

TRUTH

How to Bring Down Reagan Regime: Democratic Party or Labor Party?

By DAVID HEFFELFINGER

The Democratic Party never has been, and never will be, anything other than a party of the wealthy and powerful, a capitalist party. What we need and what we must build is a Labor Party.

Last week the Democratic Party National Committee refused to grant the most minor concessions to the Jackson campaign. The proposed change would have lowered the number of votes that Jackson needs in a state to qualify for a share of the delegates to the Democratic National Convention. This shows again that the Democratic Party is a dead end for Blacks, a fact that Jackson himself refuses to acknowledge.

We, too, along with many who support Jackson, believe that Blacks, women, and all working people must band together to fight Reagan and all that his administration has meant — racism, concessions, imperialist intervention. We believe that a new leadership must be built that represents the "downtrodden, the poor." But Jackson's campaign can only detour the working class mobilization.

This is the same picture you got if you watched the debate between the Democratic candidates. Glenn called Mondale's speech "vague gobbledygook," but that label could just as well be applied to the whole bunch of Democratic Party hucksters. Though Jackson had the opportunity to scold them publicly, he chose not to do it.

Why? Because Jackson, as he has stated time and time again, is not running an independent campaign. As such, he does not want to risk exposing the fact that, all pretense aside, neither he nor the Democratic Party has a program fundamentally different from the failed policies

of past Democratic Party administrations.

Reagan, however, can attract the capitalist class and a large sector of the middle class because he has an important accomplishment he can point to — he has curbed the struggle of the working class, of unions, of Blacks, and of women workers. That is why Reagan is ahead in every poll.

The Democrats have no such accomplishments to point to. Instead, the Democratic Party is the political expression of collaboration with the capitalist class — concessions, introduction of draft registration — that "set up" the political situation for Reagan. Only Jackson can still represent the symbol of a "fighter" in the eyes of Black workers. But Jackson will not run as an independent, as a candidate who wants to build the new Party of working people that is needed. He is a false symbol.

Jackson's program, too, is symbolic. He runs as a "peace" candidate. But, as we showed in the last issue of *Truth*, he is a firm supporter of the Israeli state, which invaded Lebanon, which was responsible for the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians, and which remains one of the staunchest allies of Reagan's imperialist plans in the Middle East. And who are the Palestinians but the "Blacks" of the Middle East?

Recently the National Urban League issued its "State of Black America" report. It showed that while the overall rate of unemployment has fallen to 8.3%, the unemployment rate for Blacks is 17.3%. (For Black teenagers it is 50%!) But their solution, similar to Jackson's, "a national job and training program," doesn't answer the problem. The capitalist class wants massive unemployment. As long as its power remains unchallenged, even minor reforms are

ruled out. Again, a symbolic campaign.

The mobilization of Blacks for political power, which has awakened many other sectors of the working class, has to find an outlet in a new leadership. We are talking about a Labor Party that will unite organized and unorganized workers to fight for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay. A Labor Party to lead and coordinate on a national scale the strikes and political energy of all workers toward this objective. A Labor Party to organize actions that would stop US intervention in Lebanon and Central America, for example, a union boycott of arms to US backed dictatorships. A Labor Party that would crush racism and meet organizations like the KKK with the might of millions of workers. This is the objective that working people must fight for around the 1984 elections, not just symbols.

Though such a movement will begin small, it will have a tremendous impact. Even Jackson's campaign, as symbolic as it is, has petrified the top officials of the AFL-CIO. They have formed a special committee of influential Black trade union leaders to convince the rank and file to stick with Mondale. Their fear is soundly based. A report by the A. Phillip Randolph Institute states that more than a third of Black workers are organized into trade unions — double the rate among white workers. Black workers are about 35% of the AFL-CIO, according to its own figures, and a much higher percentage among the industrial unions like auto and steel. Imagine what a force a real alternative to Reagan, even a small one, would be.

But what was Jesse Jackson's answer to the Democratic National Committee, its refusal to grant even minor concessions? He said, "I would rather have a broken heart than a broken party." Which means, Democratic Party all the

way.

That is why we cannot be too harsh in condemning those working class parties, like the Communist Workers Party, the Workers World Party, who pretend that Jackson will represent any alternative to the working class, and those, like the Socialist Workers Party, who refuse to make a sharp break with the Jackson campaign. Their phony policies are nothing but the most opportunistic attempts to gain legitimacy among Black workers.

But where will they, and the people who listen to them, be when Jackson's campaign comes to an abrupt halt — that is, after the Democratic National Convention (if not before). The Democratic Party will never nominate Jackson. Then who will represent "the poor and downtrodden"? Not Mondale, not Glenn, no way.

That is why, even if it is a little difficult now, we have to fight to build a campaign that will tap the potential that exists today among Blacks, the youth, and all working people. Not leave them high and dry in November. The Trotskyist Organization is fighting for those who say they are for a Labor Party to put their money where their mouths are, and build a united front for the Labor Party against the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties. We are working to put this alternative — the Labor Party Coalition — on the ballot in Michigan. And we are putting forward our own candidate, Kevin FitzPatrick, to spark a movement for labor candidates in the 1984 elections. Only the movement of the working class, and the party that represents that movement, can lead the struggle through to the end against Reagan. This is the movement of the future. Join our fight!

Chicago, Flint — Labor Candidates!

By KEVIN FITZPATRICK

Two recent events show the continued attacks on the working class being made by the capitalist corporations. At the same time, they show in the clearest way that a fight in the unions requires a fight for the Labor Party.

As we reported in our last issue, US Steel has announced a wide range of plant shutdowns and virtual shutdowns, including at South Works in Chicago. South Works will have a mere 800 workers — compared to 10,000 only ten years ago! This is the face of Reagan's "recovery."

And to match this, in mid-January, General Motors proposed to workers at plants in Flint, Michigan, that they accept a work week of forty hours, divided up into four days of ten hours each (including weekends) with no overtime pay. The workers had been carrying a schedule of at least fifty-four hours (six days of nine hours), and GM claimed that 1,700 laid-off workers would be brought back if the proposal were accepted.

Just as, all too late, the workers at South Works turned a deaf ear to more company demands, so workers in United Auto Workers (UAW) locals in Flint turned down GM's "offer." But there was an interesting aspect to this.

In a "straw" poll (informal vote) in the important Local 599, only twenty-eight workers voted for GM's offer, with 567 voting to maintain the present situation. But fully 440 workers voted for a UAW proposal that would accept the four-day/ten-hour model, but with overtime premium for the last two hours of each day.

In a very confused and contradictory way, these workers (one union official characterized them as expressing "their sentiment that, by God, we're our brothers' keepers") were seeking the sliding scale of hours — the shorter workweek with no cut in pay, 30 for 40.

The results are all the more important because the locals concerned face a total loss this

summer of about 3,600 jobs — and even those who will remain employed will be laid off for three months. In this situation, collecting big checks now has a very direct appeal.

Similarly, the final development at South Works, where the workers repudiated the usual pattern of company threats and promises designed to extort concessions, showed that many workers had at last learned that there is no common interest between US Steel and steel workers.

But how to deal with layoffs, how to deal with plant closings, cannot be solved simply by saying no. That is just not enough. The GM

workers were trying to find a way out. The fight for workers control at the plant level — from sitdown strikes to imposing shorter hours — has to be linked to a fight that will help to organize the whole working class. This fight has to be political, a fight for a Labor Party.

Flint and Chicago — the sites of great class battles in the history of the American unions — can be the starting point of the real turn the workers' organizations need to make. A fight for independent labor candidates in the elections is the required next step for the fight against concessions. That is the perspective we are putting forward in the Labor Party Coalition.



Democrats Support Kissinger Report

The report of the bi-partisan "Kissinger Commission" on US policy in Central America is a prime example of 1984 "double-speak." While press leaks prior to the introduction of the report alluded to differences among the Commission members, with some Democrats supposedly holding out for guarantees of "human rights" in El Salvador, the report was in fact adopted unanimously.

Particularly disgraceful to labor is the presence of Lane Kirkland, President of the AFL-CIO, on the Commission. With the exception of Kirkland and a sprinkling of Democrats, the Commission is composed of several multi-millionaires and three ex-CIA agents. And then, of course, there is Kissinger, one of the architects of Vietnam and of the Chilean coup.

Phony appeals for "human rights" aside, the report is clearly designed to prepare US military intervention in Central America. It calls for:

— a sixfold increase in military aid to El Salvador, \$400 million;

— leasing helicopters and other military equipment to El Salvador;

— resumption of aid to the Guatemalan dictatorship, while admitting this US puppet has "killed indiscriminately" in the countryside;

— aid to police forces throughout the region (who have been responsible for the "death squads");

— complete military victory over the guerrillas, against the "danger of a stalemate."

Perhaps more important than any single item in the report is the fact that it signifies the complete agreement of the Democrats with Reagan's policies in Central America. Already key Democrats are trying to bury the issue of Central America for the 1984 elections, to concentrate their energy on Lebanon, where even several military commanders urge eventual withdrawal (tied to massive aid to Israel). From now on, expect nothing but the State Department line from the news media, and provocations from the White House.

For example, the same day that the report

was released, January 11, an American helicopter was shot down over Nicaragua and its pilot, Jeffrey Schwab, was killed. Immediately, Reagan labeled the attack as "brutal and unjustifiable." The story of General Gustavo Alvarez, a Honduran officer, that the helicopter was blown off course by "gusty winds" and then lost in "storm clouds," was contradicted by Honduran soldiers, interviewed at the scene of the incident, who said the day was sunny and that winds were blowing toward, not away from, Honduras.

The support of the Democrats for Reagan's imperialist plans is proof that the working class needs a Labor Party that can mobilize workers and youth to stop US intervention in Central America. This fight must be taken into action today!

Volunteers for Nicaragua! Union boycott of arms to the "contras"!

D.H.

FOR AN OPEN TROTSKYIST CONGRESS TO REBUILD THE US SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

A significant number of young people have begun to turn to Trotskyism as the only tendency capable of guiding the working and oppressed masses.

Yet there are several organizations that claim to be Trotskyist. Each has its own policy that it calls Trotskyist. And the largest of these, the Socialist Workers Party, appears to be the farthest from basic Trotskyist principles.

The Trotskyist Organization of the USA, Section

(Sympathizing) of the Fourth International, was founded in 1975 to overcome this problem: to lead a struggle to clearly differentiate Trotskyism from various centrist or intermediary tendencies that masquerade under its name; to train a new generation of revolutionaries capable of guiding the American working class in the foundation of its own party and the fight for power; in other words, to rebuild the US Section of the Fourth International.

We call on youth turning toward Trotskyism, as well as youth and workers fighting for a Labor Party, to join us in this struggle, in particular, in preparing and building an open Trotskyist Congress to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion. This page is especially dedicated to this struggle. It is open to any militant or tendency that wants to contribute to it.

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Labor Party Candidate on Illinois Ballot!

The Trotskyist Organization is supporting the SWP's struggle to put Mason and Gonzalez on the ballot as part of its fight for a Labor Party Coalition in Illinois. Mason and Gonzalez are candidates for President and Vice President in the 1984 elections.

While the TO, in collaboration with auto workers and youth, is fighting to obtain ballot status for the Labor Party Coalition in Michigan, the requirements for ballot status in Illinois preclude a similar fight there. (To achieve ballot status in Illinois a new party must get 25,000 signatures and present candidates for all offices.)

While supporting the struggle to put the SWP candidates on the ballot, we are still fighting to build an open electoral alliance of workers' organizations, union militants, locals, youth, and unemployed for a Labor Party. This campaign can take on tremendous vitality in Chicago — against Vrdolyak and the machine! It can be a means to tap the sentiment among Black workers that Harold Washington, Mayor of Chicago, is detouring into the Democratic Party.

We intend to use this campaign to spark militant opposition to the closing of the South-Works plant of U.S. Steel Corporation and present the Labor Party as the instrument of organizing that opposition. Ed Vrdolyak, machine Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, will be a natural target of this struggle. His home district includes not only South Works, but also Republic Steel and the Wisconsin Steel plant.

A common struggle for a Labor Party can also play an important role in the upcoming election for a President of the United Steel Workers, influencing union militants to actively raise the demand for a Labor Party in their struggle.

In announcing his campaign, Mel Mason said, "We need a party of our class, a labor party based on a revitalized union movement, that will champion the interests of workers, farmers, Blacks, women, and every other victim of this decaying society."

If we were to take Mason's statement at face value, then there would be no doubt that the SWP would be in favor of such a common struggle for the Labor Party, not only with us, but with other forces as well. But we know from past experiences (we actively supported Ed Warren in the Chicago mayoral and Congressional elections) that the SWP does not. That is why, while supporting Mason and Gonzalez against the bourgeois candidates, we call on workers and youth in Chicago to join us in building a common struggle for a Labor Party. D.H.

An Open Letter to "Socialist Action"

Dear Comrades:

We are taking this opportunity to speak directly to you, and to the workers movement in general, through the medium of an Open Letter. It is appropriate to do so now, when you have begun to put out your paper and have held public meetings in key cities. When an organization begins to address itself openly to the militant and working class public it also has to address forthrightly the basic questions of its nature and its existence.

What Is At Stake?

Your organization is composed of the bulk of militants expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in the recent period by the Barnes leadership. Your existence, therefore, is due to the blatant turn by Barnes to an open repudiation of Trotskyism, its principles and its heritage, in favor of an alignment on the political positions of the international apparatus of the Kremlin. This turn has been expressed not only in the flat rejection of the theory of the permanent revolution, but in action in unrestrained support to the Kremlin's parties (particularly, but not exclusively, in Central America and the Caribbean) and to petty bourgeois organizations dependent on the Kremlin — New Jewel, Sandinistas and so on.

The fact that you comrades reacted to this turn by defending the principles of Trotskyism and the heritage of the SWP is positive. How much farther and faster Barnes would have gone if he had met no resistance!

This origin gives a particular character to your organization; up to now it has been defined negatively, by what it is against. Barnes has even determined your membership, basically defining it by those whom he expelled.

Now, when you come forward publicly, such a definition becomes untenable. You must now develop positively, toward the tasks of the day. And this likewise demands a clarification even of the differences you have expressed with Barnes, as well as those that exist among you.

Why do these questions concern us? We are not playing games; we are posing a fundamental discussion on the nature of Trotskyism (of Marxism and Leninism today) and on the tasks of Trotskyists, especially in the United States.

This discussion has a goal: rebuilding the US section of the Fourth International, the Trotskyist party, expressed in a Trotskyist Congress assembling all the forces, including those from the old organizations, that have raised themselves to the level of the tasks.

The chief task is to assume the continuity of the SWP — to recover the ground that this party had conquered and to go forward from there. This position was based on and developed through the struggle to rebuild the Fourth Inter-



national in a fight against centrism — a struggle that culminated on the international level in the Fourth World Congress of 1976.

Balance Sheet

The Trotskyist Organization was founded in 1975 to accomplish this task through the same kind of fight. This meant a battle against the SWP as a centrist party, as a party which had degenerated, turning from a pillar of the Fourth International into one of the key elements of its crisis.

Today all of us, your organization and the Trotskyist Organization, have reached a turning point. Barnes is dispensing with even the verbal residues of Trotskyism in the SWP. It is possible to make a balance sheet of the struggle so far.

The leaders of your organization, including those, like Comrade Weinstein, who reacted immediately against the "new International," have over the last nine years followed a course of agreement with Barnes on all the questions of the day. They have dismissed our position out of hand. Many of your younger members rejected our understanding of the SWP: we were "ultra-left sectarian," etc., etc.

But how does all that stand up now against the reality of the SWP, against the treatment that has been meted out to you? Our belief is that your past positions are completely invalidated by the hard facts.

But, unfortunately, you have not made a real assessment of your own positions or of the political situation. Thus, you have adopted two extremely dangerous positions: a political program that corresponds to the line of the SWP in the period prior to Barnes' turn, a reliance on the United Secretariat of Mandel. Both these positions reveal a blindness to the whole development of the struggle; indeed, even to your own struggle.

Comrades, on what basis did Barnes' positions develop? How do you politically explain the public change he made in early 1981? Did

he freak out? And did the great majority of the SWP go crazy with him?

We think there is not madness, but a method. His politics represent a development, a continuity and a conclusion of the politics of the SWP since the 1963 reunification with Mandel & Co. You have no explanation for Barnes' current politics precisely because you still share his old politics.

A Grave Danger

This is sharply expressed in your accord with Mandel. He likewise represents a capitulation to Stalinism — one that, until the recent performance of Barnes, was unparalleled. He, as the right-hand man of Pablo, tried to liquidate the Fourth International into the Stalinist parties, tried to substitute the "self-reform of the bureaucracy" for the political revolution, not to mention innumerable other examples. Barnes can reprint the French Pabloites' position on Nicaragua, fully aware that it is only a step behind his. And Mandel's nominee to the USec IEC, Peter Camejo, has logically adopted a liquidationism so crude it beggars description.

Comrades, you ignore or disregard the lessons of the struggles of 1953 and 1963 — on which the TO firmly bases itself — at your peril.

At your literal peril. Because you also ignore the lessons of the fate of the Internationalist Tendency in the SWP a decade ago. At first, the IT criticized both Barnes and Mandel, but then thought it could find safety with the latter. Instead, it found annihilation. Barnes simply removed its members from the ranks of the SWP (later turning their names over to the bourgeois courts) . . . and Mandel — did nothing! Search high or low today, you will find no trace of the IT.

Your perspective of reintegration into the SWP is the same course, at the same instigation, followed by the IT. You already have Barnes' answer — he threatened to again resort to the courts. You have been caught so unaware that you could not intervene in the YSA Convention, could not even come to the launching of the election campaign you state you support. Mandel is still playing Barnes' game, but it is you who will be the losers.

The road to the Trotskyist Congress lies through the most open discussion, debate and struggle. That is the sense in which we write to you, in which we demand that you examine your past and present, in which we seek a framework for discussion and common action.

We have posed these questions openly. How will you respond?

Secretariat of the Trotskyist Organization/USA
January 30, 1984

Labor Party or Conciliation

On December 3 we listened to Phil Thompson for 2½ hours at a meeting in Detroit organized by the Communist Workers Party to reorient their party around the Jesse Jackson campaign. The actions of the CWP are a signpost for the American workers. Conciliation or independence — that is the question. The discussion at the end of Thompson's lengthy speech revolved around that because the CWP's capitulation has to be a bitter pill for working class members of the CWP to swallow.

Thompson began by saying that since there was a lot of confusion about their position on the Jackson campaign he was going to deliver a speech to clear it up. But the ensuing discussion made clear that what he said was confusing. Not one CWPer defended their line from the floor, which called for some political gymnastics. On the one hand, support and organize the vote for Jackson; on the other, promote a sterile and lifeless "socialism."

He gave a fairly good account of the actual

mobilization of blacks and workers around the mayoral elections in Chicago and all around the country and said that the movement was not a "Jesse Jackson movement." If this is true, then why should Blacks support Jackson when they can build their own party in the elections based on the tremendous mobilization of millions seeking political power?

Thompson said Lenin advised the Bolsheviks (the Russian workers party) to work within the bourgeois parties in order to justify the CWP's entry into the Democratic Party. This is an outright lie and something Lenin fought tooth and nail all his life. This is what Lenin said to the Russian workers in 1906 on this question: "Whoever wavers in face of this impending struggle (workers vs. the government) will, indeed, have to choose between the alternative of 'conciliation with someone or a rupture with someone.'"

The chair said that organizations present would have five minutes to make a statement if

they chose. We made the most of our five minutes but found it took less time than that to make our political orientation crystal clear.

To summarize: yes, the movement exists and is not the property of Jackson but comes as a result of the deep class struggle unfolding. Jackson saw this, too, and at first dangled himself out as an independent but later retreated into the Democratic Party and from that position has become increasingly hostile to the working class. Now is the time to finish the crisis of the Democratic Party, this is the most important aspect of the '84 elections — a common struggle of all working class parties and the unions is needed to put a labor party coalition on the ballot and organize this rupture.

Thompson was unable to address this statement and appeared somewhat rattled by it.

After the meeting we were confident that we had reached anybody present with ears on their heads. We sold six copies of Truth #175.

A Black youth from Gary, Indiana said "I'd like to talk longer with you, but I'm with some real narrow-minded people." A young woman who bought the paper told us she did not speak in the meeting but that the whole thing churned her up inside and said we'd raised important questions "that had to be resolved immediately."

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