

PROPOSAL FOR 1970 CALIFORNIA ELECTION CAMPAIGN

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The antiwar movement is gearing up for what will probably be the largest mass protest action in U.S. history, building on the deepening radicalization. This radicalization, which is strongest among the student youth and the oppressed national minorities, is beginning to affect other sectors of the population. The possibilities of involving thousands of GIs and, for the first time, significant numbers of trade unionists in the November action are signs of this. Another sign is the developing women's liberation movement.

The social crisis of capitalism is deepening, especially in the cities, as more and more people are being confronted with the fact that capitalism cannot solve the problems of war, racial oppression, unemployment, pollution of our environment, the breaking down of services, etc.

Despite this deepening crisis and the resultant radicalization, the capitalist politicians continue to hustle votes with two varieties of the same poison: Law and Order, and Law and Order "with Justice," with more black Democrats being offered as an alternative to black independent political action.

In California elections will take place in November 1970. The Republicans offer George Murphy for U.S. senator and Reagan for governor. The Democrats will offer "lesser evil" types like Unruh and Alioto (?).

The AIP's (American Independent Party - Wallaceites) will also contest for U.S. Senate and state offices.

Our opponents and competitors on the left offer nothing to the hundreds of thousands of Californians seeking solutions. The Communist Party is searching for a formula to "defeat Reagan at all costs." Their election strategy will probably have the usual multi-pronged characteristics of class collaboration a la Gus Hall. These are several possible variants: support to Jesse Unruh as the lesser evil Democrat; voter registration and "education" through the National Committees to Combat Fascism; participation in the Peace and Freedom Party; and possibly even a token CP campaign.

The various tendencies in SDS are confused and in disarray. Most tendencies and many independent radicals have been very critical of SDS politics and organizational methods. No consistent electoral policy is likely to emerge from any of them, but they will range from abstention to reform Democratic Party activity.

The PL-dominated wing of SDS continues to oppose the antiwar movement and movements for self-determination. Both wings are

certain to splinter further when campuses open because of their sectarian, ultraleft, abstentionist orientation. PLP continues its policy of virtually no "open" work in its own name.

The Independent Socialist Clubs played a major role in putting the Peace and Freedom Party on the ballot for the 1968 elections, but did not make real gains from this work and don't constitute a threat on most campuses. They will probably participate in PFP for the 1970 elections since it will have ballot status.

The Black Panther Party has proven incapable of building a mass black party that could challenge the political domination of the Democratic Party in the black community. They have substituted ultraleft, semi-Maoist rhetoric and a reformist bloc against "fascism" with the CP. While we must continue to defend the BPP, it is urgent that we accelerate our propaganda campaign for a mass black party with a transitional program.

The Socialist Labor Party will no doubt make the record with a ritual campaign. We should take note of the recent splits in the SLP. In California, at least, a wing which wants to engage in action in the antiwar movement has split away and may want to relate to our campaign. Such elements could be a source of financial support and contact in certain areas.

The Peace and Freedom Party is entitled to ballot status in the 1970 elections and will probably be a factional battleground for most of the above groups. We will continue to oppose PFP-type politics: PFP had no clear anticapitalist program, and was an amalgam of political tendencies destined to disintegrate after the 1968 elections because of contradictory programs and perspectives.

The 1970 elections in California offer the SWP and YSA tremendous opportunities because of the deepening radicalization and the default of our opponents. We will continue to build the antiwar movement, consolidating the campus base and adult coalitions, and reaching out to GIs, Third World youth, and young workers. The Student Mobilization Committee's international student strike this fall and possibly next spring, the November 1969 action in San Francisco, and mass spring and fall actions in 1970 will probably be the high points of this work. These mass actions will be excellent examples of independent political action counterposed to the reformist electoral gimmicks our opponents will foster.

We must launch a socialist election campaign to give expression in the electoral arena to (1) the struggles to bring the troops home now; (2) the struggles for self-determination for oppressed national minorities, especially Afro-Americans and

Chicanos, and (3) the struggles of the students, workers, women, and the elderly for control over their lives and environment. We will present our transitional program as concretely and energetically as possible, setting the example for future black and labor parties.

Our campaign will be the only one to support the struggles of colonized peoples for self-determination -- especially Vietnam, the Palestine Liberation Movement, and Cuba; the antiwar movement, the rights of GIs, Chicano control of the Chicano community, black control of the black community, the building of independent Chicano and black parties, the idea of an independent labor party based on the unions, the formation of black, brown, and leftwing caucuses in the unions, the campus struggles, women's liberation, a drastic overhaul of the tax structure that would spare the poor and soak the rich, other aspects of our program to solve the crisis of the cities, and a socialist America.

A broad legal fight must be waged parallel to our election campaign for a change in the ballot laws. We will fight to have California's restrictive ballot laws declared unconstitutional, mobilizing support from others who will support our right to be on the ballot even though many of them will not support our election campaign. This legal fight must challenge the prohibitive requirements for signatures on petitions and the restrictive residency requirements.

This election campaign will be the most significant campaign we have ever run in California, advancing our ideas more broadly than ever before.

Our battle for hegemony on the left will be advanced by making the 1970 election campaign the central focus of our work. The radio, tv and newspaper coverage for our campaign will help to establish the SWP as the socialist party in the minds of millions. We will be able to organize trailblazing expeditions onto campuses in areas in California and the western region that have been untouched by Trotskyists. We will be hitting every significant campus in the state while interest in politics is heightened by the elections and the actions on campus against the war, for black studies programs, etc.

Our campaign must be used to qualitatively increase the distribution and subscription base of The Militant and the Young Socialist. Wherever the campaign goes, new openings will be found for distribution of Merit literature.

It was the Halstead-Boutelle campaign that began to put the YSA on the map as the major radical youth organization, opening up new areas where we now have locals or members-at-large. Our 1970 campaign in California can greatly increase our

influence and add significant numbers to our ranks. We will start with four party branches, five YSA locals, and a few YSA members-at-large. We should come out of the campaign with a YSA group on every major campus. Young Socialists for _____, _____, & _____, etc. should be constituted as soon as the campaign is launched. On some campuses it will be possible for the YSA to contest for student government positions. These campus campaigns will complement our state campaign. An important aspect of the campaign will be the gathering of endorsers, drawing serious activists close to our movement.

This campaign and ballot fight must declare war on routinism. They must start early because the longer we have the better, both for the legal effort and for the propaganda campaign. Other opponent campaigns have started or will start soon. We must take advantage of the fall antiwar offensive, launching our campaign this fall so that we will be able to intervene with our campaign literature in the student strikes and San Francisco action. This will give us the fall 1969 and spring 1970 terms of school and part of the fall 1970 term. Our movement in other states is beginning to plan now for similar campaigns against Kennedy, Rockefeller, and other prominent capitalist politicians. We are in a position to help spearhead our work nationally in the 1970 elections.

Our campaign should take advantage of the fact that a growing number of our comrades are playing leadership roles in the mass movement. We will want to select as candidates for U.S. senator, governor and the other state and local offices as many of these young, activist comrades as possible, from the campuses, the antiwar movement, the Third World movement, and trade unions. We will want to work out a full slate with the other branches, with at least one candidate from each branch.

We must produce attractive posters, stickers, buttons, and literature early in the campaign. Truth kits dealing with our opponents should be put out. A film should be produced showing our candidates in action, speaking, demonstrating, organizing.

Such an ambitious campaign as that outlined above would require statewide coordination that was lacking for the most part during the 1968 campaign. A state campaign coordinating committee will be necessary, composed of the branch organizers and campaign directors at the beginning.

Such a campaign requires fulltime staff: a fulltime state campaign director, candidates on fulltime all the time, touring and trailblazing, appearing on radio and tv, etc.

"Red Special" cars or campers should be acquired for the campaign to be kept on the road as much as possible from

the beginning of the campaign. The campaign should be the vehicle through which we carry out serious, ongoing regional organizing.

This kind of election campaign will be a big step forward for our California movement. But it can be carried out only if we begin now to discuss it out, drawing all our comrades into the "thinking out" of our prospects and how to be most effective. Then we must allocate forces, select candidates (hopefully from every branch and youth local in the state), project a budget and plan how we're going to raise the money, and get started on the literature.

Each branch should investigate local (municipal, county and campus) elections that could be contested for during the state campaign.