

1984 Elections: Time to Build a Revolutionary Leadership!

By KEVIN FITZPATRICK

The 1984 elections are less than eleven months away. Now is the time to grasp what is at stake in them for the working class and the oppressed. And that is the building of a *revolutionary leadership*.

Revolutionary Policy

We in the Trotskyist Organization have put forward a working class policy for the elections — an Independent Labor Candidate for President (as well as for other offices) and a Labor Party Coalition to organize this campaign and use it to build a Labor Party.

Far too often, workers and young people think of elections and politics in the way the capitalist rulers of this country want them to. A peaceful way to make mild changes — really just in the faces at the top — or to put pressure on those who rule. And if you get fed up with that, well you just don't vote at all.

But the times we are living in demand a complete break with all such ideas.

Look at the growing strikes, strikes that more and more involve clashes with the companies and the cops, and even troops, who belong to the government the giant corporations run.

Look at Reagan's drive toward war, especially in Central America and the Middle East, against peoples who don't want to be bled by imperialism anymore.

Look at the unemployment — in the middle of the "recovery" — that not only has millions of grown men and women on the street, but is depriving the youth of a future.

We are living in times that are increasingly *revolutionary*. Not just in other countries, but right here!

That is what we have to face up to and to constantly think about, including in the elections. The lesson of every one of these struggles — throughout history, right up to Grenada today — is that you must have a trained and tested revolutionary leadership to successfully make a revolution.

Daniel DeLeon, a pioneer American Marxist, put it this way: "In all revolutionary movements, as in the storming of fortresses, the thing depends upon the head of the column — upon the minority that is so intense in its convictions, so soundly based in its principles, so determined in its action, that it carries the masses with it, storms the breastworks and captures the fort. Such a head of the column must be our socialist organization to the whole column of the American proletariat."

The elections give us a major chance to pull together this *vanguard*. During elections, almost everyone but the most backward and passive elements starts to think about politics; they start to think about who is and who should be ruling. Then programs can be tested in front of these masses, not just on paper (who says the best things) but *in action*. We can make it clear what party, what leadership, really represents the needs of all the oppressed.

Revolutionary Party

Our program in the shape of the election platform below says what those needs are, beginning with a Labor Party. But is the Labor party going to be a revolutionary party just because we think so and say so? No! It *has* to be such a party because of the revolutionary times we are living in. Its platform and its very existence mean a fight against the desires of the capitalists to put us down and throw us back. The party that comes about through this fight will be, can't help being, a revolutionary party. That is, a party that organizes the workers and their allies for winning political power — as Malcolm X used to say — "by any means necessary."

A revolutionary party of course is a revolutionary leadership. But this party itself remains to be built. In this situation, those who take the lead in organizing it, in building it, also are a revolutionary leadership. They are the core, the nucleus, the embryo, of the Labor Party.

We think the present situation is wide open for building this revolutionary leadership. That is, as we have said before, the real significance of the shout: "Run, Jesse, run!" But Jesse Jackson wants to take that desire for political power and lead it into a trap — right back into

the Democratic Party!

The test of programs in action is, as we have shown, first of all against the capitalist class itself. But it is also against those like Jackson, who *talk* about "independence." Whose program and whose fight will really take the road of the liberation of the workers and oppressed, and whose takes the garden path of deception, betrayal and being stuck with Walter Mondale?

In the coming months, it will become clear to many of those who support Jackson that he is not going to do what they hoped. Those fighters who start the battle for the Labor Party now, in the test of events before these masses, will be in a position to win over people who now support Jackson out of a misplaced hope. In this way, by political struggle around a program in action, they are preparing a major step forward in building the Labor Party.

And this is a real, action-oriented struggle. We will not confine our struggle to words, as important as these are. The Trotskyist Organization and the forces already part of the Labor Party Coalition are going to place this fight on the ballot in Michigan under the name of the Coalition for a Labor Party. We are also exploring steps to take to accomplish a similar goal in

Illinois. And, in order to make sure that everyone sees this as a real campaign, the TO is putting forward a member of its leadership, Kevin FitzPatrick, as its nominee for president. In the coming weeks and months, then, the fight will be clear: an independent party and candidate, or a detour back to the hated Democrats.

Revolutionary Conclusions

This is the initiative that the TO and the forces it has already gathered are taking now. But this is only a beginning. We want a national campaign and candidates for a Labor Party. In that light, organizations like the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) also have to define themselves *in action* on this question. Will they fight together with us for a Labor Party, or will they try to use words to justify abstaining from this basic struggle? We want to know.

Some groups claim that the California Peace and Freedom Party (PFP) should be built as an "independent" (even "socialist") alternative in the elections. This is a shuck, only a little less obvious than Jackson's. The PFP is a middle class party and is not and can never be remotely

like a Labor Party.

Aside from any other points, there is one glaring sign of this. The most ardent advocates of the PFP are the members of the Internationalist Workers Party (IWP). Their position on the PFP here parallels that of their organization in Argentina, the PST (Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores/Socialist Workers Party), which dissolved into an electoral formation called MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo/Movement for Socialism). The fruit of that was that MAS got only 40,164 votes (0.29%) in the recent elections, while in 1973 (the last previous elections) the PST got 181,474 votes (1.5%). It could be said that this was a wretched failure but, more accurately, MAS did what it was supposed to — block the road to a working class alternative, impede the construction of a working class party, fight the building of the revolutionary leadership. And that is precisely what Peace and Freedom is being set up to do. The time to profit from this lesson is now.

Join us in the struggle that lies ahead. We can emerge from it with the first clear and large-scale working class leadership that this country has ever seen. The fight will decide.

PLATFORM OF THE TROTSKYIST ORGANIZATION



The Trotskyist Organization puts forward this election platform as a focus and organizing tool to build the revolutionary leadership:

Build a Labor Party! The American workers need a party of their own, based on the unions — the only mass organizations they have. This party will take shape in the fight for an Independent Labor Candidate for President *against* Reagan and free of the capitalist Democratic Party. The Labor Party means a fight for the basic needs of the working class:

Jobs for all! A sliding scale of hours — 30 hours work for 40 hours pay. This fight in industry and a massive program of public works can end unemployment and give a future to the youth.

Workers control over production! The working class must decide to keep open the factories, to control what happens in them and to enforce this through sit-down strikes.

Crush Racism! Reagan's government has opened up more attacks on Blacks, immigrants and other minorities than any in fifty

years. This is the real face of capitalist rule. Behind Reagan, the fascists and KKK are preparing assaults on every worker. Crushing racism is necessary to stop them from crushing us.

Down With Imperialism! After Grenada, we have to take steps to defend Nicaragua with volunteers and aid. We need a union boycott of all US "aid" to forces opposed to the workers and oppressed. Get Lane Kirkland off Reagan's Central America Commission. The Polish workers' fight means a blow to Stalinism, the agent of imperialism.

The General Strike! This is the way in which the workers, youth and the poor can impose their program on Reagan and the rulers of this country. Words and votes are nothing to them if not backed up by the mass action of the workers.

Workers Government! A Labor Party is a party to fight for power. No gains can be safe until the rule of the capitalists is replaced with the rule of the workers.

YOUTH CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

On November 25, the Working Conference of young fighters took place in Detroit. A total of seventeen militants took part, and agreement was reached on a number of major points. The Conference was made possible by the subscription drive carried out among the youth by the Trotskyist Organization (TO) prior to it. The final results of this drive were twenty-two hard-won subs among *working class youth* in the Detroit and Chicago areas.

The initial section of the Conference was a presentation by Kevin FitzPatrick on James P. Cannon's speech, "What Socialist America Will Look Like" (in *Speeches for Socialism*). This enabled the youth present to understand two connected points — where our present program is headed (not toward patching up this system but to building a new and truly human one) and why our present program is what it is (it is revolutionary and transitional because it connects today's fight to that socialist goal).

The brief discussion that followed this presentation centered, as might be expected, on whether or not human beings can be truly free, on whether or not they will always rob and oppress one another. Following the lunch break, a formal question-and-answer period led by Barbara Putnam helped to further bring out this question. The nature of people is marked by capitalist society. Get rid of capitalism with the revolution, abolish classes and introduce a society of abundance and "the history of the

human race begins."

Thus, one student who had asked how education would be possible without repression found herself saying that what she "hated most about the United States" was precisely the *lack of freedom in the schools*. Others pointed out Reagan's attempts to turn them against the peoples of other countries. The talk and discussion began to really open these young people's minds to a whole new conception of politics.

Following up on this advance, David Hefflinger presented a resolution calling for the founding of clubs of young revolutionaries, affiliated to the Revolutionary Youth International. Great care was taken to make it clear that voting for the resolution was strictly voluntary, that the TO wanted *informed agreement*. After a considerable discussion, and with several amendments, the resolution was passed by a vote of 16-1. The task now is to put it into action.

The Conference's final session was a report by Margaret Guttshall on the platform and candidate of the TO, the need to build a Labor Party Coalition in the elections and how to go about doing it. Plans were made to begin to get the support necessary to put the coalition on the ballot, together with the youth present at the Conference and others who can be involved in this work. The week-end of December 17-18 was agreed to as a target for large-scale actions, preceded by an action at Chrysler's Jefferson

Avenue plant to bring this fight to auto workers on Wednesday, December 14.

Immediately following the Conference, a collection was taken to finance its costs, and largely succeeded in doing so. At the same time, virtually everyone present signed the petition circulated by the TO stating that they wanted to come to the aid of Nicaragua, and calling on the Sandinistas to appeal for such aid and open the country to it.

This Conference marked a clear step forward for our fight to build the Revolutionary Youth International and, on this basis of winning and training the youth, to build a revolutionary leadership.

K.F.

DEFEND SOCIALIST ACTION

The Socialist Workers Party National Committee has just accused Socialist Action, the organization formed by the oppositionists within the SWP who were recently expelled, of initiating a "provocation" because it is functioning as a public faction of the SWP.

The Trotskyist Organization defends Socialist Action and its right to function as a public faction of the SWP, just as the early Trotskyists did when they were expelled from the Communist Parties by the Stalinists. And we condemn the SWP NC's accusations as Stalinist methods designed to terrorize and intimidate all opposition.

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