

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, No. 49, February 27, 1973

Present: Barnes, Breitman, A. Hansen, J. Hansen, Horowitz,
Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Rose, Stone

Consultative: Kerry

Visitors: Scott, Seigle

Chair: A. Hansen

AGENDA: 1. World Movement
2. Critical Support
3. Membership

1. WORLD MOVEMENT

Barnes reported.

Discussion

2. CRITICAL SUPPORT

Stone reported on the recommendation of the Chicago branch to extend critical support to the campaign of Angel Moreno for congress, running as an independent. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Chicago branch to extend critical support to the campaign of Angel Moreno for congress, running as an independent.

Carried.

Stone reported on the recommendation of the Oakland-Berkeley branch to extend critical support to the Black Panther Party campaigns of Bobby Seale for mayor and Elaine Brown for city council in Oakland. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Oakland-Berkeley branch to extend critical support to the Black Panther Party campaigns of Bobby Seale for mayor and Elaine Brown for city council in Oakland.

Carried.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Stone reported on the recommendation of the Los Angeles branch to readmit T.S. into membership in the party.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Los Angeles branch to readmit T.S. into membership in the party.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

Chicago, Ill.
February 22, 1973

Barry Sheppard
SWP N.O.

Dear Barry,

The Chicago branch approved an E.C. recommendation last night that we request P.C. approval to give critical support to the campaign of Angel Moreno for Congress in the 7th Congressional District in Chicago. Moreno is chairman of the Illinois Raza Unida Party and the campaign is being organized out of the Raza Unida Party office. Formally, however, Moreno is not running under the Raza Unida Party name but simply as an independent.

I am enclosing the report I gave to the Chicago branch.

The E.C. felt that Moreno's campaign is a significant step by a section of the Chicano community in Chicago towards independent political action. Our proposal to the branch was to participate actively in the campaign to the extent that we are able. As the report to the branch indicates we recommended that assignments be made to support work and that we look for opportunities to work directly with campaign supporters.

As you will see in the branch minutes the vote on the E.C. recommendation was 39 for, 1 against, and 9 abstentions. The E.C. was unanimous in making its recommendation.

Comradely,
s/Barry David
Assistant Organizer
s/Pearl Chertov
Organizer

Report to Chicago Branch on 7th Congressional District
Campaign -- Barry David -- February 21, 1973

This is a report from the Executive Committee which goes into our thinking on how to relate to the special election for congressperson in the 7th Congressional District. The seventh Congressional District includes the near Southwest Side Chicano barrio, the near Northwest Side Puerto Rican and Chicano communities, the West Side Black community as far west as Pulaski Rd., and the Loop area. 65 percent of the population is Black, 20-25 percent Chicano and Puerto Rican. University of Illinois Circle Campus and Malcolm X College are both in this district as well as the Loop schools: Central YMCA College, Loop College and Roosevelt University.

As most comrades know, no regular elections were scheduled in Chicago in 1973. In early December, 7th C.D. Congressman, George Collins, was killed in a plane crash. Collins was a Black Democrat and a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. He had been elected by an overwhelming majority, some 70-80 percent of the vote.

In early January a special election was called for June 5, with a primary to be held April 17. The Democratic Party machine is supporting Cardiss Collins, George Collins' widow, in the primary.

During the second or third week of January Angel Moreno announced his intention to run in the special election. Moreno is chairman of the Illinois Raza Unida Party. At his initial press conference he made it quite clear that he was not going to enter the Democratic primary and that he would run as an independent against both the Democrats and Republicans in the June 5 election.

These facts caused the Executive Committee to sit up and take notice. We always want to take advantage of every opportunity we get to explain to masses of people, especially among the oppressed national minorities, our concept of independent political action and the need to break with the capitalist parties. An independent Chicano campaign would raise the ideas of independent political action, community control and self-determination as well as provide us an opening to find out a lot more about what is going on in the Chicano community in Chicago.

So the E.C. assigned comrades Tony D., Suzanne and Barry to go down to Moreno's office, meet with him and his campaign manager and find out as much information as we could about the nature of his campaign. This report is based on that information.

It is the opinion of the Executive Committee that we should give critical support to the Moreno campaign. Support for candidates other than SWP candidates must be approved by the Political Committee. So, formally, the E.C. is recommending to the branch that we request approval from the Political Committee to support Moreno's campaign.

I would like to take up the question of support to Moreno's campaign in some detail. A decision to support a campaign other than our own is a very serious question involving questions both of principle and of a tactical choice. Before I go into the criteria we use to make these important decisions I would like to lay out as much of the facts as we have on Moreno's campaign.

As I said before, Moreno is running independent of both capitalist parties and he will not participate in the primaries. To qualify for ballot status the Moreno campaign is systematically collecting more than the approximately 6000 signatures required for ballot status in the district. Most of these signatures are being collected in the Puerto Rican and Chicano wards.

Although the campaign is independent of the two capitalist parties, it is not being run under the name of the Raza Unida Party. Moreno says that the reason for this is that the LRUP in Chicago is a very new party that has not yet established its name in the community. Since Chicanos are in a minority in the 7th C.D. (Blacks constitute 65%) he does not want the name to stand in the way of speaking to all the people. He plans to form a coalition of Latino groups from both the Puerto Rican and Chicano communities as the organizational base of the campaign.

A number of Latino organizations have already endorsed the campaign or are supporting it in some fashion. Most of the active support seems to be coming from the campus based Latino organizations such as the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) on several campuses and El Cuadro at the Univ. of Ill. Circle Campus. The Latin American Defense Organization (LADO), one of the more established Latino organizations in Chicago, which has

traditionally supported reformist politics, is also supporting Moreno's campaign. The campaign organizers are planning three conferences to be held in the Latino communities during the campaign. Moreno says he wants to bring together as many Latinos as possible to discuss direction and organization for Latino political actions.

As far as Moreno's response to political events affecting the community, we have two concrete examples: First of all, Moreno and other Raza Unida Party activists were among the central builders of the Raza Contingent that led off the January 20 antiwar march. Moreno was one of the main speakers and he gave a good, straightforward "Out Now" speech which all the comrades heard.

The second event to which Moreno responded was the strike by Tuley High School students, who are overwhelmingly Latino. Moreno was one of the main speakers at a press conference supporting their demands to oust the racist principal, change the name of the school and institute a Chicano studies curriculum.

We have three questions to answer before we can make the decision to recommend support for this campaign. 1) Can we support it in principle? 2) Is it tactically wise to offer support? and 3) What will be the nature of our support?

Over the years the SWP has supported a number of Black candidates on the basis of equal and fair representation in the government for oppressed national minorities. The criteria we used was whether or not they had real support in the community and were they running independent of, and in opposition to the Democrats and Republicans. The Moreno campaign certainly would qualify for our support under these criteria.

The second question should be answered by posing it this way: Does support to the Moreno campaign aid us in our central strategic goal of moving the masses of the oppressed national minorities towards a break with capitalist politics? The Executive Committee felt that the answer to this was yes. By supporting Moreno's campaign we would have the opportunity, through our press and through our Pathfinder literature, to bring the lessons of the Raza Unida Party in the Southwest and nationally to the Chicano, Puerto Rican and Black communities in Chicago. We would have an opening, through The Militant to participate in the debates and discussions taking place in the Chicano movement nationally and in Chicago, as supporters of the best local example of independent political action.

When we support a candidate who is not a Trotskyist, who does not run on our program, our support is always critical support. The extent to which we use our prerogative to criticize, however, as opposed to extending our positive support depends on the particular campaign. In 1965 we supported Carl Stokes for mayor of Cleveland when he ran as an independent against the Democrats and Republicans. He had support from most of the organizations in the Black community. We used our support to show, on the one hand, the positive side of Stokes' campaign: that a Black candidate running independently could get broad support from the Black community. On the other hand, we did not spare our criticism of Stokes' program, which did not begin to speak to the needs of the Black community. Stokes came out of the Democratic Party and went right back in after his one attempt at

independent politics. He never really attempted the independent organization and mobilization of the Black community through his campaign. Therefore, our support was heavy on the critical side.

In the case of the Michigan Freedom Now Party in 1964 our focus was on support rather than criticism. We had differences with the Freedom Now program, but for us the important thing was that this was a genuine attempt at independent organization of the Black community, a real break with capitalist politics. We wanted to build support for this campaign in the Black community, to use it as an example nationally for other oppressed national minorities and for the labor movement. We viewed our support to the Raza Unida campaigns in Texas, Colorado and California in exactly the same way. 90% of our coverage in The Militant was in the form of positive support, and our criticism was always couched in the form of positive suggestions on how to be more effective or in the form of indications of possible dangers such as not being clear on the McGovern candidacy.

The type of support that the Executive Committee is proposing in the Moreno campaign is more in the direction of the type of support we have given to Raza Unida campaigns in the Southwest. The extent that we criticize the campaign, and the nature of that criticism, will depend, of course, on the way Moreno responds to real developments in the political life of the community. His program is not ours. It is only in the process of developing. He is trying to grapple with the questions of unemployment, inferior schools, high prices, cuts in social welfare and especially community control. We will have something to say about all these questions through articles in The Militant. The campaign will host three political strategy conferences in the community. We will want to discuss the issues raised in these conferences, as Moreno campaign supporters, and comment on the conference decisions in The Militant.

A quarter of a million Latinos live in the 7th Congressional District. The most politically conscious of these -- especially the Latinos organized in campus groups -- are relating to Moreno's campaign as the political alternative for Latinos in this district. The Executive Committee sees this campaign as a real opportunity to get our feet wet in the politics of the Chicano community in Chicago. We are recommending that, pending P.C. approval, we assign a comrade to head up support work for the Moreno campaign. We should also look for opportunities to directly work with campaign supporters such as assigning a couple of comrades to help on their petition drive, or helping to set up speaking engagements or perhaps jointly helping to build a meeting with El Cuadro at UICC.

At the same time as we were considering the possibility of supporting Moreno's campaign we took up the question of running an SWP write-in campaign for the same office. The E.C. feels that, at this time, taking into account all of our activities, our branch campaigns and our resources, the best way to intervene and participate in the politics of the 7th Congressional District would be through active support to the Moreno campaign. We should leave open the question of an SWP write-in campaign if circumstances change later in the spring.

For us the big campaigns will be the 1974 statewide elections and then the Chicago mayoralty campaign. We want to begin now to start thinking out and preparing ourselves for those campaigns, so we can have the "Big Red Machine" in top running condition when we take on Boss Daley and his machine.

To summarize: The recommendation from the E.C. is that we request permission from the Political Committee to give critical support to the Angel Moreno congressional campaign in the 7th district and that we hold off on running our own campaign at this time.

Oakland, Ca. 94609
February 20, 1973

Socialist Workers Party P.C.
14 Charles Lane
New York, New York 10014

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a report containing the essential information regarding the campaign of Bobby Seale for mayor of Oakland, and Elaine Brown's campaign for Oakland city council.

Based on a report to the branch and discussion, we voted on February 1 to recommend to the Political Committee that critical support be extended to the Seale-Brown campaigns.

Comradely,
s/Frank Boehm
Organizer

Report on the Seale-Brown Oakland Election Campaigns - Frank Boehm

I. Mechanics of the Oakland Elections

The Oakland municipal elections are non-partisan. The procedure of electing public officers includes a primary election where all but the top two vote-getters are eliminated, unless any one candidate receives over 50% of the vote. The primary elections will be held April 17. The second round will take place on May 15.

II. Candidates in the Field

Four candidates had filed for the mayoral seat by the February 7 deadline. In addition to Bobby Seale, they are: John Reading, the conservative Republican incumbent; John Sutter, a liberal Democrat generally associated with the Humphrey wing of the state and national Democratic Party, currently an Oakland city councilman; Ortho Green, a Black liberal Democrat generally associated with the McGovern wing of the Democratic Party.

III. Where the Democratic Party Stands

Although the Oakland elections are formally non-partisan, the Democratic Party traditionally holds conventions ostensibly to decide who to endorse. This time around the convention, scheduled for Jan. 17, was abruptly cancelled. John George, a central figure in the Oakland Black Caucus of the Democratic Party and former head of the Dellums campaign, told us the cancellation was due to a split in the party leadership over who to support against the powerful incumbent mayor. (It should be noted that the Black Panther Party publicly announced that they would mobilize thousands of supporters to attend and take over the convention so that it would reflect the will of the people and end up endorsing the "people's candidate"-- Seale. To what degree this may have been a factor in the decision to cancel the convention, we don't know.)

Two Democratic Party candidates soon emerged, reflecting the differences John George outlined to us. Ortho Green's candi-

dacy was initiated by the Oakland Black Caucus, apparently with support from the "left" elements of the party.

In the same discussion with George referred to earlier, he also told us that Dellums was expected to intervene in the Oakland elections "along party lines," implying that Dellums would endorse Ortho Green, although he has not done so yet.

Neither campaign of the Democratic Party has gotten off the ground in a big way yet.

IV. The Communist Party

At this point the position of the CP is somewhat ambiguous. In an article in the Feb. 3 People's World entitled, "Mayor Race Heats Up," it is implied that the Seale campaign is an obstacle to the main task of making sure Reading is dumped. A few quotes give the general picture: "The conditions are ripe for election of a liberal mayor in this city...but the chief problem may be too many players in the field." "The main problem has been to agree on a strategy for making sure a liberal gets into a runoff with Reading, and in such a manner that he can get the maximum number of votes in a runoff."

"Two weeks ago Alameda county Democratic officeholders met with leaders of various unions in the county. While most union figures there tended to favor Green, the political representatives were split about evenly between Green and Sutter.

"As it was left, the officeholders were to vote on whom to support, and labor would then lend its support that way.

"Such an effort was made -- unsuccessfully -- at the Democratic State Central Committee meeting last weekend. A major source of reluctance was the refusal of Rep. Ron Dellums to choose between the candidates."

The only reference to the Seale candidacy occurs at the end of the article, in the context of discussing which Democrat would have the best chance of unseating Reading. "Then there is Bobby Seale, whose candidacy might provide the balance in the April primary. Although Seale is not expected to make it into the runoff, his campaign is a visible one and will undoubtedly have several hundred energetic workers -- enough to net a possible 10% of the vote.

"That vote is more likely to come from potential supporters of Green than Sutter."

From our observation of various Seale campaign meetings (including the founding meeting of Whites for Seale-Brown), it appears that the CP is at least very closely following the developments around the Seale campaign, since they have attended these meetings as well.

V. The Seale Campaign

Bobby Seale, chairman of the Black Panther Party, and Elaine Brown announced their candidacies for mayor and councilwoman respectively, some time ago, either in the spring or summer of

'72, long before anyone else announced for any post. Since the Oakland elections are nonpartisan, ticket affiliations are not required. Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown are not associating their campaign with the BPP, at least in the sense that they use a formula like "Support the Black Panther Slate," or something similar. Instead they seem to be consciously avoiding labeling their campaign as a BPP campaign. It is of course well known that Bobby Seale is the chairman of the BPP and that Elaine Brown is one of its central figures. It is also generally acknowledged that it is the BPP that controls the Seale-Brown campaign in all ways -- literature, policy decisions, funds, etc. Nevertheless, they refer to themselves as candidates of the "Survival Ticket," the "Peoples' Ticket," etc. Despite this attempt as they see it, to broaden their appeal, it is clear that the BPP central leadership is calling all the shots. "Big Man," a BPP leader, heads up the campaign organization, which is not independent of the BPP.

While in the initial stage of the Seale-Brown campaign they announced plans of adding candidates outside of the BPP to their slate, that Ron Dellums would endorse them, and so on, none of this has come to fruition. The fact is that the Seale-Brown campaign is quite isolated from the more "legitimate" organizations and individuals. Neither Seale nor Brown has received the endorsement of any individuals or groups associated with the Democratic party in Oakland. The Oakland Citizens Advocate Union, a loose electoral apparatus of Black clergy, attorneys, businessmen, and those on the "poverty program" pie, has come out in support of Green, denouncing the Seale candidacy. Needless to say, Dellums, while owing the Panthers some favors, will not return in kind through an endorsement of Seale or Brown.

We found out in our discussion with John George that the Oakland Black Caucus attempted to dissuade Seale from running by proposing a deal: That if Seale dropped out of the race, the Caucus would work to insure that Elaine Brown were elected. This proposal was rejected by Seale and the Black Panther Party.

VI. The Black Panther Party Perspective

It is our estimation that the independent electoral effort that the BPP is currently involved in does not represent a fundamental shift in their orientation or perspective of class-collaboration politics, of supporting Democrats such as Dellums, Chisholm and formations such as the Berkeley April Coalition, etc. They are not utilizing the Seale campaign to call for a break with the Democratic Party. Nor are they utilizing the campaign to promote the idea of independent Black political activity, much less an independent Black party.

A number of factors led them to launch this campaign.

First, the Panthers cannot apply the tactic of coalition politics in the Oakland elections in the same way it is done in Berkeley. Oakland, unlike Berkeley, is a major city. It has the world's second largest port, and a growing industrial and finance sector. It has a population of well over 300,000 and is growing. The representatives of the ruling class in the electoral arena are more established and more carefully selected. More importantly, they have not been confronted with the same level of radicalization as in Berkeley, where the years of struggle on a campus of over

30,000 has had a profound impact on changing the nature of politics in that community of 116,000 -- over a third of whom are involved in the life of the university in one way or another. In other words there is less room to maneuver on the electoral front in Oakland. As a result the forces needed to pull together a radical coalition, as has been done in Berkeley, simply do not exist in any significant way in Oakland.

For this reason, while in Berkeley the BPP has been involved to one extent or another in the April Coalition, which is tied to a wing of the Democratic Party, a similar perspective in Oakland is not in the cards at this time. (It should be noted that the relationship of the BPP to the Berkeley April Coalition is, at present, not clear. The BPP has not announced support for the recently chosen Coalition slate, and because of the right-wing character of the Coalition slate, we do not expect them to come out in support of Seale. The Panthers were noticeably absent from the Coalition nominating convention, while only several months before, they had played an active role in the campaign that the Berkeley Coalition radicals had run for the rent control board.)

Second, they view the Seale-Brown campaign as a means of rebuilding their weakened organization. They hope the campaign will help the BPP to reemerge as a factor in politics in the Bay Area and nationally. Seale has spoken all over the Bay Area, in New York, and elsewhere building his campaign. The Panthers have brought what they consider cadre into Oakland to work on the campaign from all around the country.

Third, the Panthers view this campaign as a way to legitimize themselves in the eyes of masses of people. They are hopeful that this campaign effort will end the isolation they have suffered from since the "pick up the gun" days, and change their image.

VII. Problems With the Seale-Brown Campaign

The main weakness of the campaign reflects the fact that they are not carrying it out because they have reached a certain level of understanding and are trying to break the Black community away from the Democratic Party. They are objectively running independent of, and in opposition to, both capitalist parties and their candidates. At the same time, however, they are soft-peddling their opposition to the two Democratic Party candidates, and are not attacking the Democratic Party.

In discussion with us various Panthers have stated that they were not going to deal with either Sutter or Green, but rather they were going to concentrate all of their fire on Reading. They did have knowledge of Green's background and had information on where he would be receiving his campaign funds and to whom he would be indebted. When pressed on why they did not hold the perspective of dealing with the two Democratic Party candidates, they stated that both Green and Sutter were peripheral candidates, that the real contest was between Seale and Reading -- an assessment which, though held by every Panther we spoke with, is absurd. It is our opinion that the real reason they insist the mayoral race is a contest only between Seale and Reading is simply so that they can offer an excuse for their unwillingness to take up and attack the Democratic Party candidates. It should be added that the logic of the "defeat Reading at all costs" mentality is that after the

primary election, when only Reading and one of the Democrats is left on the ballot, the Panthers will shift their support to the Democrat. We do not rule out that possibility.

VIII. Scope of the Seale-Brown Campaign

The BPP campaign effort is dynamic, attractive, professional, and big. They now have six campaign offices scattered throughout Oakland and the perspective of getting at least two more. Seale-Brown bumper stickers and posters are a common sight, especially in the Black communities. Posters can be seen in many homes and small businesses, again, mostly in the Black community. Spot radio announcements appear regularly and frequently, mostly on the Black Oakland station. Campaign work rallies have drawn large numbers of people, mostly students, 90% Black. These rallies have drawn 300-400. It is generally acknowledged in the bourgeois media that, while Seale cannot win, he is a serious candidate who could play a deciding role. A poll reported in the Oakland Tribune, the major bourgeois paper, had Reading with 43% of the vote and Seale with 18%. The report did not indicate where the other two candidates stood in the poll.

One of the more significant aspects of the Seale campaign organization is its student base. The Black Student Unions on the Oakland campuses (there are three junior colleges and one private, fairly exclusive, four-year college in Oakland) were relatively dormant organizations. Early in the campaign the Panthers began to revive the BSUs around campaign support activities and formed a group called the Black Student Alliance, which is a coalition of all the Oakland BSUs. They have relied heavily on Black student support and campaign work.

IX. Our Position

The fact that Seale and Brown are running independent of and opposed to the candidates of the two capitalist parties makes it permissible in principle for us to extend them critical support.

In addition, we feel it is tactically advisable to do so. We see this as an important development of some scope that objectively -- whatever the intentions of the Panther leadership -- represents independent Black political action. It is this that we support in the electoral effort of the Panthers. And it is this fact that the party can utilize in its propaganda activity. We will be the only voice in the Oakland campaign that can articulate this objective development, that can utilize what the Panthers are doing in this campaign, to explain to those drawn to the Seale-Brown campaign the necessity of breaking with the Democratic and Republican parties, and to propagandize about the need for a mass, independent Black party.

Our activity will be of a dual nature. First, we will be explaining through The Militant, campaign literature, participation in Seale-Brown rallies, and to supporters we are able to meet and develop relations with, the necessity of following through consistently their support to Seale-Brown, and therefore breaking with the bourgeois parties. Second, to compliment this,

we are running a Black comrade for the Oakland School Board. This will allow us to approach Seale-Brown supporters for endorsement of our campaign, and at the same time will open up speaking engagements, press, etc., and allow us to get out our position on the Seale-Brown campaign to a wider audience.

Extending critical support to the Seale-Brown campaign will also be of great use to us in our Berkeley election campaign, which the branch decided would be the central focus of our work this spring. We will be able to utilize the fact of the Seale-Brown campaign as a club against the liberal Democratic-radical "April Coalition." We will be able to explain why we support this type of electoral activity, and we will demand to know where they stand. The overwhelming majority of April Coalition supporters and activists will also support Seale. But their candidates, three Democrats and one self-proclaimed socialist, will either hedge on the question or support one of the two Democratic Party candidates in the Oakland race.

For all of these reasons, the branch voted on February 1 to recommend to the Political Committee that critical support be extended the Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown campaigns.