

Why we support the Jackson campaign:

Following are excerpts from a speech by Monica Moorehead Nov. 28 at a meeting of the New York branch of Workers World Party. Her talk is based on discussions held in the National Committee of WWP on the Jackson campaign. We began a discussion of the campaign in this paper four issues ago with an article by Larry Holmes, and invite readers to participate by sending us their comments.

THE AIM OF our Party, as we all know, is the struggle against capitalist exploitation and racist, imperialist oppression with the view of overturning the capitalist system and bringing about a socialist reconstruction of society.

The struggle for socialism, however, is impossible if the struggle against national oppression is ignored or subordinated. It must be seen as an integral part of the class struggle against the bourgeoisie.

Knowing how to combine these two aspects of the struggle may be difficult at times, but the more we try, the more experience we accumulate, the more successful we will be. The more difficult the problem, the closer attention we must give it, concretely analyzing each and every phase of the movement against national oppression of Black people and all the oppressed.

Circumstances are constantly changing. The form of the movement may be completely new, and therefore require more careful analysis.

New form of Black movement

It's in this light that we must examine the candidacy of Jesse Jackson. The fact that this is a struggle in the bourgeois parliamentary arena, in the primaries of the Democratic Party, should not obscure the fact that it is but a new form of the movement of the Black people. It is as genuine a movement of struggle as any of its predecessors, despite its bourgeois electoral form.



WW PHOTO SUSAN ROTGARD

Monica Moorehead

While the content of this movement is wholly progressive, the form is not. Thus we have a situation in which the political content of the movement is progressive, but the form of it—participation in the capitalist party primaries—is regressive.

Marxism teaches us that in the struggle between form and content, we are absolutely obliged to support the political content of a genuine movement regardless of its negative, even reactionary, form.

Of course, participation in the capitalist primaries is a definite drawback. It keeps the masses tied to one of the major bourgeois parties.

Nevertheless, we must not abandon a highly progressive developing movement of the oppressed because of this artificial barrier. It would be like throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Marxism on form vs. content

Revolutionary Marxists around the world have always supported movements that were progressive in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, even if they took reactionary forms. We supported the Iranian Revolution, for example, and still do, against U.S. imperialism. But we know that Khomeini

is at the head of a reactionary, theocratic state.

For these basic reasons, the National Committee of Workers World Party has decided to enthusiastically support the Jackson candidacy, notwithstanding the fact that he is running in the primary of the Democratic Party.

This is a continuation of our firm political policy of supporting on a local level the campaigns of Harold Washington in Chicago and Mel King in Boston for substantially the same reasons: the issue was fighting racism and supporting the rights of oppressed people.

These campaigns are quite different than, for example, that of Tom Bradley for mayor of Los Angeles. There the fundamental struggle was one between two bourgeois parties. The struggle against national oppression was completely subordinated.

Although Black people voted for Bradley in large numbers, they really expected little from him. There were, of course, minimal peripheral gains for some Black people, mostly officials. But the overall impact of his campaign was to strengthen the hold of the bourgeoisie over the workers as a whole, Black and white as well as Chicano, Asian, and Native.

Differences with earlier movements

Jesse Jackson's candidacy represents an upsurge in the Black struggle and has taken on an electoral, that is, parliamentary, form.

This electoral character makes it different from various other movements, like that of Marcus Garvey, the Black Muslims, and the civil rights movement of the sixties.

Each of the previous movements has made a contribution to the struggle for civil rights, national liberation, and self-determination. Each has had its drawbacks as well.

Some, however, have been thoroughly revolutionary, like the Panthers and

some Latin groupings with whom we have shared many political conceptions.

By and large, each of these movements has laid down bricks to which others coming along later have added.

Workers World Party has consistently supported each and every movement of the oppressed since the day the Party was born. The Party has supported the struggles unconditionally without necessarily overlooking their defects.

Meaning of civil rights

In Marxist terms, the struggle for civil rights in the U.S. has meant the struggle to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution and gain for oppressed people the rights white workers and whites in general have already won. The struggle for bourgeois democratic rights has been conducted in the streets, at meetings, marches, sit-ins, lie-ins, boycotts, etc.

For white workers, the revolution for bourgeois democracy was won in struggles over the last two centuries, beginning with the war for independence from Great Britain in 1776. But for Black people, the bourgeois democratic revolution didn't begin until the Civil War a hundred years later.

It was a great revolution, and a significant beginning. Unfortunately, it didn't go far enough: It didn't put Black people on an equal footing with whites. It only went halfway, abolishing chattel slavery.

This of course was a great and indispensable step. But it still left Black people far behind so that it has required, and still does, a tremendous movement of the millions to raise Black people to the level of the white population in all areas of society.

This progressive and sometimes revolutionary struggle is still going on. It may not achieve completion until after the socialist revolution, but each step in the struggle for bourgeois democratic rights for Black, Latin, Native,

Statement of WWP

Asian and other oppressed nationalities is a stepping stone that also enhances the collaboration between all the oppressed in the U.S. with the working class as a whole in the struggle for socialism.

Objective vs. subjective

We must also distinguish between the objective and subjective character of the movement of Black people. The subjective character refers to the program and leadership of the movement.

The objective character of this movement is to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution by extending and winning political and social rights for Black and other oppressed people that whites have already gained, such as participation in the electoral process. This is uncontestedly progressive.

The more that Black, Latin, and the other oppressed participate, the greater possibility that they will achieve at least some of the rights that whites have, even if in the long run those rights turn out to be illusory under capitalism, as they are with white workers.

Nonetheless, it's a struggle for equality or parity. Since Marx's day, 130 years ago, this has been correctly promoted by the genuine working class parties.

Jackson's program

But isn't the Jackson program of a bourgeois reformist character? Of course it is.

His program may become even more bourgeois as the contest becomes heated. He may move either backward or forward. For example, while in the past he has come out for Palestinian rights, today he is calling for a close relation with Israel. His positions have and may change on other questions, like women's rights and abortion.

The basic failing, however, of the Jackson program as well as that of

other well-meaning left liberal reform movements, groups, and parties is that they do not go beyond the framework of the capitalist system, which is the source of the problem. They don't go beyond calling for reforms and improvements.

Our program, on the other hand, calls for the relentless prosecution of the class struggle with the purpose of overturning the capitalist system with all its repressive forces. Our Party will continue to relentlessly expose both the Democratic and Republican parties as part and parcel of this struggle against capitalism.

However, we recognize that Jackson at this moment expresses the aspirations and the movement for democratic rights of Black people. It is the duty of all progressives, but especially of white workers, not to obstruct the use of these rights but to facilitate it.

I'm sure we all could cite examples of Jackson's inadequacies over the years, such as his role in attempting to quell the Miami rebellion and his past record on the ERA, abortion, and the policies of U.S. imperialism. But again, his program is not the basis on which we support him.

Of course, we are not going to disregard these issues during the campaign, either. In other words, we will support his candidacy critically, with all the reservations that a revolutionary party must have in respect to militant reformist leaders, Black or white, whom we are sometimes obliged to support, such as trade unionists.

In all I have said, it should be remembered that we are referring to the primary campaign. Should it turn out that the struggle becomes so fierce and bitter that after the primary Jackson breaks with the Democratic Party, which does not appear likely at the present time, we would of course continue to support his campaign for the Presidency.

We would do it with great enthusiasm but also with the necessary cau-



Jesse Jackson

WW PHOTO: AL STEARGAR

tion and consideration to the programmatic aspects of his campaign. Where criticism was warranted and necessary, we would of course reflect it in our paper.

We would not, however, portray our differences in a way that would undermine or discredit the campaign, since our whole purpose is to strengthen the movement against national oppression and defeat the efforts of the bourgeoisie who want to destroy the independent movement of oppressed people and the working class.

After the primaries?

If, on the other hand, it should turn out that as a result of divisions within the Democratic Party, or because of enormous electoral power shown by Jackson in the primary, he was asked to be the vice-presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, we would then be obliged to withdraw our support.

The reason should be obvious. The content of Jackson's candidacy would have changed. It would then be just a question of supporting the ticket of a thorough-going bourgeois party in which Jackson would be the occupant

of a ceremonial office while the Democratic Party would proceed to rule on behalf of the bourgeoisie, as it has always done. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Black people have supported the Democrats for many decades.

Is there a contradiction for an independent, revolutionary working class party between supporting Jackson's candidacy and running its own candidates? It is only an organizational and tactical question, not one of principle in the struggle against national oppression.

We support Jackson only so long as he continues to fight in the primaries or if he decides to carry out an independent campaign after the primaries. If he withdraws because of defeat or becomes badly isolated, then it is correct to give total concentration to a revolutionary, working class campaign.

As long as we understand the fundamental and principal question of national oppression, we will be in an advantageous position to proceed with the tactical and organizational questions regarding this campaign.