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THE CASE FOR AN INDEPENDENT BLACK POLITICAL PARTY

(Political Committee Draft Resolution)

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The Case for an Independent Black Political Party

(Draft Resolution submitted by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party for pre-convention discussion, July 1967)

The more than twenty million black people comprise the biggest minority in the United States. They make up eleven percent of the population, about twenty percent of the organized work force, and by 1970 will be the majority in ten of the larger cities. And yet, North or South, they have little political influence.

What are the causes for this political weakness and how can it best be overcome? This is one of the most pressing problems facing black Americans -- and their future depends upon finding the most effective solution to it.

The crawling pace of the progress toward equality and emancipation in the thirteen years since the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation decision demonstrates the folly of dependence on the Democratic or Republican parties and the necessity for organizing and exercising genuinely independent black political power. Here are some of the main reasons why this is the only kind of political action that can bring substantial benefits to the black masses, give maximum leverage to their united power, and prepare them for the tasks of revolutionizing this oppressive racist capitalist society.

1. Why an independent black party is needed

Every aspect of Afro-American life is affected by the political decisions of the representatives of the capitalist class that rules the United States. The policies they impose upon black Americans perpetuate inequality, poverty, police brutality, the highest rate of unemployment, the lowest-paying jobs, the worst schooling, the most unhealthy housing, and the shortest life-span. These conditions can be changed only through political action by the exploited and oppressed. But political action in their own interests requires the building of a political organization under their own control.

The rulers of this country understand the need for political action that benefits them and for political organizations that serve them. That is why they have not one but two parties which they control and through which they exert a political monopoly. Big Business cannot lose so long as the American people are restricted in their political choices to the two-party shell game. This is the only major industrial country in the world where the capitalists have two mass parties and the working people have none. Profit and privilege will continue to dominate this country unchallenged until the two-party monopoly of the capitalists is broken up.

This monopoly could have been ended thirty or twenty years ago by the American workers if they had cut loose from the Democratic party and created their own political party with the perspective of taking political power away from the capitalists and establishing a government that would rule in the interests of the workers and their allies, who represent the overwhelming majority of the population. The history of this country and of the world would have been radically different if the workers had taken such a step at that time. But they were prevented from taking it by the union bureaucrats, who play the same role in relation to the organized workers that the Uncle Toms play in relation to the black community. An independent mass party of the workers will eventually be formed here as elsewhere. But it will not arise until the workers, under more radical leadership, are able to defeat and replace their present capitalist-minded misleaders.

Meanwhile, as a result of the labor movement's political default, black Americans remain handcuffed inside the Democratic party or abstain altogether from electoral action. The Democratic party wears the mask of liberalism in the North but even in the North it is no less racist than the Republican party. Under duress it throws black people a few concessions, a few posts, a few tokens, but it has no intention of ending racism. It fosters the illusion that black people will get freedom through gradual reform of capitalism and its institutions. The history of the past hundred years testifies that this is a lie. Black people will never be liberated by supporting political parties that are controlled by their oppressors and that are so constructed and operated that they will always be controlled by their oppressors.

The results of the 1964 campaign provide further convincing evidence of the futility of looking for help from the Democratic administration. No group in the United States supported the Democratic party and its presidential ticket in greater proportion than the black community did in 1964. In return, they got a civil rights law in 1965 that is largely unenforced, a civil rights bill in 1966 that was filibustered to death, a penny-ante "war on poverty" that leaves ninety percent of the black people as poor as they ever were, housing and schooling that are more segregated than they were in 1964, and the ouster of Adam Clayton Powell from his congressional seat. How much good does the appointment of a black Supreme Court Justice do if the entire local, state and federal legal system is stacked against justice for the Afro-American?

If racism is not stronger today than it was in 1964, it is at least more openly and unrestrainedly expressed through the so-called "white backlash." And it has reached the point where an outright racist like ex-Governor Wallace

of Alabama can contemplate a nation-wide campaign for the presidency while Johnson's Vice President Hubert Humphrey publicly embraces and praises the notoriously racist Georgia Governor Lester Maddox.

The notion that the Democratic party (or its Republican duplicate) can be reformed from a party of racism into a party of liberation is wishful thinking to the point of fantasy. As Malcolm X said, a chicken is not constructed to produce a duck egg; similarly, a capitalist party is not constructed to produce freedom for Afro-Americans. The Democratic party is capable of giving concessions, especially to certain middle class elements whom the capitalists expect to use to contain and police the black masses. But it is incapable of promoting and making the profound economic and political changes needed to solve the problems of millions of oppressed. Black people who think they are going to "take over" part of the Democratic organization and "use" it in the interests of the black masses are fooling themselves or the masses; they themselves are the ones who get taken over and used.

Equally futile is the concept of a "third force" recently advanced by some of the black power advocates and by Adam Clayton Powell. The reasoning behind this proposed course of political action goes like this. Black Democrats, black Republicans and black independents would get together politically, bargain as a united bloc with the two capitalist parties, and deliver or withhold the votes they influence depending on which one offered the best bargain. Although this is called "independent political action," it is nothing of the kind. It is a spurious substitute because it would leave black voters dependent on the promises of two racist parties, rather than of one.

At most, it could bring a few more concessions rather than any fundamental changes. And it cannot even bring many concessions because it overlooks the fact that the two capitalist parties are controlled by the same forces, to whom it does not much matter whether black people vote Democratic or Republican. Just so long as that is their only choice, just so long as there is no alternative to the two parties they control, the ruling powers have the black voters at their mercy.

On the basis of the deep disillusionment bred by experience with the two major parties, some ultra-lefts, mistakenly identifying politics with narrow "electoral" action, reject all political action as useless. But a political party need not restrict itself to electoral activity. History has known political parties that combined running candidates for office with mass struggles under their leadership that abolished oppressive social systems. Electoral activity is not necessarily the opposite of revolutionary struggle; the two modes of action can go together and strengthen each other.

In reality, political action, properly understood and practiced, holds the key to the many doors now shut against black people. But it must be a different kind of political action than the one that has produced such sorry results up to now. It must be political action counterposed to the old parties and independent of them. It must be based on the political power of the black masses, organized into a political party of their own, expressing their needs and fighting for their aspirations. It must define its own objectives and fight for them; it must identify its enemies and fight against them. It must stop hoping for miracles and build the organization through which freedom can be expanded and attained. That can be nothing less than a new political party controlled, financed and led by black people themselves.

2. What makes an independent black party possible

What makes it both possible and urgent for black people to build an independent party, which the ruling class does not want, is the system of racial segregation which the ruling class created and intends to maintain.

Segregation and urbanization have brought the black people together physically, especially in the politically decisive big cities where in many cases they will soon be a majority of the inhabitants. Segregation and discrimination are also bringing the black masses together psychologically. It is now necessary to unite them politically on local, state and national levels.

The rulers of this country do not care to have black people think of themselves as a distinctive group -- with group consciousness, group interests and group objectives. They go to considerable trouble to persuade blacks to accept the same myths about "individual progress" that they have used to brainwash white Americans. But in pursuing their own ends the dominant powers create the very thing they don't want. They not only force black people to live together; they also make them feel, think and react together and in similar ways to their oppression. The ghetto whose original function was to facilitate economic exploitation and to split the working class now plays an additional role unwelcome to the powers that be. It can serve as a base and force to unite black people politically.

If the capitalist class had abolished racism, an independent black party would not have been possible. If the labor movement had broken with capitalist politics and launched a revolutionary struggle along socialist lines that included the abolition of racism as one of its key demands, an independent black party would not have been likely. Such a party is now possible and likely because capitalist development has created the objective preconditions for it and closed off other avenues for effective political struggle, and because other anti-capitalist forces, at least for

the time being, have not opened up alternative roads for political opposition.

A substantial base for an independent black party already exists and only awaits serious efforts to organize it. Before the congressional elections in November, 1966, disillusionment with the Democratic party had reached the point where 17 percent of the black people said they were in favor of "dumping the Democratic party and going it alone in all-black political organizations," according to a national survey made by Newsweek and printed August 22, 1966. (74 percent were reported to be opposed to such a policy.) That survey was made prior to the ouster of Powell from Congress which added greatly to resentment against the two major parties and disillusionment in working through them.

To be sure, 17 percent is a minority of the black population. But it is not an insignificant minority when an independent party has not yet been started or widely discussed, when it is only an idea, and before it has had any opportunity to show that it can be established, work and produce favorable results. No political party starts with a majority of the people it hopes to enlist. The majority has to be won over, through struggle and education, by the more far-seeing minority that creates the party. Seventeen percent of the black population amount to over two million adults, plus several hundreds of thousands in their late teens. This is surely enough to launch a new party and sustain it long enough to carry out the tasks of educating, mobilizing and winning the adherence of a majority of Afro-Americans.

3. What an independent black party can accomplish

An independent black party can unite the Afro-American masses of this country, North and South, urban and rural. It can provide a vehicle for the idealism and militancy of black youth. It can draw into activity millions who have felt that politics is futile and it can raise the political understanding of black people as a whole. It can take over the political life of the black community. In fact, this is the only way the slogan and concept of black power can be politically realized.

In all areas where black people are a majority, it can run and elect to office representatives who will not have obligations and allegiances to the capitalist parties and who will be responsible to the black community. A well-organized continuing black party, democratically controlled by its ranks, can control its own candidates in office more strictly and thoroughly than any committee that is set up for a single election campaign can do.

A strong black party will not only isolate and destroy the Democratic and Republican party machinery in the ghetto, doing away with two-timing political Uncle Toms, but will bring about a vast increase in black representation at all levels of government. Instead of five or six members of Congress who are tied to the capitalist parties and subject to their pressures, there could be fifty or sixty who owed their election and allegiance to an independent black party. Instead of a few dozen state legislators and municipal councilmen, there could be a large bloc of hundreds and thousands of black men and women elected to office as genuine representatives and spokesmen for their people. They could take over the operation of big cities in the North as well as small counties in the South. For the first time black Americans would have a political voice that really spoke for them, a political weight that could not be ignored or swept aside, a political power that could make itself felt, both for defensive and offensive purposes.

Representatives of the black people will be able to govern in areas where they are a majority. In other areas, including Congress, they will be able to fight and/or negotiate more effectively than in the past. Both in situations that call for political combat and situations that call for political negotiating, the representatives of an independent black party would compel respect from both their foes and their friends and would extract far more concessions than Negro Democrats and Republicans ever have done up to now because they would be bargaining from a position of strength.

If an independent black party accomplished only these things, its organization would be justified. But by its mere existence it will accomplish other things as well. The massive withdrawal of black voters from the Democratic party -- not to the Republicans, not into electoral abstention, but into a powerful party of their own -- would shake the political structure of this country from top to bottom.

This comes from one of the basic facts of American life today. The black man can't stand up erect, can't even exercise his democratic rights (that's what independent political organization would signify), without repercussions spreading throughout the United States. White men, rich or poor, upper or middle or lower class, would have to move over or stand up too or alter their stance in some other ways. When large numbers of black people act on their own, a lot of other people, like it or not, will have to act and react too. When black people will move on their own account in the political field, others will also find themselves moving politically, or being moved.

The Democratic party is usually predominant not because it is controlled by the capitalists (this fact is kept hidden or denied as much as possible!). Its strength comes from the support received from a combination of sizeable non-capitalist forces -- the unions, segments of the middle class, the unemployed, the pensioners and retirees along with the great majority of black people. The defection of the black voters will create an immediate crisis for this Democratic coalition. Without the black vote, the Democrats will be unable to carry the big cities and thereby have great difficulties in winning national elections and control of the White House or Congress. Since the Democratic coalition is bound together not by any principles or identity of interests, but by the belief that it can win national and lesser elections, its growing incapacity to do so will undermine the coalition's reasons for existence and in the end break it up.

Inside the unions those elements that are discontented with the pro-Democratic policy of the bureaucracy (and they are more numerous than is now apparent) will be strengthened and find it easier to win support for a struggle to establish an independent labor party. Old alignments will disintegrate and new ones will be formed. An independent party will be the best means for black people to protect and promote their welfare. It will also be the best way for them to forge new alliances with other non-capitalist forces in the conditions that will ensue after the two-party system crumbles.

Back in Reconstruction days after the Civil War, political action by black freedmen in the South improved educational facilities, equalized taxes, cut down illiteracy, abolished imprisonment for debt and instituted many other reforms in city, county and state governments. Picture what unified political action by millions of Afro-Americans could accomplish today!

4. The nature of an independent black party

The character of an independent black party will, of course, be determined by its founders and members in accord with the needs and possibilities as they will see them at the time the party is organized. Without being able at this time to answer such questions concretely, it is nevertheless possible on the basis of past experience to discern certain problems that the builders of an independent black party will have to be concerned about both in the preparatory and initial phases of its organization.

How radical will such a party be? In terms of the political spectrum in the United States, a political party created to the left of the Democratic party and in opposition to it will inescapably be labeled radical. How radical it

will actually be, and what kind of radicalism it will actually express, will depend on the composition and outlook of the leaders and forces who launch the party and their evolution as they operate in the political arena. If, to them, independence of the capitalist parties means independence from capitalist politics, then it will surely be a radical party. The chances of this are strong because black militants and revolutionaries will probably be the chief advocates and founders of an independent party. But in the final analysis the degree of its radicalism will depend on the relationship of forces inside the groups that form and compose the new party.

Will it be a purely electoral party, or a party seeking to intervene and involve the masses in every area of struggle -- economic and social as well as political -- that affects the interests of black people? Will it seek only to elect candidates to office or will it also seek to mobilize and educate the masses by participating in and leading rent strikes, boycotts, demonstrations for jobs and decent schools, against police brutality and military interventions against colonial freedom fighters like the war in Vietnam? It is hard to see how an independent black party can become a mass force without adopting such a perspective and following the practice of total involvement. Even so moderate a civil rights leader as Martin Luther King was impelled to take a stand against the Vietnam war.

Will it be an all-black party (like the Freedom Now Party of 1963-4) or a party controlled and led by blacks (like the Lowndes County Freedom Party)? This is a question of tactical expediency, not of principle. Both approaches have advantages and drawbacks which will have to be carefully weighed.

The founders of the Freedom Now Party believed that an all-black organization would be more attractive to the black masses. Some of them still thought this was the best approach after the Freedom Now Party collapsed, while others felt it had been a mistake, not because of what white people thought about it but because they concluded it had been a deterrent to the recruitment of black supporters.

The founders of the "Black Panther" party in Lowndes County, Alabama, on the other hand, left membership open to anyone who accepted its program and worked loyally for it. Despite this, control and leadership of the party remain with black people. The feeling among young militants in the North today is decidedly in favor of all-black organizations and they are likely to demand an all-black party when one is formed.

Just as it is difficult to envisage an independent black party confining itself exclusively to electoral activity, so it is difficult to imagine that its program

would be restricted to so-called "racial" issues alone. Of course an independent black party will proceed from the needs of the black community but this very concern will inevitably lead it to consider positions and take actions on the most vital and urgent national and international issues.

When it opposes the drafting of black youth to kill colored people in Vietnam, it will be impelled to take a position for or against the war itself; its representatives in Congress will have to vote for or against military appropriations. When it demands jobs for blacks, it will have to take a stand on the fight for a shorter work week, a minimum wage, on adequate compensation for all the unemployed. When it demands funds to replace the slums with decent housing for black people, it will have to take a position on the national budget and how it is divided. When it demands the right to control the schools in the black community, it is also going to have to take a position on the source of taxes and the way they are allocated.

There is much misunderstanding of what politics is all about. Politics does not simply mean booing or cheering for a candidate or putting a ballot in the box on election day. Politics can decide whether slums are cleaned up or not; how the cop on the beat behaves; how much food, if any, there is on the table; whether or not black sons are drafted; what kind of schools and education black communities will get. There is hardly a condition from which Afro-Americans suffer that cannot be changed for better or for worse through engaging in, or abstaining from, the right kind of political action.

Inevitably too, at some point, an independent black party will have to decide whether decent conditions of life, equality and freedom for the black people are really attainable under capitalism or whether a basically different, non-exploitative system is necessary -- and whether a change of such magnitude can be effected through reform or requires revolutionary mass struggle. This will squarely pose the issue of capitalism versus socialism to the leaders, members and supporters of a party of black emancipation.

In the early stages many important and fundamental questions of program and perspective will very likely be left untouched, or even misjudged, as tends to happen at the beginning of every new party. These will have to be thought through and fought out in the course of the party's development as it grapples with the problems involved in creating a better life for all Afro-Americans.

5. Two pioneer experiences and their lessons

The two most significant recent experiments in independent black political organization have been the defunct Freedom Now Party and the apparently thriving Lowndes County

Freedom Party of Alabama. What lessons do they teach?

Some opponents of independent black political action or downhearted former supporters of it contend that the attempt to build the Freedom Now Party turned out to be such a sad failure that all future efforts along that line are bound to be unsuccessful. From this negative judgment they conclude that the only realistic course now is to try and take over the Democratic party in the ghetto and use it for the black community's purposes. They disregard the fact that this policy has been tried much longer and has given far poorer results.

Others propose some version of a "third force" that will be a pressure group but not a political party. Still others look for a third party like the Wallace Progressive Party of 1948 or talk about a "peace party" ticket headed by Martin Luther King and Dr. Spock.

In dismissing any future forms of independent black politics, they forget that all new and enduring political formations in American history or elsewhere have had short-lived predecessors. The Republican party, launched in 1854, was preceded by the Liberty and Free Soil parties of the 1840's. John Brown's band failed to overturn the slave power or abolish chattel slavery -- but it prepared the way for the Civil War that did. Jet travel is common today. Yet the first attempts to build airplanes either crashed or never got off the ground.

The truth is that the project of an independent black party did not get a fair and full trial from the founders of the Freedom Now Party and any subsequent attempt will have to understand the mistakes that were made to avoid repeating them.

The organization of the Freedom Now Party was not undertaken in a sufficiently serious, systematic and sustained way. A new mass party cannot simply be proclaimed; it has to be created by passing through a series of stages. The skeleton and backbone of the coming party has to be constituted through an initial stage of education and propaganda devoted to developing and clarifying its basic ideas, testing out its program, and training its cadres. Only when this indispensable preliminary groundwork is completed can the founding forces reach out and win over large numbers.

The national founders of the Freedom Now Party mixed up these two main stages and tried to do everything all at once. They thought it possible to leap over the tough preliminary chores of gathering, consolidating and educating the initial core. Then when the required organizers, administrators, educators, writers and all the rest did not come around rather quickly in substantial numbers, they became discouraged and gave up.

In the state of Michigan the Freedom Now Party did enlist a few hundred activists and manage to get on the ballot and run an election campaign in 1964. But there too the leadership attempted to rush through or skip over inescapable stages. Instead of concentrating at the start in clarifying the nature and problems of the new party for themselves and their followers and instead of developing a realistic long-range as well as an immediate objective, they pinned all their hopes on securing a big vote and possibly electing a few candidates. They counted on so impressive a showing on the first try that it would bring large numbers into the party right away.

Most of the Michigan leaders became discouraged when the party received only five thousand votes. Instead of regarding this support for a new, untried, unpopularized, largely unexplained movement as the beginning basis for sustained education and organization, they saw the low vote as evidence of total failure.

If in place of exorbitant expectations, they had been guided by a more realistic approach, the party might have survived, grown and spread to other places. The quick collapse of the Freedom Now Party did not prove that the black masses would not support and join an independent party. It only showed that they won't go for it in a rush and all together at the first call. They will have to be convinced and won over, not by a one-shot crack at the ballot box, but by serious and persevering education and organization.

The main point to be learned is that the founders of a new party will first have to organize themselves properly before they will be able to organize large numbers successfully.

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Like the Freedom Now Party, the Lowndes County Freedom Party clearly opposes both the Democratic and Republican parties and seeks to create an alternative to them. But it is being built on a more realistic basis. It was not proclaimed as a full-fledged political party as soon as the idea struck a few pioneers. Instead, it was discussed at great length by its founders, soberly, in detail, and with careful attention to local needs, possibilities and peculiarities. This preliminary stage of discussion, when the movement was known as the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, unified and educated the founders and gave them a perspective, trusted leaders and the elements of an agreed-upon structure for going forward to the launching of the Freedom Party itself.

Some members and sympathizers of the Lowndes County Freedom Party expected it to win the very first election it contested in November 1966 because black people are a majority

in the county. They underestimated the intimidation and pressure applied by the Democrats and the difficulties of conducting an election campaign for the first time. The new Freedom Party did not win; its highest vote was 42 percent. But its leaders and most of its members were not crushed by the outcome. Armed with a long-range outlook, they took the result in their stride and have set about to do better on the next try.

Thanks to its foresight and careful planning, the Lowndes County Freedom Party has a well-defined organizational structure which facilitates active participation by its members and democratic decision making. Its candidates and leaders are expected to respect these decisions. Through constant education and propaganda it has sought to unify the black community and has displayed considerable skill and flexibility in bringing along most sections of the black community without sacrificing any of its basic principles or purposes.

While bidding for power and office through the ballot, it functions the year around to improve the living conditions of the black population through such projects as building a library, providing milk for children, etc. It has taken measures to ensure the self-defense of its supporters against racist terror attacks. It tries to better the conditions of the black people in all respects.

It remains to be seen whether it will continue to grow and become so deep-rooted that it cannot be disoriented or destroyed. In any event, it sets an example and provides a model for other black communities, North and South. If an independent black political movement can survive and grow under such difficult and isolated circumstances, how much easier could this job be done in a Harlem or a Watts!

6. The problem of allies and alliances

It is in the very nature and logic of political struggle to seek allies. Even majorities seek and make alliances. The question is not whether an independent black party would seek alliances but what kind and with whom.

The necessity of alliances is not altered by the fact that Afro-Americans are part of a non-white majority in the world and even less by the existence of differences with prospective allies. Alliances are made specifically with forces and movements with whom an organization is not in essential or complete agreement. If there was complete agreement between the two, unity rather than alliance would be on the agenda. Practical agreements are made with forces which disagree on some or many matters. Alliances are concluded on actions and aims on which there is a coincidence of interests, even if only for a temporary period, while "agreeing to disagree" on other things.

This right to disagree on some points while working together on others is crucial. Without this right there is not an alliance of equals but a dependent relationship of subordinate to a superior power. The existence of an independent black party would safeguard Afro-Americans against the wrong kinds of alliance. They would not be forced into unfavorable or unequal tieups because an independent organization always has the option of getting up and walking out. It is not necessary to agree to any move, tactic or strategy which will injure your cause so long as you are independent and able to withdraw and act on your own.

At this juncture the major alliances possible for an independent black party would be international. The American ruling class that oppresses and exploits black people at home has a large and growing list of enemies abroad. It is feasible and imperative for Afro-Americans to forge ties with the victims of U.S. imperialism who are still in shackles, with those who have broken them, and with those who are in the process of breaking them. Malcolm X was stressing and striving to effect such alliances at the time of his assassination because he knew what healthy effects they could have on the progress of the liberation struggle within the United States.

Once an independent black party has the power and acquires the skill to seek and make alliances on its own terms, then it will also be possible to anticipate useful alliances with domestic forces. Among these will be the rebel youth, especially among the students; the antiwar movement; the Spanish-speaking people (Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans); the American Indians whose plight has been neglected by almost all the forces in the country; poor white workers; and radical opponents of both capitalism and the trade union bureaucracies. While none of these elements may approach problems in exactly the way black militants do, those who are enemies of the enemies of black people at home can become partners on certain issues and for certain stretches of the road, whatever their staying power in the long run.

Cooperation with allies is part and parcel of the strategy of splitting white America and driving wedges into its constituent elements with conflicting interests so that some will fight others to the benefit of the black millions. An independent black party would best enable Afro-Americans to employ this tactic without surrendering their own interests, unity, autonomy or freedom of action. Successful maneuvering along these lines would set an example for other potential anticapitalist forces by encouraging them to break with capitalist politics and showing them what independent political action can achieve.

7. Why the Socialist Workers Party supports independent black political action

The Socialist Workers Party believes that only a revolution taking economic and political power away from the capitalist exploiters and abolishing the system of production for profit can cleanse this country of racism and enable Americans to live in harmony, prosperity and equality with one another and with the rest of the world.

The Socialist Workers Party opposes the capitalist system and its political agents who run the Democratic and Republican parties. It exposes all attempts to hoodwink and lure the working people, black or white, into supporting the candidates of these basically white supremacist and anti-labor parties on such pretexts as "it's the man, and not the party, that counts." The Socialist Workers Party does not endorse "People's Fronts," anti-monopoly coalitions, "lesser evil" choices, "third forces," so-called "peace candidates" or any other formations which have not clearly and cleanly cut their ties with the capitalist parties and asserted their independence of capitalist politics.

On the other hand, the Socialist Workers Party will support and defend those political forces and movements which represent a genuine breakaway from capitalist politics, whether or not they are socialist-minded or oriented. Thus it advocates the creation of an independent labor party by the trade unions and would back such a progressive step, whatever criticisms it might have of its program and leadership.

So the Socialist Workers Party favors the formation of an independent party uniting Afro-Americans in political struggle for their just rights and freedom. It believes that black people have the democratic right to decide their own destiny and that, without such a political instrument, they cannot effectively advance their immediate well-being or attain their ultimate goals. That is why the Socialist Workers Party hailed the Freedom Now Party and supports the Lowndes County Freedom Party.

There is no contradiction between adhering to the ideas of revolutionary socialism and championing an all-black party. To be sure, the one is consciously opposed to the capitalist order whereas the other may be only partially and potentially directed against its domination. But both will stand arrayed against a common enemy in the capitalist ruling class and should travel along the same road toward the same destination.

Because black people are the most exploited, oppressed and aroused part of the population, it is reasonable to expect that they will become the first mass force to cut

loose from the Democratic party coalition and blaze a trail for others to follow. If they should establish an influential party of their own which carried through the fight against oppression and exploitation to the end, black Americans can be the vanguard of radical change in this country and play a decisive role in revolutionizing its political life.

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