

## National Black Assembly Meets

### Which Way In '76

KANSAS CITY--The Missouri Black Political Assembly met on Jan. 24 at the Linwood Center in Kansas City. The theme of the conference was "Which Way in '76?" The alternatives, as put forth by Brother Richard Dockett, the Missouri State Chairperson, were "The National Black Assembly or a Progressive United Front."

To understand the question it is necessary to understand the history of the National Black Political Assembly. The call for the NBPA first went out in 1971, and came primarily from the Black Caucus, a caucus made up of all the national black elected officials, as well as most black national organizations.

It was no accident that the call was for a convention to be held in March, 1972, an election year. It was clear that the assembly was to harness the black vote to be used as a wedge for black spokespersons to force concessions, or at least promises, from those seeking political office on national and local levels.

From the beginning there was a source of conflict, because the assembly was to be non-partisan toward the Republican and Democratic parties. As stated in the National Black Political Agenda, it was to be "an independent Black political force which acted as a brokerage for Black people in their dealings with both local and national political figures." The problem was that most of the Black elected officials were already committed to the Democratic Party and saw the assembly as a way to collect the Black vote for that party. This was clearly in opposition to the line, of the assembly.

In his opening address to the assembly, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, at the time one of the tri-chairpersons, state very clearly that:

"The American system does not work for the masses of our people, and it cannot be made to work without radical fundamental change." In his speech, *Both Parties have Betrayed Us* he said:

"The profound crisis of Black people and the disaster of America are not simply caused by men nor will they be resolved by men alone. These crises are the crises of basically planned economics and politics, and of cultural degradation. None of the Democratic candidates and none of the Republican candidates--regardless of their vague promises to us or to their white constituencies--can solve our problems or the problems of this country without radically changing the system by which it operates."

Despite this kind of rhetoric, the assembly was sold to the Democratic Party by its leadership, the very ones who had called for an independent all Black political organ.

Another source of conflict at the

1972 convention was the call for dismantling the illegal State of Israel. The Organization of African Unity, which condemned the Israeli forces for their expansionist policies and forceful occupation of the sovereign territory of another State was adopted by the Convention. This position, in a watered down form, was heatedly contested by elected officials, and by some others whose livelihood depended on Jewish support.

After adoption of this position, the national elected officials left the NBPA in mass, leaving only one representative, Charles Diggs, also tri-chairperson, to represent their cause.

#### THE LITTLE ROCK CONVENTION IN '74

After the sellout in '72, the remaining elected officials also pulled out, for the assembly no longer served their purpose. Consequently, in 1974 at the assembly's second convention in Little Rock, Arkansas, only a skeleton of those represented at the first convention attended.

Most notable in Little Rock was the address of Brother Imamu Baraka to the convention in which he called for Black workers to take the lead in the struggles of Black people, and called for Marxism-Leninism to guide that struggle. Imamu had in the past been a severe critic of any Black position supporting Marxism-Leninism, calling it a white boy philosophy. No one, including members of his own organization, the Congress of Afrikan People, was prepared for this progressive move.

#### WHY WE NEED A PROGRESSIVE UNITED FRONT

The assembly is due to meet again in March, 1976. It is another elec-

tion year, and brokerage politics, clearly in the interest of the elected officials, is again becoming an issue. Obviously, it cannot be in the interest of Black working people, for the fundamental change that Mayor Hatcher spoke of in '72 has not occurred. In fact, we are still faced with the question of how to bring about that change. Which way in '76: The National Black Political Assembly or a Progressive United Front?

There was considerable discussion of the two alternatives at the Missouri Assembly. Some people, especially from the Kansas City area, could not see a difference between the two: they could not see why it was necessary to change the structure in order to make the changes that most agreed needed to be made. This confusion existed throughout the conference and led to the K.C. delegates abstaining from making a decision. The State Assembly was charged with the task of electing delegates who could vote on this question, so the K.C. members chose to participate only as observers. The St. Louis delegates unanimously supported the Progressive United Front, so this will be the position of the Missouri State Assembly at the national convention.

The reasons for supporting a Progressive United Front are that we need a totally different philosophy to guide our struggles than the guiding philosophy of the current leadership of the NBPA. Their philosophy still is, brokerage power politics within the capitalist system, whether that means bartering between the two political parties, or tailing behind as an appendage of one party or the other. But unless the guiding philosophy of the organization we are to build is Anti-Imperialist and Anti-Capitalist, it will never be in the interest of the working class as a whole, or the black masses, who are primarily workers.

An organization which speaks to the interests and issues of the working class, in turn, demands working class participation and leadership. The NBPA by its very nature cannot accomplish this. Only a Progressive United Front has those possibilities and is the answer to the question "Which Way in '76?"

willing to support that struggle and not try to accumulate wealth only for themselves are welcomed to the new society ZANU wants to build.

At present support from the white settlers in Zimbabwe is limited because Ian Smith has dealt most harshly with whites who support the Zimbabweans' right to self-determination-the right to decide how their country will be run. Imprisonment, deportation, and execution is the standard Smith response to activist support from whites.

OTL and W.U.O. support the struggle of ZANU. We believe that tyranny in Zimbabwe will only be ended when Smith's regime is smashed. We believe that as long as corporations of foreign countries like the U.S. are allowed to take over the Zimbabwean economy, and as long as the government represses people's right to speak out against this foreign domination and backs up this repression with armed forces--the only response possible is that taken by ZANU. ZANU has armed the people to fight back-it has rejected any compromises in terms of only giving black Zimbabweans more civil rights-like the right to vote. There has to be a commitment to build a society to serve the needs of the people- this is ZANU's goal.

## ZANU *Continued from p. 11*



Sarudzai Churucheminswa, ZANLA Freedom Fighter

control of the economic, and therefore political, system so that all of the people will benefit. Whites who are