

'... if that be revolution, make the most of it'

Speech by Fred Halstead
Socialist Workers Candidate
for President

San Francisco Antiwar Rally
April 27, 1968

photo by Dave Warren



Halstead — 'if that be revolution'

[The following is the transcript of the speech made by Fred Halstead, candidate of the Socialist Workers party for president of the United States, at the April 27 antiwar rally in San Francisco. Next to the one in New York, this was the biggest demonstration in the country. It was particularly significant because of the number of GI's on active duty who participated.]

[As it turned out, Halstead's speech received the most enthusiastic reception of all those made. When he finished, the crowd of 30,000 persons gave him a standing ovation.]

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Ed Farley, cochairman of the April 27 Committee: Our next speaker, a leader of the antiwar movement in New York City. He has been active in the Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, active in the demonstration April 15 last year and in the October 21 demonstration at the Pentagon. At present, he is running for president on the Socialist Workers party ticket with Paul Boutelle. It is my pleasure to introduce Fred Halstead.

Halstead: Okay. You know Johnson announced his withdrawal from the race, and started making peace noises, and we have a proliferation now of so-called peace candidates. But the B-52's are still raining death on Vietnam. And now they are doing it close to the environs of Saigon.

There have been more than 700 GI's killed since Johnson made that statement, and who knows how many Vietnamese.

Now, we are told that we can't get out of there now, that we have to negotiate, and that we have to stay there because we've got to somehow shore up the Thieu-Ky regime so they can carry on the war themselves.

Well, let me read you a little item about that regime and the recent elections there: "The elections here were a loss of time and money. They were a joke. They have served to install a regime that has nothing in common with the people -- a useless, corrupt regime." End quote.

And that is a quote from Marshall Ky himself. That's right -- as it appeared in a March 31 AP dispatch describing an interview in Stern magazine of West Germany.

Now, we're supposed to expend GI's lives to shore up that regime. Let me tell you that that's not exactly why they are expending GI's lives. They are being expended to save face for some cheap politicians who first got us in there because they were sending the American military around the world to defend Big Business. [Applause.]

And that's a very poor reason to lose 21,000 young men dead, and it's a very poor reason to kill all those Vietnamese. We don't own that country. And we never did. And we never will. And we shouldn't. [Cheers.] It doesn't belong to us. And the fighting over there is not in our interest and it has absolutely nothing to do with the defense of this country. Absolutely nothing. As a matter of fact, it's a big fat negative.

I happen to be a resident of New York City. And, frankly, while I support the Chinese revolution, I take a dim view of any H-bomb, even China's, that might be pointed at the city where I live. It's a personal matter. [Laughter.]

And when I see this government over there on China's borders, prodding her, insisting that China understand that the U.S. is her mortal enemy, then I wonder what a Chinese thinks. And I wonder if they don't feel some necessity and some justification for developing that ICBM and pointing it at New York City. [Applause.]

And I ask, what has that provocation got to do with my defense? Or the defense of you, or of the rest of the American people. And what has it got to do with the defense of the families of the GI's that are over there? Or with the defense of the GI's?

It has absolutely nothing. It is a negative as far as our defense is concerned.

Admiral True pointed out that in the past, this country did not have a tradition of a permanent draft. We have one now. When I was a child in the 1930's and someone suggested we have that -- occasionally somebody did -- you'd look at him like he was some kind of a nut.

We don't need that kind of thing to defend this country and we never did. The reason we have it now is because we're all over the world defending these private-profit interests and future investment possibilities. [Cheers.] Trying to put down other peoples' revolutions. And that isn't making it any safer for us.

You know, the people with white skin, like mine happens to be, are not a majority in this world. And what this government and what this ruling class is doing is not making it any safer for us.

Those people have got a right to make their revolutions after their own fashion. As we have done -- and, incidentally, will do -- in this country. [Cheers.]

They say if we don't stop communism over there, we'll have to stop it here. If we don't stop them over there, we'll have to stop 'em here. They'll be climbing up the beaches of Los Angeles. Who? The Vietnamese? [Cries of "No!"] The Chinese? [Cries of "No!"]

They've been growing in numbers, lo, these many years; and they still don't have troops outside their own country. Unless you consider Tibet not to be part of China, and you'd have to argue that with Chiang Kai-shek as well as Mao. [Laughter.]

But we have ours all over the world. And that's wrong.

And it's not in our interest, and it's not in our defense, and it's an abuse of our young men facing the draft, and it's an abuse of our young GI's in the army, and the navy and the marines and the air force. [Wild cheers.] It's an abuse.

The other day, General Eisenhower wistfully said: "Where is the old courage? Where is the old patriotism? Where is the old honor?"

I'll tell you where it is. It's right here. [Wild cheers.] It's right here. It's right here. It's in Admiral True. That's where it is. And it's in these young kids out here. That's where it is. And it's in these GI's who came on this demonstration. That's courage! [Wild, prolonged applause and cheers.]

And it doesn't take any courage for a fat politician to stand up in Congress and say, "Let's support our GI's by sending more of them to die over there." Or by voting more money to kill more Vietnamese and endanger more GI's lives.

You want to support our GI's? Get them home; and get 'em home now! [Cheers.]

The antiwar movement supports the GI's -- the independent movements growing up outside of the corporate power structure, which gets rich off these wars, supports our GI's.

Get out and talk to the GI's. They listen. And they want to know that they've got people supporting them.

And the way we're going to end this war: We don't have to wait till the election. And we shouldn't quit then either. But we don't even have to wait until then necessarily. If we stay in the streets and if the GI's keep coming on demonstrations. And if we get out and talk to them, and if we talk to the young men that are facing the draft. And if we keep building that pressure, then we can stop the war. Not by trusting some other liberal Democratic or Republican politician. [Applause, cheers.]

There is a precedent for this sort of thing. I was in the navy at the end of the second world war, and when it was over they put us in China. I had never heard of the civil war in China until I found myself involved in it. A slight oversight, I figured, on the part of my government.

But there began a movement among GI's in the Pacific to get out of there. It was a massive movement. Thousands demonstrated -- in uniform, technically in time of war, and even in a shooting situation. That's right. And wrote letters, and petitions to all kinds of people back

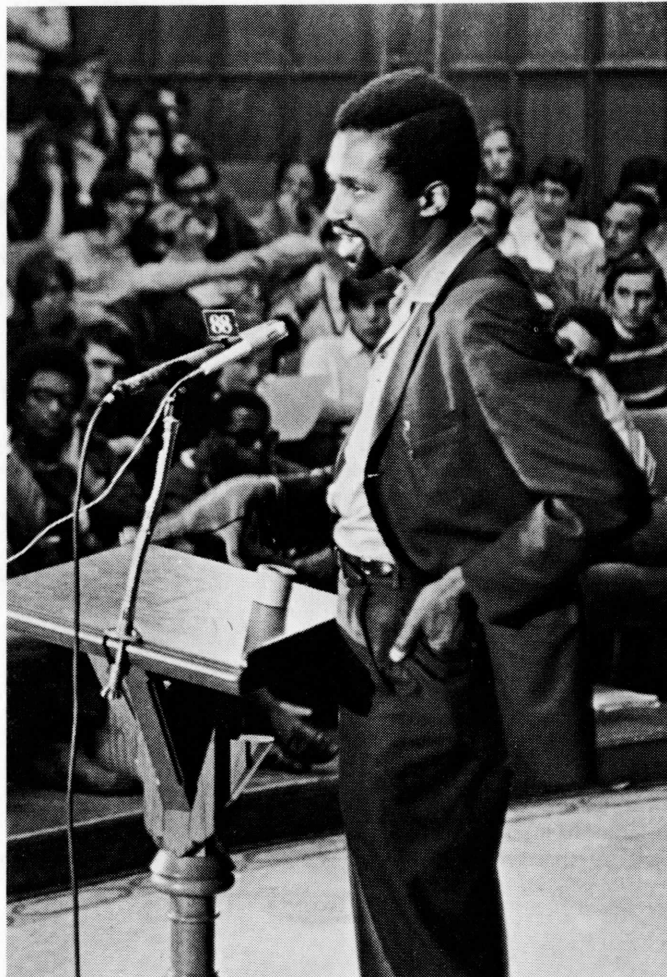


photo by Brian Shannon

Paul Boutelle, Socialist Workers candidate for Vice-President, supports student demands during Columbia University strike.

home, who went to Congress and to any official they could find and put on all kinds of pressure.

And it became very clear that the authorities were going to lose something a great deal more than what they expected to gain over there if they didn't pull us out. And they did pull us out.

Now, I'm not advocating that GI's do anything that's going to subject themselves to court-martial or anything like that. I'm just citing a historic precedent. [Laughter.]

Now, have a little confidence in yourselves. Take a look at this crowd. They haven't fooled anybody. The people are going to stay in the streets. The antiwar movement is going to continue to grow, and the pressure is going to continue to mount.

We're not going to go for any austerity program or "no strike" pledge for this war or for any other imperialist adventures around the world. [Applause.] We're going to keep the pressure on until they bring the GI's home, and until they spend the billions of dollars being wasted on war over there over here where they are needed on these central cities. [Applause, cheers.]

Don't get fooled. Don't get sucked back into their structure. Stay independent. Stay in the streets. Build black power. [Cheers.] Build brown power. [Cheers.] Chicano power. [Mounting cheers.] Student power. High school student power. Independent political action. Labor power. [Cheers interrupt speech.]

I'd like to see some more labor unions out here next time. If you've got any friends in labor unions, talk to them. Tell 'em, Where are they? Why aren't there more of them out here?

Go into your own unions. Raise it on the floor. Don't take no for an answer. George Meany doesn't speak for you any more than Johnson does. [Wild cheers.]

Have a little confidence in yourselves. Have a little confidence in your kind. Yes, and have a little confidence in your country. Because your country isn't those big businesses. And it's not that white capitalist power structure. It's right out here. It's right out here. [Cheers.]

Keep building that independent power and we'll end this war and make this country a decent place to live in. And if that be revolution, make the most of it. [Prolonged wild cheers, standing ovation.]

JOIN THE 1968 SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN

Unlike LBJ, Hubert Humphrey and their Republican counterparts, Fred Halstead and Paul Boutelle are workers, antiwar leaders, fighters for the right of black people to control their own communities, and active in the struggle for a socialist America.

Some supporters of the Halstead-Boutelle campaign are members of the Socialist Workers party. Most are not.

Many of them do not agree with all the planks of the SWP program. But they believe that the ticket of Halstead and Boutelle campaigns for the break with capitalist politics that must be made by the majority of Americans—Afro-Americans, workers, GIs, and students—if we are to put an end to war and racism.

Socialist Workers Campaign Committee
873 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003
Tel. (212) 673-0790

- Please send me more information on the Socialist Workers campaign.
- Enclosed is \$1.00 for a packet of campaign literature.
- I want to organize a meeting for a candidate.
- Enclosed is a donation of
- Although I do not necessarily agree with all the planks of the Socialist Workers Party platform, I endorse the SWP's presidential ticket as a positive alternative to the Democratic and Republican parties. Add my name as a Young Socialist for Halstead and Boutelle. Add my name as an Afro-American for Halstead and Boutelle.
- I will help petition this summer in (indicate the state).

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School or Organization
Summer Address

BRING THE GIs HOME FROM VIETNAM BLACK CONTROL OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY