

EXCERPTS FROM SWP NC PLENUM DISCUSSION ON THE POLITICAL REPORT

February 27, 1970

Weinstein: There's only one area of Jack's report that I have a question on, and I'll deal with that. That is, his discussion around the question of the Chicano movement and the very unusual formulation that he used in his report that leaves a big question mark in my mind as to what it means. I think I know what it means, but it's not clear. The phrase that I'm referring to seems to indicate a line that we should have the perspective of urging the formation of an independent Chicano party. Now let me try to put this into some context, so the comrades might have some idea about what I'm talking about.

A dispute has arisen in the Bay Area over the question of whether the SWP's call for the formation of a Chicano party is an established line of the party. I appear to be a very small minority in the Bay Area on this question. As a matter of fact, I can't remember where the party ever acted to take such a position.

Many of the comrades have argued that it flows naturally from our position on the Black question, and our call for an independent Black party. I don't think so. I haven't been convinced. I want to make something clear, comrades, it's very awkward for me to have a discussion of this nature. I listened carefully to Jack's report, and I haven't heard any arguments in favor, if that indeed is what he's proposing, I haven't heard the arguments in favor of us issuing the call for the formation of an independent Chicano party. So that I don't know whether or not I would be in favor of such a call, of us taking such a position, if I heard the arguments.

I think that there is a significant and qualitative difference, in my opinion, between the stand that we take in relation to the struggle of Black people for their liberation, and our call for an independent Black party, and the premises for it. I think that there's a difference, a very significant difference, between that situation and the situation in the Chicano movement. I don't think I have the time to indicate in any degree, any significant degree, what these differences are. But I think that the differences can be just briefly alluded to.

For one thing I want to make something clear. Two things I want to make clear. I think it's completely proper for the SWP to make a determination on whether or not to give support to the concrete expression of independent political action by an oppressed national minority. I think it's within the framework of established party positions on this question to do that once it arises -- it flows from the general question, our general approach to the question of self-determination, which is a right of self-determination, a right of oppressed minorities to make their own determination about which direction they're going to

take to win their freedom from oppression. So that if it arises in the Chicano community, the Black community, the Puerto Rican community, certainly, on the basis of the concrete situation, it's within the domain of the party to make a tactical decision on whether or not we should give critical support to one or another particular expression, of this phenomenon. I think in general we should encourage it when it arises.

I listened to Jack's arguments, preceding his statement that I read to you, that were the premises, apparently, and he seemed to indicate that there was some sentiment in the Chicano community for independent Chicano political action. The only thing I was able to put my finger on was the reference to a report by the CP of a convention of Chicanos, in which they were surprised that Royball was not endorsed by this conference. He did not indicate any concrete expression of any sentiment, with the one exception that it's on the agenda of this coming conference in Denver. I understand also that we had a little to do with the fact that it is on the agenda. How much is not clear to me, but we did have something to do with the fact that it's on the agenda.

I think Jack was absolutely right when he raised the question that "we don't know," when he stated that "we don't know what form independent political action is going to take in the Chicano community." Whether it's going to take the form of a national party or whether it's going to take the form of a labor party. There have been both expressions. There was one case where Chicanos allied with some Teamsters, or they largely composed the ranks of some Teamsters' organization somewhere in the South, where they ran independent candidates along the lines of a labor party. It was a labor party expression of independent political action.

Now, Jack says, "we don't know." I don't know. I think it's premature for us to settle this question, and we do in a manner of speaking, settle the question -- which we may have to reverse in a matter of a year or so if the mood appears to be going in a different direction in the Chicano community -- of which direction the Chicano movement is going to go. As I indicated in the beginning, I thought there were important differences. Some of these differences are, for example, the fact that my experiences, which are very limited, my experiences with Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, is that their attitudes of alienation from the white working class, or the working class as a whole, is nowhere approaching the attitudes of alienation in the Black community, and that the concept of Chicano independent political action to me appears to be a judgement that is highly premature, as not flowing from the moods that prevail in the Chicano community.

If you'll remember, that was an important factor in our decision to advance as an agitational demand -- that's what a

slogan is -- we've already begun to use it in our election campaign in California -- the slogan of a Chicano party. I don't think it was proper to begin in that fashion. But all things aside, when you raise that in the form of a slogan it's more than just an educational idea. It's an agitational demand, otherwise it doesn't have any meaning.

I don't think it's correct for us at this stage, I don't think we have enough information. Perhaps the comrades do have more information at their disposal. But it hasn't been made available to me. Now I understand there is a tour report by Joel in the folder that was given to us this morning, but I haven't had a chance to read it. Maybe that would answer many of my questions. But my general feeling is that if the report by Jack -- if its significance and meaning is that we're taking a position in favor of calling for the formation of a Chicano party -- I think it's a little premature.

Halstead: I want to touch on the point made about the Chicano groups and the nationalism that is expressing itself. A party has been formed in some of the southern counties of Texas where there is a majority of Chicano people, some 80 percent, and they are on the ballot. A separate independent party has been formed which has succeeded in getting on the ballot. The name of the ballot party is La Raza Unida, The Mexican Race United -- hardly a party with a name designed to appeal to the gringo vote. At this point they are getting themselves together.

Sell: Unfortunately we really don't have sufficient information about the formation of this Chicano party in the southern areas of Texas in order to make any kind of definitive or even partially definitive statement about what is happening with it and what our position should be in relationship to it. We're attempting to get that information and hopefully we'll be able to get it, but we don't have it right now.

But we do know a few things from newspaper reports and from some contact we have with an individual who seems to be in the leadership of the development there. And the first thing we know is that they're not all talk. They haven't proclaimed something and then sat back waiting for large numbers of Chicanos to rally around them to make it a reality. They actually went out and did the kind of hard work that must be done to get a party on the ballot in order to run a campaign and reach large numbers of people. And they did it without us; they did it without our issuing the call, without our sitting down and going through the election code manual, they did it without our doing the kinds of things we did, on a different scale, in Michigan, for example, in the initial stages of the Freedom Now Party. They did all that themselves.

They did not create a statewide organization which would

have required a tremendous amount of signatures, finances, etc. They're working at the county level, but even at that level, they went out and got the required number of signatures on petitions, they did everything they had to do. They got themselves, as far as we know, legally declared an official party and they're running candidates. This shows the seriousness of purpose and understanding of some of the mechanics you have to go through in order to build that kind of a formation -- which many groups haven't shown in the past. They have announced that they are doing this at this time, and on this scale, in order to build toward something larger. This again shows the kind of seriousness and appreciation of what you have to do to build a larger organization. In other words, they say that they are using the county campaign to build themselves a base, to mobilize forces, to gain experience, etc. in order to launch larger campaigns, such as state campaigns, in the near future. So this does show us something about them right from the start which indicates a seriousness and an appreciation of what it takes to really be what they call a third party in Texas.

Now, we do know something about the individual who appears to be a leading figure in this development. Comrade Marianna Hernandez has had contact with him. His name is Gutierrez and he seems to be genuinely committed to what we call real independent political action. He seems to be a very leading figure, not only in this particular movement but in the student movement in the area and he is in contact with Chicanos all over the area as far as we can tell. So in this sense, it does appear right now that the development there is a healthy one. We're going to try to find out more about it, we're going to watch it very carefully, as carefully as we can, we're going to establish as close contact with it as we possibly can, and you'll be able to read about it in internal reports and articles in The Militant.

By the way there has been information about it which has appeared in The Militant, either in the last issue or the previous one. It was just a straight objective report of what they've done to date. Jack referred to it in his report as well. So we do have some information which is getting out to the party.

Linked to this development, but not directly related, is the experience that some of our comrades had in giving some of our propaganda material to the people involved in the movement down there. I think you will recall that there was an article in The Militant about the Crystal City high schoolers who boycotted the school in order to present a list of demands and who were successful in many respects. Marianna Hernandez, who is running for U.S. Senator on our ticket in Texas, went down to Crystal City when they were holding a big rally to decide their final steps in this struggle. She went down there with two other comrades, another party comrade and a YSner. They took sample Militants to give out, because we'd never been down to

that area and we wanted to start off by giving sample Militants. We also took our election leaflet. On one side of the leaflet we had a statement supporting not only the struggle of the students in Crystal City, but similar struggles that had taken place in the area; and on the back side of the leaflet we had our total program, which emphasizes the war and self-determination and includes a point about independent political action in the Black and Chicano communities.

When the comrades came back they told with dismay about an incident which had occurred there. They handed out their sample Militants and were handing out their election leaflets when one of the Chicanos stood up on some kind of a soap box and began a tirade against these reds, these radicals, coming down there. "We don't want to have anything to do with these kinds of people," he said, and he called for everyone to turn in their Militants and election leaflets to make a large bonfire. Well this kind of shook the comrades up. This was the first time they had ever done anything like this, they were new comrades, and here all of a sudden they were confronted with this type of thing and they were pretty upset. But I asked them what happened. And they said two people turned in the newspaper and the guy burned them, and everyone else just stood around very quietly watching, but holding onto their Militants and election leaflets.

Now there's an old saying -- one swallow doesn't make a spring; we can't project from this one incident that we are going to have this kind of an effect or that we're going to do great things all over Texas because people are going to reject anti-communism, antiradicalism and accept us with open arms. It is just one example, and we'll see how it fits in with other experiences in the course of the campaign. We'll see if there's a pattern. As one example, I thought it was a healthy sign that the first time the people there saw the Socialist Workers Party campaign literature, it seemed to be fairly well accepted. I thought it was a pretty good sign in that respect.

Garza: Comrade Chairman, comrades, I cannot really describe how pleased I was that the political report spent so much time on the Hispano and Chicano movements. But I think the question raised by Nat is a very appropriate and a very good one because when we vote for the adoption of the general line of this report, I assume it will mean that we stand for and will push the slogan of a Chicano party as well as a Puerto Rican party. And we should not be surprised, and Nat is perfectly correct, in my opinion, when he says the anger and the alienation of the Hispanos in this country toward what they call "Anglo" society is not as deep as that of Black people. But that of the Blacks is very, very deep. The Chicano also has many, many beefs with capitalist society and that movement has grown and been inspired by the struggle of the Blacks. We must understand that.

In his report I think Jack touched on the fact that these movements were coming to life before the American revolution.

Now as these movements begin to take place, put forward their demands, we must also expect them to look about to see how to carry out these demands. They are not just demands that can be carried out by the seizure of a school during a strike. We pointed this out many times. The movement, the worker's movement, needs a political arm. Just as it is impossible to tell the Black that he must wait for the American working class to form a labor party, we cannot say that to the Chicano or to the Puerto Rican.

Now your experience is probably a very valid one. This idea of political action is not a deep one, not yet; but it is an idea that has been seized by the vanguard of the movements and that, to us, is very important because they will be the ones to educate the rest of the movement.

I think that the report by Joel on the intervention that we project in the Denver conference should be very important for the party as well as for the way that this movement is going to express itself, the forms that it's going to find. It would be foolish for anyone to say that this is going to be the conference of the movement, but this is the direction we want to see it going in. We want to see independent parties of the minorities. I think the reason for that is very simple. Our major task in this country is the destruction of the political apparatus that the bourgeoisie has used to dominate the working class and minorities of this country, principally the Democratic Party. And that has been a coalition, an unholy coalition of capitalists, workers, Blacks, Chicanos, landlords, tenants and racists. It is our objective to remove this impediment, this object that stands before the politicalization of the working class. And these parties will begin and accelerate that process. In addition -- and these arguments you have made yourself, Nat, in talking about what a Black political party will do to serve as a catalyst upon the main body of the American working class -- it will serve as an example. When Blacks are organized politically, when Chicanos are organized politically, the rest of the working class will not be far behind.

Now this conference is important to us for another reason. It can serve to raise the consciousness and understanding of the nationalist groups that exist in this country among all the minority races. Many have already arrived at the point where they understand or feel that political action, a political party, is important. The Black Panthers have pointed that out. They were going to form a political party. When you talk to people of the Young Lords, they say, "Yes, we have learned. We want a political party. We are a political party." However, as yet they do not project challenging the Democratic Party in elections. This conference could serve very well to begin this education nationally, because if we are able to intervene successfully and raise this question we will then be able to take the news of this conference throughout the rest of the country.

I know that here in New York it's going to have a tremendous impact among the Young Lords, because although they talk about a political party, they're still in a very reformist bag. They don't completely see the logic of a political party. They're still stuck in the game of a ghetto salvation army. They think it's very important. It does have some positive aspects. It shows their seriousness in trying to get to the community. But our job is to raise that political consciousness. I think that when the comrades vote on this report they should be very conscious that this is one of the things we're going to push.

Now it's true that the party by and large has not had the opportunity to discuss all aspects of this question and take all the ramifications into consideration. We certainly have not spent the time on this question that we did on the Black struggle. But that should not be very surprising. The Chicano struggle has not gone through all the forms that the Black struggle has. They are building on that experience and I think that we can do the same on the basis of the resolutions we have passed. Jack is perfectly correct; not everything we have learned from the Black struggle is applicable to the Chicano and Puerto Rican struggles. But this fundamental point is: they will have to have their own political expression.

Thomas: I want to make several comments along some of the lines that Dick just made. I think the important point in terms of being able to grasp the character of this whole radicalization, especially within the Third World community as a whole, is the point about the Third World struggles that Jack made; that is, the importance of understanding the different demands and the different concrete organizations of the different national groups -- not just talking about Third World struggles in general.

In part, the stress on Third World consciousness, while it is good, flows to a certain degree from the ultraleftism of certain elements of the vanguard of this movement. Certain aspects of it flow from the lack of appreciation, lack of understanding of the problems of orienting toward the mass. The vanguard of this movement generalizes and understands to a good degree that the struggle is not only the struggle of their own particular national minority, but the struggle of all the different national minorities, and to an increasing degree understands that it is the struggle of the entire population and working class. But they have this problem that we face in the whole youth radicalization, of substitutism. That is, they're not concerned with the mass level of consciousness, but center around their own level of consciousness. There is a tendency to focus away from the pure nationalist conceptions of the mass, which hasn't gone through this whole process, which doesn't understand fully, concretely and intellectually about the whole dynamic of capitalism. The mass is still very much moving around a nationalist basis.

The whole thrust of groups like the Panthers, and even the Young Lords, in terms of the Third World concept and the "power to the people" concept (which becomes more popular than the Black power, more known I think) flows from this lack of understanding. There is a failure to relate to the basic nationalist consciousness in the community, and also, to a certain extent, a groping, but an incorrect groping, toward the concept of building a revolutionary party. Even the Rainbow Coalition idea of the Panthers is the wrong approach to this problem. It shows lack of understanding of the nationalist radicalization. A lot of the Panthers here in New York have complained that they get more white people to their demonstrations, even when they hold them in the Black community, than they get Blacks.

I think it's important for us to understand the nationalist character of the radicalization of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and the others that is going on. Even to the extent that some groups still are on the level of integration, they are dealing with the national question as a political question, as opposed to just seeing it as an economic or purely class problem; because it is not. That's why we project in the Black struggle, and the report given today projects for the Chicano struggle, the calling for a Black political party on a nationalist basis.

We don't call for something because we think it will develop immediately. We're not abstract. We call for a Black political party, and if this report is passed for a Chicano political party, because we think it would be the best thing that could occur. It is the best thing that can occur politically in terms of meeting the needs of the mass radicalization that will go on. There will be other forms, of course. We're materialists, we're dialecticians, we understand that things don't always develop along the best possible norm. There will be aberrations that develop. The best possible norm, I think, would be for the development at this stage of a mass Black political party and for a similar development for the other national minorities. This would be best in terms of being able to reach, organize and mobilize the masses, understanding the national character of the current radicalization.

Nat brought out a good point that I think there should be some discussion on -- whether or not our slogan for a Black political party is agitational or not. I know when I first came into the movement until sometime after I joined the party, I used to think that our demand for a Black political party was an agitational demand, as Nat said it was. It's not. Our demand for a Black political party would be an agitational demand if we were agitating people to build a Black political party. We are not going out on the streets and saying "Join the Black political party, start a Black political party." The period today is the period of propaganda for the formation of a Black political party. We are not yet at the stage of calling for that in an agitational way. We are propagandizing for that idea, drawing together cadres,



getting that idea out in the mass movement and developing in the mass movement the base for that party as was outlined in the convention resolution, the Transitional Program for Black Liberation.

It's in that sense that we have to approach the whole problem of a Chicano party. If anything the indications of the concrete foundations of the kind of Chicano political party we want, the developments that are outlined in the report, are much closer than anything we have seen toward a Black political party. And it's because of the combined development that was outlined, it's because of learning the lessons of the Black liberation movement. The movement around Corky Gonzales that is calling the conference in Denver is a movement of a certain mass base in its locality. The sentiment for a Chicano party exists within certain sections of the vanguard of the Chicano movement and some people have come out and organized it in Texas. We do not think, as was outlined in Joel's report, that right now we are at the stage for agitation for this party. What we will be wanting to go to Denver with is an idea for the entire Chicano movement, the propaganda for a mass political party. I think that was implicit in Jack's report -- the propaganda stage, the different stages they're at. Before the formation of such a party we will see more of what is happening in certain parts of Texas and in Denver. We don't see the best strategy for building a mass Chicano party in Aztlan in the formation of groups around immediate agitation for such a party, but through propaganda and formation of cadres around that question.

And one of the reasons why I don't think it was necessary to have as full a discussion on the Chicano struggle as we've had on the Black struggle is because of the discussion that's gone on in this party over the past years on the national question in terms of the Black liberation movement. We have had the same kind of combined development within the party as happens between the Chicano and the Black movement. This party has been educated on the national question in a very intense fashion, not just in terms of the peculiarities of the Black struggle, but in the general character of a national struggle. We can apply some of the lessons about the general thrust of the national struggle that we've learned in the Black struggle to the Chicano struggle.

Britton: I also want to deal with the very important question of the developments in the Chicano movement and the recent call for a Chicano party. First of all, just on the factual matter, this is not simply a question that is "on the agenda" at the conference in Denver. It is to be a major focus of the conference in Denver, as has been indicated in all of the conference publicity. Most of the publicity of the conference has indicated that it has been called to form such a party. It is not just an idea that has come up and was put on the agenda.

Now, for the sake of dealing with the basic question, let us abstract from the question of whether or not anyone has called

for a Chicano party, and let's assume for the moment that no Chicanos have called for a Chicano party -- just as it is helpful to clarify some basic thinking to abstract from the question of whether or not anyone in the labor movement is calling for a labor party. Very few people are, yet we're for it. Of course, it's tactically helpful to us if some Chicano groups have called for a party. The developments in Texas, which we reported immediately in The Militant, and the developments around Corky Gonzales and the Crusade for Justice are very helpful in getting across our ideas on the perspectives for a Chicano movement.

First of all, assuming no one has called for a Chicano party, aren't Chicanos an oppressed nationality? Leave aside for the moment whatever Chicano you've talked to who may not seem as alienated as Black people you've talked to. Aren't Chicanos a nationality, an oppressed nationality? Now, some facts point to their being an oppressed nationality, but in other ways it is not so clear. For example, a couple of decades ago, most Mexicans living in America made protests and demanded to be called Caucasian on census forms, etc. They didn't want to be considered an oppressed nationality. They wanted to assimilate, just like most Blacks wanted to or many Blacks wanted to. But more and more Chicanos think that they are a national minority. This is the crucial thing, just as we said it was the crucial thing about Black nationalism -- even though all Blacks don't live in some little part of the country where we can conveniently draw a border and say yes, that's a nation. If people think they're an oppressed national minority, that is a very important consideration, and that in essence makes them an oppressed national minority, especially taken with all of the other obvious characteristics they have of being an oppressed nationality.

How are they oppressed? It's obvious they're oppressed because they're Chicanos. If you take the statistics on education, jobs, health, and everything else, you find that in many of these categories Chicano people are more oppressed than Blacks, whom we consider to be an oppressed nationality. They're also oppressed as workers. Most Chicanos live in cities and most adult Chicanos are workers, or would like to be workers. They're not a peasantry or some other kind of class. They're urban and working class.

Is their desire to control the barrios, to control the Chicano communities and to reclaim Aztlan, to reclaim that part of the country which Mexican people used to own and control -- is it progressive? Is it revolutionary, this desire to control the schools, to control the police -- all the things that were outlined in the plan of Aztlan, which was published in The Militant? Well control, that is, power by oppressed people, is what we're all about. And when oppressed people start controlling the institutions that exist in their communities, that is very progressive, that is very revolutionary, and that's what self-determination is all about.

Are these struggles divisive? Chicanos want to control the Chicano community; is that divisive or reactionary in any way, as Progressive Labor would say about Black nationalism? We don't have to start all over with the Chicano struggle; we've learned a lot after long discussions on Black nationalism. We can say, no, it's not divisive when Chicanos form a Chicano caucus in a trade union or when Chicanos attempt to organize to control their own communities.

Does the Democratic Party control the Chicano community? That's an important consideration. Yes, the Democratic Party does. Most Chicanos in most areas vote for the Democratic Party if they vote -- which is true of the Black community, and is also true of the labor movement. So we shouldn't be worried about the fact that some new political formation of Chicanos that might develop might somehow be some kind of a cover for the Democratic Party.

What is the crucial next step for any oppressed group, national group or the working class in the United States which organizes independent political action in the form of demonstrations and in other ways? The crucial next step is for these movements also to engage in electoral action. As we have said many times, it doesn't do a damn bit of good to picket someone one day and vote for him the next. So it's crucial for us to project this important step.

Now, is a mass independent Chicano party the best form to unite and mobilize Chicano people in street actions, in electoral actions, and all of the other ways that oppressed people take to gain control over their lives? I would say it is. I would say that we can certainly find a parallel with what we've said about the Black struggle. We shouldn't go through the Black transitional program and cross out the word "Black," and write in "Chicano," but at the same time we shouldn't forget the whole discussion and analysis that we've had of the Black movement. We should apply it to other oppressed nationalities of this country which have a lot of similar characteristics.

Can we advocate the formation of an independent Chicano party (or a party for any other oppressed minority) before masses of Chicanos do, or is it premature? Does it cut across their right to self-determination somehow? I definitely think we can say, yes, we can. We've got to have an answer when people approach us. Asian-Americans are going to be approaching us in California and saying "What do you think we should do?" They're going to be organizing demonstrations, etc. We're going to have to have discussions on the electoral question. All these things are political. Are we just going to say that all radicalizing Asian-Americans should join the SWP, all radicalizing Asian-Americans should join a labor party that doesn't exist, or wait for a labor party to come into existence, or join a Black party or Chicano party? There will be cases in some areas where Indians and Chicanos may form a common party because of special

circumstances, but it is not at all inappropriate for us, it is perfectly principled for us to project the formation of independent parties based on the oppressed groups involved.

Jones: I thought the question which faces the plenum was posed quite accurately, and that is: what's before us is the opportunity to become the very center of the radical movement. It's crystal clear, and the only question I have, and it can't be answered, is how big we will actually become if we fulfill those opportunities that are before us. I think it's important that alot of the discussion has revolved around the Chicano struggle, because it is precisely around something like that, that we're going to become the center of the radical movement and the sizable organization it looks like we can become.

Far from it being premature, I think that it's precisely around mobilizing the party and campaigning to support and build the Chicano conference that we will get the gains that we want for our own organization.

Now, I know alot has been said about the Chicano struggle, but I'd like to underline a couple of points. It has been said many times that our position on this flows from our position on the Black struggle, but I must disagree with that quite strongly. It does not. What it flows from is our understanding and theory of the national question as it applies to the concrete history of the Chicano people. That's where it comes from.

We say the Chicanos are an oppressed national minority. They were not assimilated into the United States for very concrete reasons. They were here first, and throughout the whole Southwest they established a colony which was in large measure just transferred from Spain through Mexico City. Conditions in the Southwest were very similar to Spain. Now, I'm not quite sure what the class nature of that colony was. But it did exist, and it certainly was not advanced capitalism. But, in the mid-1800's, you had the advance of the railroads, the gold rush, etc. which swept across the Southwest and found it very necessary to crush that economy that existed, the culture that went along with it, the religion, the ties of those people. They were pushed down. And ever since the Chicanos have existed as a reserve army of unemployed. What Joel said about them being particularly oppressed, even more so than Blacks, is quite true in many areas of the Southwest. One of the distinctive features of Chicanos, for instance, is what they term linguistic handicap -- they know neither English nor Spanish very well -- which is a manifestation of the oppression that exists. They are an oppressed national minority; therefore we support their right of self-determination.

Now, the entire history of the Chicano people has been one of independent political action. It takes many different forms, around essentially a nationalist character. In the development

of the American economy, as it came across the West, there were many, many violent battles, armed warfare in fact in a couple of cities in the Southwest in the last century. Chicanos have taken over cities and attempted to administer them and have administered them. Some of the great American "folk heroes," such as Kit Carson, were the ones that led the army troops into those cities to crush the Chicanos and kill them. Moreover, the Chicanos were the first ones to call a strike in California and carry it off. In the thirties the Chicanos supported the CIO wholeheartedly, not as Chicano nationalists; that is, they saw their interests as a nation and also as workers best fulfilled by the growth of the CIO, and they supported it quite vigorously on that basis. There are all kinds of other examples of this independent political action on the part of Chicanos.

We're not just discussing this in our party for the first time. We have a rich history of dealing with it, not as rich as, say, our history on the Black struggle, but we have dealt with it. For instance in '47 or '49, I forget which, we were quite energetic, quite involved in supporting Royball for city council. An organization came into existence -- I believe it was called the Community Services Organization -- which was a Chicano based organization, and fought for the Chicano people. And they had put forward Royball as their candidate, I believe it was for the city council. And not only did we support him, our party was quite active in building that campaign, even to the point, I believe, of going out and helping to get signatures, organizing the actual petitioning to get him on the ballot. And, moreover, Royball won the election. Then the witchhunt came, and we saw the degeneration of Royball to the point now where he's a Democratic Party hack of the worst order. But we were involved in that campaign, and the articles in The Militant are quite interesting. For instance, the word nationalism is used in the articles as a bad word, so to speak. That is, it says Royball's campaign is not nationalist. But if you read the article carefully, it's very clear that it was a nationalist campaign. His program is described as being in the interest of the Chicano people; he was running as a representative of the Chicano community, etc. And we were quite active in that campaign.

Well, with the witchhunt and the decline of activity in the labor movement, the Black struggle, etc., the Chicano movement paralleled them, and was not quite as active. But as the radicalization deepens, Chicanos, too, are starting up again.

A number of our campaigns in the last 3, 4, 5 years have put forward the slogan of calling for a Chicano party, most notably, in L.A. a couple of years ago. I believe that in the last election campaign in New York we called for a Puerto Rican party. And currently, I believe in both the California and the Texas campaigns, we're calling for it. So it's not really something that's hitting us fresh here. We do have a history of this position. And, I think, far from the slogan being premature at

this time, it's overdue. And what we must do, I think, is go on a campaign footing to build the Chicano conference in Denver and to give it as much support as we can.

Boutelle: Very briefly, on the Chicanos. They're the second largest nonwhite group in this country, and I think that a Chicano political party would be a very important radicalizing factor in this country. It could be something that the Black movement and other movements in this country could learn from. And it could do a great deal toward helping to make the American revolution. The Southwest is a very important area. So I'm all for publicizing this concept and working to build a Chicano movement.

Camejo: I want to say something very briefly about the Chicano party. I agree completely with what Joel and Lew have said, so I'm not going to repeat any of those arguments. I simply want to talk about the tactical question of how we should relate to the movement, what stage it's at in terms of the Chicano party. I think we must be careful on the question of whether this slogan is propagandistic or agitational. I think the situation is right in between the two and that we need a transitional concept in dealing with it. That is, there actually are Chicano parties in existence, there are candidates who are running. Yet, the stage is still mainly propagandistic. The basic point that I think we have to make is that we're talking about a mass party. A mass party. We're not just talking about a party, but a mass party. The basic concept is very simple. There are two revolutionary forces in this society that are going to make the third American revolution: the working class and the oppressed nationalities. We're for either of those groups breaking from ruling class politics. But we're talking about a mass break. We're not talking about some group that sets up a title, or a specific candidate who runs.

What we've got to do at that Chicano conference is say, concerning those parties that already exist on the ballot, "that's good. If a group of Chicanos wants to run a candidate, that's good. In fact, running candidates is in itself a propaganda act for the mass Chicano party." As long as that emphasis is put on it, you can see how we're not in any way saying, "hold back" by the fact that we still think the slogan is in a propagandistic stage. In fact, at the conference we may have to avoid using the word, "propagandistic," because it would be misunderstood, since the conference was called to act. But it would be a tactical error for the conference to declare itself a party, to create the shell without the content. There has to be a process. What we've got to say is that "we've got to go out to the field, campaign for this concept, run candidates, come back in a year, relate the experiences, and begin to build this party from the base up." That's the sort of concept that we should project. And we've got to participate in that process. A lot of things are going to happen in that process, a lot of things that can't be predicted.

Weinstein: I'm a minority again, just like I was a minority in San Francisco. I'm in the minority more often than I like to be in the minority, and I wasn't going to belabor the question.

No, I'm not convinced, comrades. I listened carefully to the arguments that were presented, and it appeared to me as though the comrades were knocking down a straw man, that they were setting up themselves. I tried to make clear without going into a big thing that I do consider the Chicano people to be an oppressed national minority. What do you have to do, spell it out? The question is asked as if there were some question here. Nobody has raised the question. That's not the issue. The issue is not whether they're an oppressed (national) minority. I think Lew is partly right when he says that the idea of calling for a Chicano party doesn't flow from our position on the Black struggle. I agree with that part of what he said. I don't agree that it does flow from our position on self-determination.

I'm not a big reader of Lenin. He wrote so much, I've got all kinds of volumes at home, but I very rarely open them up. It overwhelms me. But recently, as a result of the fact that this came up, I've been going through some of Lenin's works and I read a couple of paragraphs here and a couple of paragraphs there; at the same time I'm trying not to practice the policy of selective quotation. It's very easy to pick a quote here and a quote there, and I could make a good case. But what comes through to me -- despite my care I hope I'm not being subjective in my interpretation of what Lenin said -- is the clear impression, I think it's an accurate impression, that Lenin is warning specifically against this kind of a thing. That the revolutionary socialist party does not advocate a separate party for the oppressed minorities. In one place he says it in so many words, he says there's a difference on the question of separation of a state, the forming of a separate national state.

I've got to make one explanatory point. I don't know if the situation ever arose in Europe of the question of a party of an oppressed national minority. I don't know. I've never seen any reference to this problem in the movement. Maybe there is. Very likely, I suppose, if you look back in history, the nature of the European nations, there always were parties, there were bourgeoisies, there were separate economies, there was a different kind of a national minority than we see here in the United States, that we're dealing with in the case of the Black community, or in the case of the Chicanos. It's an entirely different thing, had an entirely different origin, we all know that. So that we can't specifically refer to any discussion and debate over whether you advocate the formation of a national party of the oppressed because I don't think it's ever arisen.

On the other hand, I get the very clear impression from Lenin, he was very hard on warning against bourgeois national parties. And warning against the workers of that oppressed nation he said, at one point, inadvertantly falling into an

alliance with one or another national bourgeoisie; of course he's talking in another connection, where there are big powers involved, like in Biafra, and Nigeria. Here that's not the case. In the case of the Chicanos or the Blacks there are no big powers involved. But he was always very careful to warn, and it flows from the whole idea of the independence of the working class, even on the question of the right of oppressed nations, and that's what we're talking about. He's also very clear about which takes precedence, the democratic demands, which this is a part of, or the socialist demands, within the framework of the demands flowing out of the needs of the working class in a socialist revolution. Which takes precedence?

It's an entirely different matter, comrades, to support the formation and the call that emanates from the Chicano community, and for us to call for it. These are two different things. I don't think it's necessary to wait until it's clear, you know, some way in which we determine; obviously there's not going to be a plebiscite. We don't have to wait until the evidence is overwhelming that that's the aspiration, that's the feeling, that's the objective demand, that's the form which the Chicano people wish to develop. We don't have to wait until it's overwhelming us. But I think we have to wait until there is significant evidence and as yet I don't think that there is.

I know that there have been Chicano parties ... there's a long history. Tony Camejo, who has done a good study of the matter, and made some important contributions, the little discussion we had in the Bay Area, these indicate there's a whole history, but of an entirely different kind of Chicano party. They were the remnants of the nation that did exist on the soil of the United States with the whole classic setup of an economy, a whole government, and sheriffs and everything else, or whatever they called them. I don't know whether they called them sheriffs or not. So what we're dealing with is something a little bit different.

And there isn't the evidence yet that this is the will of the Chicano community. One last point is this: there's a big difference, differences that there is, as far as I can tell a Chicano bourgeoisie, if there's not one here in the United States, there's one right across the border, that has an influence. Maybe the whole culture of the American Chicanos is different from the Mexicans, but there can be an interplay, that's not the case with the Black liberation movement. Another very important point. I think that in the case of our calling for a Black party, that was a very exceptional step on our part. I don't think there's any precedent for it. I think it was correct. And I think it flowed from an entirely different consideration, than simply the right of a nation to self-determination. It flowed from the reality.

We had to demonstrate that we were really for the fight of a nation for self-determination, the right of Black people to self-determination within a very special context. What was that



context? That context was a whole leadership ranging from the labor bureaucrats, the Democratic party, the Black leadership itself, the pacifists of every variety who were saying, "You gotta stay within this bag we put you in."

Which means no self-defense, we have a mass movement going, which is different from the advocates of self-defense now in a vacuum, but in the context of a mass movement, they were polemizing and restraining the masses from defending themselves against racist attacks, and from stepping out in their own interests, and they did this in what name? In the name of black-white unity. In the name, very often, and it always crept up, of an alliance between the Black movement and the labor movement. We had to cut through that, and I think that was an important consideration in our projecting the demand before it arose in the Black community, of an independent Black party. I do not think, comrades, I have alot more to say on it, but I'll stop here. I do not think that this is the case with the Chicanos.

Now, I'm going to vote for the report, with the reservation that I do not agree, and am not voting for the point that authorizes the party to raise the slogan and project the idea of the formation of an independent Chicano party.