support to Proposition C. The question of support to Roy Nichols, a Democratic party candidate, was raised on the basis of the CP's approach of "electing a Negro candidate," and the possibility that he might support Proposition C! There was quite a bit of talk about there being "special cases" by some of our comrades where one could support such candidates. This position was brought to a screaming halt when our candidate said he "could not see himself supporting a capitalist candidate while running as a socialist."

Since the USA candidate had agreed to run only on the basis that he felt Proposition C needed one of the Berkeley candidate's full support, it was decided to let this question drop, lest he withdraw.

Furthermore, the comrades and USA independents had become so involved in the campaign around Proposition C that M. Syreck was forced by lack of help to act as his own Program Manager -- even to the extent of writing his own platform and mimeographing his own leaflets!

The entire process away from socialist campaigns and towards "practical actions" was culminated in the summation report of the Berkeley campaign -- when the reporter stated that "he thought it would be a mistake to judge the campaign in terms of the 'longer range party program;" and that although we "did not talk to as many people in general about socialism, we talked to more people that heard us." I would not say that this is an unusual phenomena in this day and age -- the CP lays claim to this special advantage every day of the week, and twice on Sunday!

That the projected USA program for the future includes another "practical action" around the possibility of a referendum on re-instituting the ward system, "to insure election of Negro candidates" is not just the dialectic logic of a departure from a "class line"

program. It is also the reflection of the charges of the CP issued at the end of the campaign, "that Proposition C on the ballot served to solidify and strengthen the racist vote, and was responsible for defeat of Negro candidates."

Now, some of the party leadership is concerned with the basic differences evolving between the independents in USA and the party. That these differences were given soil and impetus for growth by the initiation of a "practical action" into the campaign by party comrades has not been deduced. That this periphery has steadily grown away from us, programmatically during the campaign, has not been recognized. The fact that our initial winning of these people to us was on the basis of agreement in running socialist candidates has been forgotten! The "success" of Proposition C in "raising city-wide attention" has convinced almost the entire periphery we won to us during the regroupment period of the CP program of the importance of issues vs. socialist campaigns. This attitude extends even to some of our recently recruited comrades in the party who maintain that "the bourgeoisie sees our purely educational socialist campaigns as 'paper tiger' campaigns -- as opposed to those containing direct challenges."

That this is not so can be proved by comparing the New York "educational campaign" with the Berkeley campaign as far as the reaction of the bourgeoisie was concerned. An extended attempt was made in New York to derail the ISP from the ballot, while in Berkeley the comrades actually had to attempt to pose the passing of Proposition C as the duty and responsibility of the city council in order to expose their over-willingness to refer this issue to the referendum, where the council was certain it could be defeated and thus let them off the hook of having to do anything about desegregated housing.

What Do Socialists Mean by "Practical Actions" and How Are They Applied? How "Practical" Was This Particular Application?

Perhaps before I start off, it would be pertinent to the discussion to advance a definition to the term "practical." Webster's dictionary says that it "pertains to action or use -- useful. Capable of applying knowledge or theory to practice." As used in the socialist sense I would assume that it meant any action useful to the working class or socialists. Note comrades, there is no mention in either of these statements relating the term practical to a status-quo situation; and yet this is the coloration the term had throughout the entire campaign. I should hope that we would most of us know by now that the entire capitalist system is based on a whole series of "impractical" hypotheses. This raises the question within such a context of "How practical for socialists are practical actions?"

Not one word has been said in the summation of the campaign around Proposition C about its end results for the Negro people, or how it served to advance socialist ideas. . . but let's look on the other side of the question and see how practical it was for the bourgeois forces.

I contend that Proposition C provided the NAM, as well as socialists, with a "testing ground" in California, by which they

could determine the probable results at this time of a referendum action on Negroes rights.

Did the campaign through exposing the bureaucratic cliques of the trade unions and the NAACP in their opposition to Proposition C destroy confidence in these elements? I contend that in the long run not only did it fail in this respect, but that it actually succeeded in giving these elements a "back-handed" support. The weaknesses and defaults of the bill (being originally copied from a bourgeois bill in New York) gave such elements -- more than sufficient excuses for not supporting it, and served to obscure all the real issues at stake. This is the first time to my knowledge, since I have been in the party, that the CP has actually been given the grounds to point to the weakness of any proposal of our party. Whether or not these grounds were excuses is relatively unimportant to me -- what does seem important, however, is that these excuses were "built in" in Proposition C, and were there free for the taking. If the majority comrades were to be completely frank about these weaknesses, they would admit that they really thought at the beginning that such a "liberal" formation of the bill would win them support from these sources. Some of their earlier statements (included in another section of the bulletin) will support this statement of mine.

The NAACP followed suit, close on the heels of the CP with their arguments. In an Oakland Tribune article of Jan. 25, 1959, titled, "NAACP Denounces Petition Opposing Discrimination," is the statement that the "NAACP legislative program calls for a well planned and organized fair housing law" to be submitted before the California legislature. Then, "The Berkeley NAACP reaffirmed the organization's opposition to discrimination. . . in all housing, not merely in multiple dwellings, but considers the petition to be poorly prepared and seriously questions the political integrity and wisdom of the United Socialist Action in this presentation."

As far as the petition being poorly prepared, it is obvious when I am forced to explain that in copying and changing some of the New York Isaac-Sharkey bill, the comrades forgot to change the title of the bill, thus leaving a contradiction between the title and the text.

When the USA issued a leaflet to answer these charges, and stated that "Proposition C is taken almost word for word from the Isaacs-Sharkey-Brown bill which is now in effect in New York City," and that "The New York Bill was supported by the NAACP in New York. . . and it is difficult to understand the opposition of the regional office here to a virtually identical bill;" they were pretty well satisfied that they had exposed the NAACP's opposition as being based on a phony excuse. It never occurred to the comrades that at the same time they were relying for their own basis on the approach that such status-quo bills initiated by the very forces they were "exposing" were perfectly valid and effective! Comrades, I ask you, how can you expose a bureaucratic clique at the same time you support their very "expressions of weakness," that is, their programs and solutions?

Such exposures that have their basis in the political ignorance of the people using and making them, seem to me to be perfectly use-

less. (Or perhaps they hoped others were ignorant enough to accept them.)

I maintain that the clinging of the NAACP to the bill in the State Legislature made them appear (at least to the non-dialectic approach of the mass of the working class) to be actually supporting a stronger bill. The Negro people today do not care how a bill is presented or by who as long as it serves their demands and needs! The only answer to this situation is that if we expect to gain their support on an action, while opposing their bureaucratic and liberal leadership, we better make sure we have something to offer that is more than "just as good."

Most pathetic of all, the position the comrades have taken in the USA campaign has very effectively disposed of any possibility of them participating in the probable future state-wide labor and NAACP struggle against the NAM referendum. They even stumble over their own phrases when mentioning this referendum among themselves. Taking as a starting point their obvious discomfort on this issue, I cannot foresee them "courageously and enthusiastically" entering this general class struggle issue; from which they excluded themselves for the sake of a "practical action."

I believe that the proofs are sufficient to support my contention that the campaign was centered around a "bourgeois reformist demand." What cannot be proved yet is my contention that this campaign ended in a set-back for socialists and the Negro struggle in the State of California. Perhaps some of the comrades feel that the strength of such struggles does not in the last analysis depend upon the advance or retreat of a socialist movement -- given the general isolation of radical movements. If this is so, I maintain this is the kind of "sloppy" attitude about the role of socialists that leads to the loss of confidence in socialist ideas. That working-class struggles can be immeasurably strengthened by the successful intervention of socialists with a correct program has been proved by the party time and time again.

### What Is My Position?

My position as well as B. Kaye's has been characterized at times as being empirical, pragmatic, and last but not least that of a petty-bourgeois sectarian. It has been called empirical because it demanded an answer to the nature of the Negro struggle in the State of California, its form and strength of organization, and how our campaign on Proposition C affected it. It has been called pragmatic because I maintained from the beginning that the petitions' obvious weaknesses and short-comings would defeat it; and because these were seized upon by the Communist Party and the bureaucrats of various organizations in the course of their opposition, the "similarity of charges" has been used to relegate my position to a status of "petty bourgeois" and of "up-holding of such cliques." When I speak of the necessity of adhering to a socialist program, as opposed to the concept of "practical demonstrations of socialist beliefs (as they have manifested themselves in this area) I shall have committed the unalterable sin of contracting "the disease of sectarianism, which this campaign above all made clear."



But since I am already sectarian enough to maintain that Lenin was successful in outlining organizational and programmatic concepts which can be used today; and insist that theoretical analysis is indispensable to correct action, I somehow or another feel that I can make my way through this maze of characterizations to at least a semblance of reality (which is after all what Marxist theoretical analysis attempts). When the comrades of the majority are ready to climb down from their "more revolutionary concepts" and phraseology, we can begin to discuss future actions with some direction inherent in them from the beginning and expect to be advancing in that direction when we are finished.

First in the line of reality should have been a discussion of whether the Negro people of this state and at this time could afford to cut themselves off from the support of the organized Negro and labor movements, and depend on the good nature and advanced consciousness of the liberals? Were they organized and ready to move in any degree, such as they were in the Montgomery boycott situation, or in Little Rock; for it is such organization and movement that affects the winning of liberals, and not the formation of a liberal bill. Were we ready and able to challenge or expose the real estate interests propaganda? And last but not least, was there any reality in the charge that such a referendum tactic had generally been used by reactionaries to defeat civil rights issues, and that such a move if used (no matter how good intentioned) at this time could provide a stepping-stone to the defeat of similar state bills?

These issues when discussed at all were cloaked with revolutionary phrases and justifications without the majority ever once facing them squarely or directly. They see the amount of opposition rolled up against Proposition C as proof of its effectiveness and revolutionary content. Let's examine this contention a little more closely. Isn't it part of a role of a bureaucrat to ride militant pressure from below and take original propositions and distort them into their own use and purpose? One of the young comrades maintains that the Berkeley chapter of the NAACP wanted to support Proposition C and that their leadership "wouldn't let them." If the pressure was really very strong for support, it would be a historical phenomena if the leadership did not reflect such pressure at least by some small "lip service." We saw no such reflection. Would the bureaucrats risk the loss of support of the mass of their organizations by opposition to an action that was "so fundamentally correct that it was too hot to handle?" Is it not to the advantage of the bureaucrats to have their rank and file split on the question of how to effect reform measures, does this not give them an excuse to get off the "hook of action"?

To me, it seemed to be a real essential weakness of the campaign to observe that when the "real enemy," i.e., the real estate forces, finally came out of their holes with propaganda and billboard messages that not one leaflet, one speech, or one action was devoted to their opposition! The comrades were too busy dispelling the arguments of the other radical forces, and the NAACP! Some of the real estate interests arguments would have led directly into our real transitional program planks, such as the "Open the books" slogan -- in opposition to the claim that such a bill would raise taxes and destroy property values. This was a perfect opportunity to apply

"practically" the socialist program and ideas. However, this kind of practicality was completely overlooked.

This brings us to the question of when and how do you attack the bureaucratic cliques for their class-collaborationist politics? Do you choose a time or an instance when they have been forced by their ranks to give some small consideration to the need for bills for their benefit? Also which actions of the state do you oppose as socialists? When it is so difficult to push the Democratic Party and bureaucratic cliques towards any action, do you devise means to "cut off credit" of these forces for their "lip-service actions," or do we critically support their actions, and show the working class and masses by presenting a stronger program for their use, that the bureaucratic forces are incapable of adopting the correct solutions because the class interests they serve are not compatible with any real solutions, for any section of the working-class problems. Do we oppose the bureaucrats from outside of their organizations by opposing them on their own grounds, i.e., through bourgeois reform politics, and attempting to replace our pressure alone for that of the working class in general? Which is stronger, the isolated "reform action" of a group of radicals, and their relatively limited supporters or the pressure, protest and movement of large sections of the working class? Contrast the growing demand for 30-40 in the strength of its sweep and support to that of the program of the bureaucratic cliques, and the question is answered. Does not the "isolated" action of socialists gain ten fold in strength when they oppose their stronger programs to the weaker ones of the bureaucracies?

Some of the answers to the foregoing questions would seem to have been answered by the entire nature of the campaign and the split of the vote of the Negro people against themselves. We would think that the fact that the comrades' awareness of the splitting of the radical, liberal and Negro forces on this question would call to light some reexamination of their entire action and its validity. Instead they speak proudly of the separation of the "sheep from the goats." This does not seem to me to be the advantage that some of the majority comrades contend. They forgot one given condition that you must have before you can afford to engage in such splitting actions, the revolutionary movement of the working class and the disintegration and falling apart of the bourgeoisie.

During the campaign, there was quite a bit of talk about the success of USA in intervening and providing to a large section of the working class the "leadership" with their "referendum movement." How can some of our leadership forget the basic Marxist premise that there is no quicker way to lose the "confidence of the masses" than to lead them into an isolated struggle that they have no possible hope of winning; that their confidence must be won on the basis of a correct program of action that will serve their needs and demands.

At the summing up conference held between the branches, however, such considerations were quickly passed over. One of our comrades said that the most important thing about "Proposition C" and the campaign around it was the "gaining and solidification of a new cadre for the party." I would be the last one to sneer at such a consideration, if it is really true. If I am correct in my analysis

however, even this will prove to be an exaggeration. Another comrade said the main value of the campaign was to highlight the "disease of sectarianism that this campaign above all made clear."

Even the main report of the campaign, in many respects, although it was calculated to gloss over the contradictions and weaknesses of the entire action served instead to highlight them.

The reporter said that when they chose the housing issue, they didn't completely realize its significance, and that they chose it "almost casually." He "forgot" the name of the Program committee set up in the beginning that so quickly became superfluous when all attention was delegated to the practical aspects of the campaign. There was no evaluation given of the Syreck campaign, nor of the disparity between the rather larger vote that Martinson (also running as a socialist) received; no voluntary evaluation of the disparity between the Roy Nichols vote (which I consider to be pro-Negro) and the Proposition C vote. When I asked how wide the percentage differences were, the question was "misunderstood" and quickly passed over.

On the Proposition itself the reporter said that if we had "set any kind of conditions" on the entry of other forces into the campaign (such as printing the petition under the name of USA?) that then we would have been guilty of the worst kind of sectarianism. Evidently the fear of this kind of mistake prompted him, too, when he said that he thought it would be a serious mistake to "determine the significance of the campaign in terms of the longer range party program."

I would like to know what terms can be used? Evidently neither their own original hypotheses nor that of the minority opposition seem valid.

Some of the majority comrades in this area may feel that I am being too harsh or polemical in my approach to the campaign, and in my criticism of our newer comrades. I would like to point out that I would not feel that such a position was necessary if I saw any evidence of the local leadership attempting a milder approach to these new comrades to convince them of the validity of the party program as opposed to more general misconcepts. That they have instead encouraged them in the misconcepts, and fought tooth and nail against even the mildest kind of opposition, has made me feel that I cannot in any instance maintain any other kind of position. To do so would be a complete negation of my conviction that the primary role of the party is the education of a "revolutionary cadre" which will be capable of leading a working class rise to power.

#### The Campaign's Relation to "Regroupment"

I think perhaps one of the reasons that the entire regroupment period and actions have been so fraught with misunderstandings is that in each area -- given the different compositions of the branches to begin with and the difference in periphery available, it has become necessary to subject our basic regroupment ideas that we began with to different interpretations and applications. However, throughout the entire national area there have been a few predominant

patterns that stood out, at least in my view, that I think we should review in our coming convention.

One of the burning questions throughout the last year has been "How are we to tell the difference between programmatic and tactical concessions?"

In relationship to this question, it would be a serious theoretical mistake to approach our actions and program throughout the last two years only in the light of "What has been accomplished," without looking at what our program and perspectives were when they were adopted at our 1957 convention. The important thing to me is not how much of our aims and perspectives were accomplished, but rather the question of "To what extent did we orient ourselves around the planks, not plank of the 1957 program?" Is our direction as well as our movement today fundamentally the same as it was two years ago, and if not why? What should be the decisive factors in determining whether or not we are moving into a "liquidationist" or rightward policy?

It seems to me that some good guiding lines to use are (1) the organizational strength and cohesiveness of the party, (2) the total effect we have had upon those we have been working with in the regroupment area, (3) the extent to which we have been able, through correct analysis of events and our reactions to them, to raise the theoretical level of the ranks of the party.

Another task before us in the immediate discussion that seems very important to me is an evaluation of what the general role of a revolutionary party consists, for there is always the ever-present danger that comrades through enthusiasm and effort to achieve a temporary, tactical line (and this is essentially what the regroupment concept is) tend to make of it an integral part of principle and program. Such confusion can very easily disintegrate and disorient the ranks of any party if they are not completely clear on such a question. So it was that locally the "tactic" of regroupment, which was to be an attempt to gather all the "shaken" revolutionary forces in movement into a single arena, in order to achieve the AIM and OBJECTIVE of the "ideological destruction of the Communist Party," became over a period of time the aim itself -- with the original objective displaced and forgotten. As a result some of the comrades today present the aim as though it was to replace the Communist Party -- organizationally, first.

I don't know exactly how the review of regroupment has expressed itself in other areas generally, but in the local situation there is a definite tendency toward judging our actions on a basis of motion vs. non-motion, and hand in hand with this attitude a growing stress on "breaking out of isolation." Then, too, now that we are in movement there is a definite trend of fear of "sectarian" ideas:

I have no quarrel with guarding the party against sectarian ideas, if at the same time those who raise these considerations are just as vigilant against the "social-democratic" interpretations within the party. Sectarianism has been approached by our protagonists with a kind of "blanket approach" and to some degree they have

been successful in rousing an anxiety within our ranks to avoid this horrible death, for this is essentially what sectarianism results in for any radical movement and most of our comrades realize this.

So it seems to me that the third most important task at the coming convention is to clarify what a real sectarian position consists of. There is a wide difference between a sectarianism which rejects participation in the working-class organizations, because they don't present revolutionary or socialist solutions; and the kind of program that is labeled "sectarian" by the CP -- SP-SDF and other generally pro-liberal forces. I think I have shown in my bulletin how it was just such a misunderstanding that led our local comrades to an almost complete isolation of themselves from any organization of the working class in the past campaign.

There seems to me to be an exaggerated reflection within the party of the charges of the Communist Party, that we are sectarian because of our forces and numbers being small and a reaction to it expressing itself in the concern to "get out of isolation."

I would like to see reaffirmed the position that it is our so-called "sectarian" class-struggle program (as well as our ability to make quick turns) that put us in the position we are in today as a leading contender in socialist politics.

Oakland, California  
May 1959

A FEW WORDS ON THE BERKELEY CAMPAIGN

By Art Sharon

G. Russell's report on the Berkeley campaign tells the story well of this unique party experience. Based as it is on his report to the Bay Area membership it is largely expository in form rather than polemical and thus may seem a little out of place in an internal discussion bulletin.

But perceptive comrades will see that the course followed in the campaign around Proposition "C" couldn't help but arouse strong differences both inside and outside the party. However the force of circumstances locally inhibited what might otherwise have been a very lively internal debate on these differences. No sooner did our local minority (on this question) raise its voice when they with the majority were pulled willy nilly into a slam bang fight against a broad front of our opponents. Almost by reflex ranks were closed and all pitched into the fight.

Thus we came to the end of the campaign and into the convention period with hardly an opportunity to bat our experience around with a meaningful discussion on the main strategical considerations. But from the looks of the picture that is shaping up nationally on the Negro struggle this will come on the agenda again.

A second word is in order here and this relates to the "regroupment process." We have been so busy arguing regroupment that we hardly noticed that part of it which was taking place under our noses. This was impressed upon me as I listened to G. Russell's report and realized that it was only a short time ago that he was the object of regroupment. And likewise a number of others who spoke up strongly and well. Each one stood out as a distinct asset. Intelligent, dedicated and talented people were joined with us, and if you will permit an outsider looking in could hardly tell which twin had the Toni.

One word of warning. It shouldn't be inferred from this report on the Berkeley campaign that we would suggest a similar campaign anywhere else. Some of the NAACP's arguments would be quite valid in other communities. The Berkeley situation seemed to us to offer a unique opportunity as the report indicates.

June 1, 1959.

SOCIALIST POLITICAL ACTION AND  
THE BERKELEY MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

By Geoff Russell

Berkeley, California, is a small city of about 120,000 people just across the Bay from San Francisco. The University of California, many of whose 18,000 students live in the city, plays a big role in Berkeley's life. However, Berkeley is not merely a university town, nor a bedroom for San Francisco. Along its waterfront is a substantial string of factories. If its hills support Montgomery Street brokers, its lowlands are the home of steelworkers, chemical workers, and longshoremen. 25% of its population is colored.

Berkeley is a city where small homeowners predominate. Apartment houses are rare and the cottage is the dominant form in working-class areas. Berkeley has no real slums. Its citizens like to think of it as different, as exempt from the problems of other urban areas. In part because of the presence of the university, Berkeleyans are particularly skilled in the use of the liberal rhetoric.

For the quarter of its population (mostly Negroes) who are colored, however, the city's democracy is largely myth. Color lines, in housing, are drawn with great rigorousness. South Berkeley is a sharply demarcated Negro ghetto. That housing in this area, compared with similar areas in eastern and midwestern cities, is relatively good does not alter its essential character. In West Berkeley, on the fringes of the factory district, lies another, more thinly populated area of mixed Negro, Oriental, Mexican, and some white working-class population. In Berkeley the color line cannot be disguised as an economic line. Houses in West Berkeley are not much different from those in the north and center, but only in the west are they available to Negroes.

Some white liberals have been aware of this problem. A number of excellent studies have been made. A group of citizens have banded together to work on the problem. Operating on the assumption that housing discrimination is the result of some kind of misunderstanding, they attack it with the weapon of voluntarism. Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) seeks to persuade landlords in white areas to rent or sell to colored. In recent years it has actually relocated two Negro families by this technique. Around HOME and similar organizations is clustered a fairly substantial group of enlightened citizens. They belong to the Co-op foodstore; they subscribe to KPFA, Berkeley's listener subscription radio; they vote Democratic. They are particularly militant in denouncing discrimination in Little Rock or the Union of South Africa.

Until the election this spring, almost everybody was reasonably happy. At election time politicians promised fair treatment for all. HOME and its associates demonstrated their good will. The real estate interests continued to make additional profits by holding the

color line. Only Negroes and Orientals who wanted to move out of the ghetto had cause for complaint.

The disturber of the peace this year was United Socialist Action. The history of this group is germane to this discussion. In September of 1958 a conference of radicals was held in San Francisco to discuss the possibilities for united independent political action. This conference featured a direct confrontation between the position of the Stalinists and their periphery, who wanted a respectable non-socialist pressure group that could avoid direct collision with the Democratic Party, and our position for a united socialist electoral coalition opposed to both capitalist parties. The CP won the majority at the conference, but we were the real victors, attracting to ourselves a number of healthy elements.

Our of this newly acquired periphery, USA was formed. In the beginning it had three main components: ourselves, a group of young non-party activists, and San Francisco notables such as George Hitchcock and Vincent Hallinan.

It spent a good deal of time in the beginning formulating its statement of principles. Although it never used this statement, the time was not wasted. It got the members acquainted with each other on the ideological level and proved that despite the differences here they were able to carry on an extended action together. By not covering up, but fully exposing, these differences at the very beginning, USA forestalled their rising up to disrupt it later on. These are the formulations of the two most difficult questions, attitude toward capitalist candidates, and toward democracy in the Soviet orbit:

"We completely reject the outlook which calls for the infiltration of the Democratic Party," and

"We declare our support also. . . for the workers and intellectuals of the non-capitalist countries, who face the problem of establishing full control over the state and the economy and of guaranteeing essential rights of political and intellectual freedom."

These compromises showed us pretty clearly who our allies were. They were ideological, though not organizational, adherents of the National Guardian.

USA's first opportunity for action came in the Berkeley municipal elections in April 1959. We determined to intervene.

Our interest did not originally center around the idea of an initiative. We first saw it merely as an adjunct to our usual campaign. We discussed possibilities around nuclear testing and smog control, but abandoned them as impractical. Our final choice was to attack in the crucial area of housing discrimination. We selected the Isaacs-Sharkey bill in New York City as our model. Making a few minor changes in its text, the USA started the machinery for enacting this ordinance in Berkeley by the initiative method.



As soon as we decided on this step, USA attempted to get in touch with the NAACP and other liberal groups. However, these attempts were pursued with insufficient energy and brought no reaction. But when the petitioning actually started and it became apparent that USA was serious about the matter, the reaction was quick and strong. The NAACP regional office violently objected. They objected to the use of the initiative method on the grounds that whites are by and large hostile to Negro aspirations and therefore not to be trusted in a vote. They said that its defeat would jeopardize the passage of the FEPC bill in Sacramento, and also a housing bill that had been introduced there. Finally, they objected to USA entering the field without their permission.

Similar attitudes were expressed on the left. The Independent Voters of California (IVC), a Stalinist pressure group, developed the same arguments as the NAACP. In fact it is the opinion of many of us in USA that these CP elements helped urge the NAACP to attack us, although such an attack would undoubtedly have taken place anyway. The local SP-SDF thought that USA's action was unwise and irresponsible, and pressured us to drop it.

In the face of this opposition we could either withdraw or fight an all-out campaign. No compromise was possible. It was also at this point that two comrades in the East Bay branch began to raise serious objections to the initiative. Their grounds at this time were on the one hand that the action was opportunistic, fostering illusions in parliamentarism and false reliance on the state apparatus. On the other hand they objected that this work would cut us off from the NAACP and the official labor movement which were conducting their own FEPC campaign by the usual lobbying techniques in Sacramento. After two discussions, the branch endorsed the general line of the USA which decided with virtual unanimity to fight the issue through.

Tactics at this point were crucial. In USA we took the attitude that we more than welcomed any other forces entering the campaign. We would make whatever organizational concessions might be necessary. We claimed no franchise on this fight. But at the same time we insisted on proceeding with our own work. We would not withdraw or be quiet in return for the vague promise that the issue would be taken up by some nebulous citizens' committee. To have taken a hostile attitude toward other forces entering or to try to set conditions on their entry would have been the worst sectarianism. Then we, rather than the liberals, would have assumed responsibility for the defeat of the proposition. On the other hand, to collapse in the face of the attacks of the official leaders of the Negro people and other respectable elements would have been the worst opportunism. To think that were we to withdraw the liberals would then take the matter up would have been naive self-deception. To drop the proposition knowing that it would then be dead would have betrayed into the hands of their bourgeois leaders the people who believed in us and signed our petition.

We didn't issue a lot of statements and make a lot of noise. Neither did we get derailed. As one comrade put it, we presented a thin edge to the line of fire.

The petitioning went well. About 90% of the minority voters approached signed, and about 50% of the whites. An increasing number of Negroes and whites began to circulate petitions. About 45 Berkeleyans directly collected signatures, and another 15 or so non-residents did clerical and other work. The response from below encouraged us to continue in the face of the liberal opposition.

At the next meeting of the Berkeley NAACP a letter from the regional office was read attacking the initiative. No discussion was allowed and no vote was taken in the Berkeley chapter at this or any other time.

At the end of the three week signature collection period, USA had collected 2856 signatures, about twice the amount necessary to put the measure on the ballot. The Isaacs-Sharkey bill became Berkeley Proposition C.

Now that the proposition was on the ballot, USA hoped that the liberal elements might give it some support. USA therefore continued to ask other organizations to join in on their own terms, and encouraged the formation of a broad citizens' committee. Such a citizens' committee, however, was not forthcoming. The Reverend Roy Nichols, liberal Negro Democratic candidate for City Council, came out against it.

USA embarked on an energetic leaflet campaign. By election day it had put leaflets under more than half the doors in the city. USA also used a sound-truck, some personal visits in four test precincts, and spoke to every gathering before which it could get a speaker.

USA had also entered a candidate, Marion Syrek Jr., for a post in the City Council. This was originally planned as the usual general socialist propaganda action, with which the East Bay branch of the party had had experience in Oakland. Syrek was running for the full term and was thus not a candidate against Nichols who was running for a two year term only.

Some friends and a few comrades had originally feared that running a candidate might interfere with the "C" campaign. This fear turned out to be groundless. On the contrary, with the default of the liberals, Syrek became the spokesman for "C," speaking for it in places where it otherwise would have had no defenders. However, forces which would have ordinarily been used in the Syrek campaign were committed to "C," with the result that the candidate's campaign suffered. Syrek carried a heavy load with very little help. He was forced to be his own campaign manager and to do everything from writing his own leaflets to cranking them off on the mimeograph. In a field of thirteen from which four were to be elected, he received 5.6% of the vote. With more help, this could have been increased. However, in view of the possibilities of the "C" campaign, it is the opinion of most comrades that the concentration was fully justified.

When no liberal opposition developed to the conservative mayor, the local SP-SDF entered a candidate against him. Despite its initial opposition to the measure, the SP-SDF and its candidate gave full support to Proposition "C" once it was on the ballot.

This gave "C" an additional voice in public places. USA gave critical support to the SP-SDF candidate. The SP-SDF did not reciprocate.

The real estate interests now entered the fight. With offices in the biggest of the downtown bank buildings, their committee took out large ads in the local press, rented at least four full-sized billboards, and sent out a mailing to every registered voter in the city. Their line was openly racist. "Don't destroy Berkeley." "Don't destroy property values." They also used the civil-liberties-for-landlords approach. The appearance of this material caused some embarrassment to the liberal opponents of the measure.

The NAACP, however, hardened its line. Mr. Franklin Williams of the regional office issued a long statement to the newspapers attacking the proposition on technical legal grounds. THE BERKELEY GAZETTE, Berkeley's only daily newspaper, printed this in full, and on the front page. USA replied, pointing out that the specific provisions attacked were taken word for word from those in the New York bill which the NAACP had enthusiastically supported. THE GAZETTE refused to print one word of this reply.

However, in the closing weeks of the campaign, some liberal support began to develop. The civil liberties secretary of the University YMCA, himself a lawyer, came out in support of the measure and characterized the NAACP's position as "legal lint-picking." He appeared on KPFA to defend his position. Sidney Roger, a regular KPFA commentator with International Longshoremen & Warehousemen Union connections, also endorsed the proposition. The legislative committee of Local Six, ILWU, took similar action, as did the 7th Congressional District Democratic Club. "C" also received the editorial support of THE SUN-REPORTER, one of the area's leading Negro weeklies. On the left the membership of the East Bay IVC endorsed the proposition against the advice of their pro-Stalinist leadership. IVC did not, however, undertake any action on its behalf.

The most significant entry into the fight was that of SLATE, the liberal, multi-tendency, anti-fraternity group at University of California. They endorsed Proposition "C" and planned a rally on its behalf. This action was taken despite the sabotaging activities of the Shachtmanite wing of the SP on campus. Vice-chancellor Sherriff's banned the rally. This precipitated a full-scale fight for student civil liberties. SLATE called a rally to discuss Sherriff's ruling. This rally in turn was banned by Dean Stone, who, oddly enough, was Rev. Nichol's opponent in the City Council race. Thus the position of the University was that student groups could neither take part in outside politics nor even discuss their right to do so. The banned free-speech rally was held anyway. The University's course attracted much unfavorable public attention, and a ruling from the state attorney-general overturned Stone's interpretation of the education code. Thus the civil liberties fight was substantially won. SLATE leaders, however, may still face retaliation from the University authorities because of the banned rally.

The opposition's most telling blow was saved for the Monday before election. On that morning every household in the South

Berkeley ghetto received a professionally distributed leaflet put out by the real estate committee. This leaflet reprinted the NAACP's attacks on "C," and gave the appearance of being co-signed by the NAACP and the committee. Thus the NAACP was placed in the position of supplying material for and having its name used by what has been appropriately called a White Citizens' Council group. There has been no repudiation of this action by the NAACP, which surely must have had foreknowledge of it.

After all this the election itself was anti-climactic. The NAACP attacks cut the vote in the Negro districts to an average of about 45%. "C" did somewhat better than was expected in the areas of heavy University population and among the Oriental voters. Of course it did poorly among the hill-dwelling bourgeoisie and the respectable white petty-bourgeois property owners of North Berkeley. Overall it got 8,025 votes, or 26% of the total. The SP-SDF got 5,754 votes, or 17.8%, against the incumbent fuddy-duddy, and USA's council candidate, Marion Syrek, received 1,994, or 5.6%. Nichols lost to the rally-banning dean by 1,359 votes. SLATE elected the next president of the Cal. student body in an election conducted during the aftermath of the "C" campaign and the free speech fight. Mr. Franklin Williams, NAACP regional office counsellor, is slated for a post as assistant state attorney-general. The state FEP bill passed, as everyone knew it would. The state housing bill never saw the light of day, and almost everyone knew that, too.

Although this campaign was more expensive than the usual type, it also received financial support from persons who would not ordinarily contribute to a socialist campaign. The money raised was mostly in small contributions. Not only did the campaign not end up with a deficit, but on April 25 USA was in the embarrassing position of having a \$60 surplus.

What goals did the party have in this campaign and to what extent were these goals achieved? In the first place, our goals did not remain static throughout the campaign but changed as time went on. In the beginning, before the initiative developed, we had three main aims in mind:

1. To demonstrate in a real situation the meaning of our line on independent socialist political action.
2. To gather a periphery and to reactivate some of the casualties of the XXth Congress and prosperity.
3. To make propaganda for socialism among the general population and especially before the trade unions and other organized groups.

When the initiative was developed we of course aimed a real advancement of the Negro rights struggle in this area by striking a blow at one of the most vicious forms of Jim Crow. The response from below also caused us to set certain more specific goals:

1. Before the extent and intensity of the opposition of the liberals became apparent, we hoped to pass the ordinance.

2. We hoped through the campaign to raise the level of political consciousness in the Negro community.

3. We intended to put the Democratic liberals to a real test.

4. We hoped to smoke out the racism of the real estate board.

How did what we got match with what we wanted? In the opinion of the party people who worked in it, the Proposition "C" campaign did advance the struggle for Negro rights. True, it was defeated, but consider that with only our backing and against the opposition of the reactionaries and the NAACP and most liberals, it still got 26%, including many votes in the white areas. This was a first attack. Such initial actions usually don't win, but they point the way to victory. Furthermore, anything which mobilizes significant numbers of Negroes and whites in an attack on Jim Crow marks an advance.

As for our more particular goals, we did increase our periphery quantitatively and also improved it qualitatively. The people who stuck with us or were attracted to us in the course of this campaign are, by and large, people who are willing to play our brand of politics, even when the going gets rough. True, we lost some on the way. Nevertheless, on the Saturday of the last big weekend before election, of the 32 people who were actually working, 15 were non-party.

We demonstrated in a most forceful way the meaningfulness of our line on independent political action. Who can say that our participation in the Berkeley elections of 1959 was a meaningless gesture? Let such a skeptic examine our archives.

Were we able to make general propoganda? Yes. Perhaps we did not talk to as many people about socialism in general, but we talked to more people who heard us. We never attempted to disguise or minimize the socialist character of our group. "C" gave people a reason for listening. It is in this context that propoganda becomes meaningful and effective.

We unquestionably smoked out the real estate board elements. It will be a long time in Berkeley before anybody again says: "But we don't have segregated housing here!"

Also, "C" provided the best test for liberals in years. As a group they showed up very badly. But "C" was a good differentiator, for a few such as Roger and Walters, the YMCA lawyer, got stronger as time went on. On the other hand, the radical William Mandel, with his "position to protect," got weaker. Certainly as a result of "C" we are in a far better position to point out concretely the nature of liberalism.

As to the effects on the political consciousness of South and West Berkeley, this is hard to judge objectively. But in this battle socialists were on the popular side and the NAACP was objectively allied with the White Citizens' Council. This must have raised some serious questions among the Negro masses. The liberal organizations attacked us by saying that they could do the job better

their way. Now they will be subject to pressure from their mass base to come across with something, and their failure to do so will be enlightening to their rank and file. The election returns indicate that the NAACP still can exert powerful conservative influences over the voting of the Negro masses on such an issue, but this influence is certainly not the stronger for the Proposition "C" campaign. The local Democratic leaders look just a little sicker as leaders of the Negro people out of the Jim Crow wilderness. This further demonstration of the limitations of the liberal position cannot be a matter of indifference to those who offer a socialist alternative.

There were a number of weaknesses in the conduct of our campaign. It was prepared in great haste, and we did not cover our flanks on the consultation angle by early enough official talks with the NAACP and others. All the consultation in the world however would not have changed the basic situation.

The relations between the party and the USA were not always altogether clear in either body, although at no point in the campaign were difficulties of this sort a serious threat. Perhaps we would have been better off if we had been more explicit about this difficult matter.

There were plenty of others, of course, but they were incidental and inevitable for a campaign of this magnitude carried on with the forces available to us. Not the least gain of the campaign is the development of an experienced cadre. For some, this was their first contact with a real political campaign, with struggle in a public arena instead of within the restricted confines of purely left circles.

In their early attacks on the initiative, the comrades who are opposed to the USA attacked the feature of the ordinance which provided for the appointing of a commission by the mayor. These comrades propose as their alternative that the commission be created in some unspecified fashion directly by the minority groups involved. This, of course, sounds very revolutionary, and at the appropriate stage of the struggle would be an altogether proper demand. To include it at this point, however, would be to raise this campaign from the level of a realistic immediate demand having a powerful impact on this community to the level of pure propaganda which no one would be obliged to treat seriously. Fortunately, this criticism was rejected.

What conclusions, then, can we legitimately draw from this campaign?

In the first place, our willingness to work with allies paid off. While it is true that the San Francisco notables tended to lend us their names and then become inactive, their moral support was none the less valuable. In the East Bay the non-party people made a major contribution on all levels. People in this category more than pulled their own weight. In fact, during one period, they carried the major share of the responsibility. While we hear that the SP's broad supporters were a drag on them, our new periphery was a stimulus to us.

As we predicted, being an openly socialist and non-respectable organization we were not greatly troubled with red-baiting. When the real estate committee attempted to tie us up with the Stalinist PEOPLES WORLD, it embarrassed the PW, but not us.

It would be tragic to miss the significance of this campaign in terms of the longer range aims of the party. We say that we aim to replace the Stalinists in the leadership of the left. As a result of "C" we are on the road toward achieving that aim in Berkeley. USA became an active, dynamic, and attractive organization. The Stalinist IVC became involuted, moribund, and factional. Our gains could not have been achieved with the standard type of campaign, however good it might have been in itself, to which we have in the past been limited by objective and subjective circumstances. With "C" we have shown what we can do with an action at once principled and practical. Nor can anyone effectively maintain that this was not a class issue. It was a class issue and it was handled in a class way. The lineup of forces shows that. The real estate propaganda shows that. The precinct results show that.

Our job in this period is to break away the working class and the Negro people from their illusionary attachment to the Democratic Party. Proposition "C" did not strengthen these illusions; it weakened them. The Democratic Party is not going to be exposed by our speeches delivered in the abstract. It will be exposed by events, providing we are there to point out their meaning. Some events we must patiently await. Proposition "C" was an event which we made happen. It is by these standards that we must judge the class significance of an action.

June 1, 1959.