

SECOND JOINT BAY AREA BRANCH DISCUSSION
ON BLACK PANTHER PARTY CANDIDACIES

Meeting of July 21, 1968

(Verbatim transcript not edited by speakers.)

Presentation by Carl Frank

Comrades, the discussion today is the second joint discussion we've had around the question of the Black Panther Party - Peace and Freedom Party candidacies. This discussion today proceeds from the first discussion in which we tried to make a general evaluation of the BPP.

In this discussion, the question we want to address ourselves to is whether or not to give critical support to the three BPP local candidacies -- the candidacies of Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Kathleen Cleaver in San Francisco. My presentation includes a motion that we give critical support to these three local candidacies. This motion can be presented on the branch floor on either side of the Bay for a vote.

I think we ought to go back and try first to see what kind of agreement we can reach in terms of the evaluation of the BPP, because I think there is some basis there for general agreement, a groundwork to go into the principled and tactical considerations that we have to take up in order to come to any decision on whether or not to extend critical support.

I think, even though the San Francisco branch did not vote on Peter Camejo's document, that there can be general agreement on the question of the BPP as a whole. Most comrades, even those who like Nat put an amendment to Peter's document, agree that the BPP is a progressive development in the black community, something which we support, something which we wanted to see grow and develop.

In terms of trying to express a general agreement on the evaluation, I think we can put it in the words of Derrick Morrison. Derrick evaluated the BPP as such: "The BPP on the West Coast is a very significant development. It is the organization in the Bay Area. It is the only organization on the national scene that comes close to our conception of a black party. It possesses a tendency to become a para-military group and a tendency to become a political party. The tendency to become a political party seems to be on the upswing."

This agreement which I think we can all reach and agree to has its place in the context of our understanding of the black liberation struggle right now and its historical content. In terms of the vacuum of leadership existing in the black community, in terms of the contradiction between the explosive power, the readiness and the demonstrated capacity of the black community to strike out against the symbols of capitalist property, against the capitalist state on the one hand, and the lack of organized

expression of this mood, of this sentiment within the black community on the other. Within this general context, the rise of the BPP has tremendous significance because the need which we see today is the need for an organization to emerge, an organizational form to give expression to the vanguard of an oppressed national minority, the Afro-American community. And it's in this regard that we look upon the BPP and its movement towards becoming a political party, trying to take power for the black people to achieve self-determination as a significant development.

We recognize, also, the mistakes, the weaknesses of the BPP. We recognize the programmatic weaknesses and, more than anything else, its major weakness -- its failure or inability so far to come up with a clear strategy for how to achieve its desired aim of self-determination for the black community.

We also recognize that the BPP arises out of the radicalization which has emerged from the black youth -- the rejection which we've seen, total alienation, rejection of white capitalist society and rejection of the tokenism of the civil rights movement, rejection of the reliance that the black community has placed upon capitalist politics. More than anything else, we recognize the BPP's significance in terms of being independent of the ruling class. And we see that the BPP has the potential of becoming the kind of black political party which we would like to see emerge in the black community as the first step toward the coming American revolution and the black people of this country playing a vanguard role.

I don't think I want to go into anything further in terms of our general evaluation of the BPP. Where our differences began to emerge was in regard to the question of the coalition which the BPP has established with the PFP. That's where the nuances of disagreement began to emerge in terms of that coalition and its significance.

In order to address ourselves to the question of critical support, there are two major considerations which we have to take up. Principled considerations first, tactical considerations second.

The principled considerations which we have to look into are the questions of whether or not we see the BPP candidacies on the PFP ticket as being a step toward the break-away from capitalist politics. If we can say that we see this step as a break-away from capitalist politics, then we can utilize this opportunity to project that break even further, to establish in the minds of the black vanguard and radical white students the consciousness of what this break means and to try and project it forward, try and project it on a mass scale. That's the important criterion which we have to utilize to establish whether or not we can in principle support the BPP candidacies.

I think it's not hard to say that the form, the mere form of ballot designation is not the issue to which we have to address

ourselves. That alone would hardly be significant enough a determinant to prevent us from taking an attitude of critical support. For example, in the discussion in the New York branch around the question of critical support to the Aptheker candidacy, the New York branch decided to give critical support to the Aptheker candidacy in New York City. The ballot designation in the Aptheker candidacy was not the Communist Party. Curiously enough, the ballot designation in that case happened to be the Peace & Freedom ticket. Nevertheless, the New York branch decided in these terms that the ballot designation was not the decisive question, that Aptheker was a Communist Party candidate and that the Communist Party was viewed as having major responsibilities for the campaign. So I think that we can say that the form alone is not the issue.

There is a difference between that case, however, and this one, some major differences. One of which is that in that case there really was no coalition between some Peace & Freedom elements and the Communist Party. The CP simply set up an Aptheker candidacy on a Peace and Freedom ticket. There was no two distinct groupings -- the CP and a Peace & Freedom group -- they were merged. In this case, there really is a coalition and that's what we have to address ourselves to -- the nature of that coalition that exists and try to make an evaluation of that and see whether or not there are any principled considerations which would preclude us from giving critical support to the BPP candidacies.

This is probably the major point around which our discussion revolved last week and I think today's discussion should revolve primarily around the tactical considerations. But I want to go over this because we have to clarify this issue. The major discussion we had last week in the joint Bay Area discussion was around the question of the coalition. I'd like to go over that again here and then go on to the tactical considerations of our extension of critical support.

In trying to make this kind of evaluation of the coalition, what we're trying to determine here is whether or not these candidacies of Newton, Seale, and Kathleen Cleaver are really Black Panther candidacies in the first instance. And, secondly, whether or not these candidacies are viewed as such by the black people, by black militants and by the white radicals who support the PFP.

I want to go over some of the points that were made in the last discussion. First of all, one of the points that Peter Camejo tried to make on the nature of this coalition was that it was not a unity between the BPP and the PFP. They were not organizations which had merged together. The BPP remains an independent organization -- has an independent apparatus, independent headquarters, independent membership, and continues to function as such. The candidacies of Newton, Seale, and Cleaver were initiated by the BPP and continue to be viewed as BPP campaigns.

I want to refer again to Derrick Morrison's evaluation of the BPP understanding of the relationship which they established with

the PFP. When Derrick was here, during April I believe, he had an opportunity to discuss with some of the BPP people and had some kind of a national perspective in terms of what other things were going on in the black vanguard around the country. Derrick wrote in his tour report, I quote: "The Panthers are primarily using their relationship with the PFP to gain funds for defense and use the ballot status of PFP for their candidates. Even though it is being run through the PFP, the BPP militants see the campaigns as BPP campaigns. The election campaigns provide a focus for stressing the political character of the BPP."

There is something very important to establish here in terms of the attitude which the BPP has towards the PFP. We've seen that the PFP operates within the sphere of bourgeois politics, but nevertheless is different than a direct organ of class rule such as the Democratic Party is today. It's very important to understand what kind of evaluation the BPP makes of the PFP. For example, when a liberal black politician or civil rights leader looks toward the Democratic Party, he's looking for concessions, looking for the Democratic Party to produce freedom for black people. This is a very different thing than the way the BPP looks to the PFP. It's not the same.) ✓

The BPP doesn't look for the PFP to grant them any concessions, to suddenly produce freedom for black people. It's very obvious that the PFP is totally incapable of doing anything like this in the first place. It's not, at this time, an organ of class rule, the oppressor of the Afro-American nation. It's a rather weak, middle class radical party that doesn't have much of a perspective of going anywhere. The BPP doesn't orient primarily to the PFP and that's the important thing to establish. The orientation of the BPP continues to be towards its base in the black community, towards the ghetto, towards those alienated, radicalizing black youth. You can see this very clearly if you've been able to participate in some of the demonstrations the past week -- the way in which they organize, the way in which the BPP organized phone teams to go into the black community. The clear orientation which they have established not towards getting the PFP to build these demonstrations, or the PFP alone to take these demonstrations into their hands and to produce freedom for Huey Newton, but by continuing to mobilize the black community and orient towards it. The BPP looks upon the PFP as a friend and an ally, somebody who will give them support and aid. Now, they're very mistaken in this regard. The PFP is not going to be a viable friend or a trusting ally. But the BPP, on the basis of some very empirical understanding of the support they have in the student movement, sees the PFP as being an expression of that, which it is to a certain extent, and will offer support to it.

The important thing I think we have to realize is in spite of the electoral coalition that's been established between the BPP and the PFP, the BPP continues to maintain its independent political activity -- the task of mobilizing, organizing the ghetto, building support for itself in the ghetto, recruiting from the

ghetto, and building its own independent political party. That is still its primary task and its primary orientation. In terms of this election campaign, there is no indication whatsoever that there is an adaptation on the part of the BPP to some form of electoralism. The BPP hasn't seen these election campaigns as some kind of way to take over a state assembly district or congressional district and in that way produce some kind of gains for the black community. They don't look upon that as a primary orientation. Their primary task is to use the election campaign, much like we would, as a propaganda and organization tool, and primarily in the defense of black political prisoners. So that the political character of the electoral campaigns will retain independence of the daily political activities of the BPP. And that's the important thing here.

In terms of the 1968 elections, what will emerge will be that the daily political activity of the BPP, their independent attempt to mobilize the black community in struggle, will be expressed via the election campaign. Take the defense of Huey Newton, for example. The defense of Huey Newton will be waged primarily around the defense of Huey Newton, black political prisoner and congressional candidate. The campaign of Huey Newton will assume in its organizational work much of the defense of Huey Newton. And it's a clear orientation towards independent black political action just as the demonstrations on Sunday and Monday and throughout the week are. There's no indication that that's going to change at all.

In order to make a case for an objection to critical support on principle, one would have to make the case that the direction of the BPP as a whole would have to be turned around. That is, there would be a complete reversal in their major orientation and that, instead of orienting towards the black community, the orientation would be reversed towards the PFP, some kind of liberal white movement. That's the basic case that would have to be made in order to make a principled objection to extending critical support to these candidacies.

There's a lot of doubt and hesitation that this direction may change, even though I think it's pretty clear that there is no major indication, or any indication, that it's going to change with the exception of the Cleaver for President campaign. This doubt and hesitation has come forth in what I consider PFP phobia on the part of many of the comrades, a tremendous fear of the illusory growing strength of the PFP, or their potential growing strength. Again and again, go over what the PFP is and what it's not and where the PFP is going. It's a transient phenomenon, transient. It's an expression of the white, middle class, student-based antiwar movement with no viability in and of itself. And it's going absolutely nowhere. It's not going to go very far.

After the elections in 1968, the BPP will still be there. And the PFP will more than likely disappear from the face of the earth. Let me give you an example of this. In San Francisco County, the organization of the PFP. I walked in there the other day, by the way, and was greeted by the office staff -- four PL'ers.

They've completely dominated the San Francisco County PFP organization. At their state-county convention, they took up as one of the five major points of concern the question of the relationship between PFP and BPP. And it's very interesting what this major point of concern was. It shows you the weakness and the real relationship between the BPP and the PFP. The task which they set for themselves, the San Francisco County organization, was and I quote, "To continue to try to develop the relationship with and equality with the BPP." They felt the whole process that was going on -- that the BPP was the organization that was gaining strength, building, developing and they were trailing very, very far behind. In fact, unless they tried to become an equal competitor with the BPP, there would be very little reason for the San Francisco County PFP organization to continue to exist.

Now, the Cleaver for President campaign. I don't want to go into this too much. I'm sure this will be a major issue under discussion here today. Maybe I'll take it up in the summary. It's clear it's very different in its origin, initiation, development than the other campaigns. It's something which we cannot support.

Some white radicals came to Cleaver as an individual and agreed to run him on the PFP ticket. ~~It wasn't a campaign initiated by the BPP. It doesn't have the program of the BPP. It isn't under the organizational confines of the BPP, or anything like that.~~ It's a very, very different kind of campaign in its initiation. The thinking of some comrades -- and they're very correct in this -- is that the PFP is going to try to use the Cleaver campaign to suck white radicals into the trap of lesser evil politics. That's true. But the thinking is that this will lead to a growing, revitalized PFP which will then submerge the local candidacies of the BPP within this trap. I just don't see it. You've got to prove not that something will happen like that, but that the direction of the BPP is changed, that Cleaver is now directing the BPP in another course. And I don't think there's any indication that the BPP direction is changed. Cleaver certainly is going on that course right now in relation to his candidacy. But I don't think you can make a case that the direction of the BPP has changed. And I don't think, unless you can prove this direction has changed, that it's a decisive obstacle to our extension of critical support.

There's a very good possibility, or possibility, that the direction of the Cleaver campaign, which is bucking the central current of the BPP and the black struggle, may change. There's a lot of pressure that can be exerted upon Cleaver -- from SNCC, from James Foreman, from the Newark Convention of the United Brothers, from the whole black movement -- to change the nature of his campaign, to orient the campaign towards the BPP as a national organization. That is a thing that could develop. Now, I say we can't predict that and on that basis extend critical support to the Cleaver campaign because it has developed, evolved and moved in a different direction. Nevertheless, I think there is a possibility that that kind of thing could happen.

So, unless these kind of cases can be made, I don't think there can be any principled objection to the extension of critical support.

Let me just run over the tactical advantages of our extension of critical support to these local campaigns. There are three basic tactical considerations.

Number one, it would tactically, in my opinion, help to advance our line on the black struggle, the need for a mass black political party. Those comrades who've been on the campus recognize this fact. I know this for a fact. When I'm speaking to the kids on campus, they cannot understand what we're talking about black political action when we say we're wary of supporting the BPP candidates. They don't understand what we're talking about. I'll give them our line, the case for an independent black political party, and they'll say well, why don't you support the BPP candidates. And I'll say, there's a problem with the PFP. They'll say, they're only running PFP for the ballot status. They're not under the control of PFP. And I'll say, that's true, but it's miseducating for black militants and so forth. They'll just pin you up against the wall defending a position that is not only difficult to defend, but is untrue. We can support those campaigns. It represents independent black political action and it's a first step towards the building of a mass black political party.

There's a lot of examples we can go into. The example of Milton and some other comrades up at State College with black high school kids advancing our line. And these same black high school kids are going to be advancing the campaign of the BPP. We can reach these people. It's an opportunity to get in there and reach them with our ideas.

The second tactical advantage is it drives a wedge into the PFP-BPP coalition. We're interested in destroying the PFP, in breaking it up. That is our desire. We don't want to see it grow and build and become a dynamic force and submerge the black liberation struggle. We want to break it up. The question is how and in what way can we best break it up. I think that by extending critical support we can go a long way towards breaking up that coalition because the white radicals look upon the PFP-BPP coalition not as something that's a good thing to have, working relations, and so forth -- I say the white radicals, not the tendencies. Our opponent political tendencies are very conscious in their manipulation of the BPP. The white radicals want to support the BPP.

The organization that can do that best, that can best support the black liberation struggle, is the organization that both the BPP and the white radicals will tend to gravitate around. And the comrades from Berkeley can point out that in the Free Huey Newton demonstration, the PFP totally defaulted. A lot of the activity came out of our headquarters, around our actions in the Free Huey Newton demonstration. This thing will develop and continue as the election campaign proceeds. If we have an election campaign, we

would put out literature not in the narrow, sectarianism of the PFP, but for building a mass black political party. That's the kind of literature that will go out and orient towards white radicals. Our literature can explain the political issues. We can explain the political issues involved around the BPP candidacies. It's a phenomenal thing, a phenomenal opportunity for us to go out and campaign for a mass black political party utilizing the BPP candidacies.

There's a lot of things I could say here, but let me go on to the last and final tactical advantage, the most important one, in the last analysis, and my last point. That is that the major advantage that this is going to give us is it's going to build the SWP. It's going to build the revolutionary party. That's our final and ultimate criterion. How is it going to do this? By the way, it's also going to do it on a principled basis, on the basis of a principled stance.

In 1968, you know, we have an election campaign going on, too. We have presidential and vice-presidential candidates and some local candidates here in the Bay Area who are going to go around campaigning, projecting our ideas. One of our major slogans in that campaign is "Black Control of the Black Communities." It's one of our major slogans. PL, by the way, has taken the Cleaver candidacy and is now projecting their slogan -- "Black Peoples' Control of the Black Communities." Our statewide candidates and our local candidates are going to be campaigning in a big way. We're not going to stop our campaigns. We'll be campaigning against the Democratic and Republican parties in many of the same areas as the PFP people will be campaigning.

For example, Peter Camejo is going to be stomping the state in the fall and he's going to wage a bigger campaign from campus to campus than Paul Jacobs. And one of the ways he's going to wage a bigger campaign is that he's going to wage it around that issue, around support for Huey Newton, around the defense of black political prisoners, around the need to build a mass black political party and the support for the BPP in Oakland. That's the kind of campaign that Peter's going to wage and he's going to point those things out. He's going to build the Huey Newton defense and it's going to be a better campaign than Paul Jacobs' campaign because he can project it from a little bit different perspective.

And when I campaign, if I campaign in the 5th Congressional District against Marvin Garson -- and Marvin Garson is dying to take up Free Huey as one of his slogans along with Free Busses, Free Pot and free this and that -- when I campaign, I'm going to be an active supporter of the BPP, one who builds their defense, who is involved in the support of the BPP. And it's going to become obvious that it's a different kind of campaign than the one waged by Marvin Garson, even though we both extend a formal kind of support to the BPP. And I think it's pretty obvious which campaign will be more attractive to the kind of healthy white radical kids that we want to attract.

So, in the final analysis, this decision is based upon the fact that I think the SWP will gain and build the revolutionary cadre through this action around our critical support. It's simply untrue that this growth, our perspective of such growth, is going to be on the basis of an opportunist adaptation to the PFP or the PFP milieu. That's simply untrue and anybody who claims to say that has no relation to reality. As we said months ago, these antiwar students who supported the PFP, many of them did it for the right reasons, for the correct reasons. Not being Marxists and having no perspective of anything, any class perspective, these students couldn't see beyond the confines of bourgeois politics. They had no perspective beyond the confines of bourgeois politics, although they were going in a healthy direction. Our job remains to take their healthy impulses, take their support for the BPP, take their support for electoral action outside the Democratic and Republican parties, and pull it in a direction which will open up the perspective of genuine independent working class politics. And the BPP is an example of such a phenomenon that opens up the opportunity to explain such a perspective to them. The direction of the BPP, the direction of mass black political action -- this can open up the perspective to these kids of independent political action and independence from capitalist politics. This is the opportunity we have right now -- to destroy the PFP, to build the SWP along with building independent black political action. And it's an opportunity to recruit many, many of these PFP activists, take them beyond the confines of the bourgeois political spectrum and into the confines of the revolutionary socialist vanguard.

Summary by Carl Frank

I'm a little bit tired after a lot of discussion, and also a bit confused by the presentations of those people who oppose giving critical support to the three BPP candidacies, local candidacies. When I gave my first presentation today, I tried to move from the general evaluation of the BPP, the principled consideration involved, to the tactical considerations involved and judge it on that basis. The presentations of the people opposed to the motion to give critical support have varied in different ways. I mean at different times, the people have first attacked it on a principled basis, and then attacked it on a tactical basis. The principled considerations were often directed at different parts of the phenomenon.

I'd like to know, from Nat, from Bob, whether they consider it now a principled question not to support the three local BPP candidacies. I know that Bob, some weeks ago, did not feel that it was a principled consideration. That is, it merely presented tactical problems that he felt were insurmountable. However, the tone, direction and thrust of the remarks made by some of the comrades indicate to me that they have now raised the question to a new level. There's a serious danger here in our giving support. It's not only a tactical question. That's the thrust. I don't know whether that's true or not and I'm not going to put those words in comrades' mouths. The point I'm trying to raise is that if it is not a principled question, then we'll have to look at it merely from the tactical variants involved.

I agree with Nat that there is a significant difference involved in this question. It may or may not be serious. I think it's a good difference to have and one that's tremendously educational. I don't think the serious difference involved is around the question of the PFP. I agree with Derrel. I think our ranks are relatively well steeled on the question of the PFP and third partyism in general, and the limited circumference of bourgeois politics and our non-support of those phenomena and our desire to break them up and destroy them because they're a block towards independent political action by the working class or the black people.

The differences, or nuances -- and they're just developing -- are developing in a good sense. I mean, they allow for dialogue and the collecting of our ideas. I think they revolve around the analysis and evaluation of the BPP. Let me explain what I mean.

There is a peripheral point to the general discussion. It's very important, underlying this discussion and discussions we're going to have for some time. Some of the comrades have remarked that the BPP does not represent, in their opinion, a mass party of the ghetto. That's true. It's not a mass party in the sense

we conceive a mass party of the ghetto. Other comrades say that the BPP, the cadre of that party, is not really working class in the sense we usually take it to mean. That is, the cadre is young, radicalized, alienated black youth. And there's a difference. It's an important consideration.

I think what we have to address ourselves to is the phenomenon of a black political party -- what it is, how it's going to arise, what its dynamic will be. Is it the same as the dynamic of a trade union political party? A labor party? I think that comrades who tend to look at it in the same dynamic tend to make certain mistakes or tend to see certain things that really aren't necessary in terms of establishing the independence of such a phenomenon and its real direction. I don't want to dwell on this too long, but I want to point out that the BPP provides, in my opinion, the nucleus of a real mass black political party. The support is there. Support for the BPP exists in the ghetto. And you don't need those formations like the trade union formations to provide that base. What you'll have is a cadre that will go out and project that and gain the support of the masses of black people. It's going to be a different kind of dynamic in its development, just like the rebellions in the ghetto are not exactly like the kind of striking out that the organized working class strikes out at capitalist society, but just as significant and just as powerful. These kinds of questions are going to have to be discussed and taken into account over a long period of time. They enter into this discussion. Perhaps they're even the most important in the long-term sense in our discussion of the black struggle.

If it's a question of principle, I'd like to have it explained a little bit more clearly to me. The question of principle usually arises out of the question of our support for the PFP. That's what it amounts to in this case. That we are going to act unprincipledly by giving, maybe implicitly, a surge forward to the PFP and that type of a formation all over the country, third partyism. I just don't think that's true.

From a tactical point of view, James Forman of SNCC has an orientation towards the building of a mass black political party. That's what Forman explained, in Trotskyist terms, in his speech on Sunday. That's his orientation. I'm quite convinced that he disagrees with the PFP coalition. Nevertheless, for our tactical considerations we ought to learn a little from the way Forman is taking on that question. For man, precisely because he sees the BPP as such a significant development -- there's nothing like it in the country -- he's there on the spot. He's projecting that concept to them in spite of the fact that he thinks that the PFP coalition is not the correct way to go. He's there and on the spot and we ought to be with him.

Sylvia mentioned that we want to pay more attention to SNCC and formations like that. I agree, but where are you going to find SNCC? In the BPP to a large extent. Yes, James Forman is a

member of the BPP. He's proud of being a member of the BPP. And we ought to get there. The nucleus of the vanguard of that black political party that we want to see will be found by the BPP in Oakland and San Francisco. That's where you're going to find that vanguard and that's the vanguard we have to influence.

From a tactical point of view, our job is to be there. And it's not unprincipled to be there. That's the whole point. If you think it's unprincipled to be there, then we have to argue it out on that basis. Be there within the BPP campaigns.

Let's go on to the question of Cleaver, because that is where I understood one part of the argument. The Cleaver candidacy raises very important tactical considerations, in my opinion, as to how we can best push the independent black political action of the BPP forward and relate to the Cleaver candidacy. It raises some very complicated considerations. We have to deal with these. Look at the Cleaver candidacy to see how it differs. We all know that it differs.

Let's take a look at one specific variation. I was down at the PFP office the other day when I met the PLers. I was handed a brochure from the Cleaver for President Committee. And it had on the back of that brochure the San Francisco program of the Cleaver campaign. Now, I couldn't disagree more with that program, and the total orientation, the aura of that program. It was a program that could be raised by Willie Brown. It was so bad. It was PL's whole community organizing orientation. The important thing here to note is not that PL and every other radical tendency besides ourselves -- the Independent Socialist Club, social democrats of all stripes, the Communist Party and its allies -- are trying to capture one or two black militants like Herman Ferguson in the Freedom & Peace Party in New York and use them as bait for white radicals to be sucked into lesser evil politics. That's not the important thing in this regard. The important thing to note is that the local program pushed by the Cleaver for President Campaign was done through the Cleaver for President Campaign and not through the Kathleen Cleaver campaign.

Now, Nat's right -- it can come in there, too. They can, PL can, put out another brochure saying vote for Kathleen Cleaver because Kathleen Cleaver does this and that. I find that a little bit difficult to believe that they could do the same with the image created of Huey Newton. Newton supports rent control, lower taxes and so forth. I find it very, very difficult because the Huey Newton campaign is for the recruitment of the black ghetto kids. That's the purpose of the Huey Newton campaign. And I think that's the purpose which we can see in the local candidacies as a whole. And we want to push that tendency forward.

When Bob says that there's a difference between their independent political action carried out in the streets and their electoral orientation, we've got to ask ourselves something. We're for the BPP participating in elections. We're not against

that. We see that they have made a bad mistake by allying themselves with the PFP in order to get ballot status. It's a miseducation to the ghetto, for example, because the ghetto gets the impression it's the PFP. But we're for them running because the question of political power is going to be carried through in its political form to the masses via an election campaign as with nothing else. And we want to push that tendency of the black vanguard towards political action, conceiving themselves as a political party more and more.

I want to disagree with Nat on one point. Nat assumed -- one comment he must have heard that I might have made here -- that our tactical orientation, once we pass this motion, would be decided. We would put out a brochure calling for an independent committee to campaign for the Kathleen Cleaver candidacy, for example, and we would invite all comers. And the BPP would participate and PL would be there. That's not decided at all. That's the kind of thing that we have to decide after we finish this discussion. Whether or not that's a good idea, whether we would be able, through that vehicle, to push the BPP, to give aid to that tendency in the BPP candidacies towards building the BPP and building a mass political party. We may not want to do that. We may want to take another variant. We may just want to support it through our own election campaign literature. There's lots of variations we might want to take. We'd have to determine them on the basis of whether or not we thought they were the most effective.

On the nature of our support. Our support would be critical support to the BPP candidacies. It is similar to the kind of support we would give to the Freedom Now Party and to the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. That is, we would make prominent the momentum of the black struggle towards a mass political party. We'd criticize the PFP. This is the critical element. We'd go after the PFP. We would go after our opponents within the PFP and try to do them in. That's the critical aspect of the support.

I want to conclude on this fear of third partyism and the possibility of a petty bourgeois adaptation towards electoralism, towards third party petty-bourgeois politics. One thing I've noticed. I've known when these moods were in our ranks. I could see them a lot in individuals. I could see them in Jean, for example, for a long time when Jean was under tremendous pressure from the campus milieu, when the whole question of Stop the Draft Week was in the fore. There's a reflection of moodiness involved in that, uneasiness, qualms. That's not the case now. We have an optimism in our ranks that's tremendous. That kind of optimism does not go well with that kind of petty bourgeois moodiness in terms of adaptation to this milieu.

If there's a danger here, you're going to have to make a case that this really exists. That somehow our party can't get involved in this kind of thing. They're too complicated maneuvers and they'll misorient and miseducate our ranks. We have to guard against it now because we have a petty-bourgeois current

in our midst. I don't think that's the case. I think we're a healthy organism. We're very clear about independent class political action and we're going to carry that forward.

We are not a right-wing. Those people who support the motion to give critical support to the three BPP candidacies are not a right-wing section of the SWP at this time because we see the movement towards a mass black political party as being the most left-wing, vanguard stance in the American community as a whole. And those people who will forward their support to the BPP will just forward this motion. I heard a few comments trying to divide the ranks between the right-wing and the left-wing. I don't think that's true.