

873 Broadway
2nd floor south
New York, N.Y. 10003

October 13, 1969

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are copies of the correspondence between Doug Jenness and Farrell Dobbs on the question of giving critical support to the Horace Tate mayoral campaign in Atlanta.

In the October 7 election, Tate came in third with approximately 23% of the vote behind the Democrat Massell with 31% of the vote, and the Republican Cook with 27%. The "law-and-order" Democrat, Millican, got 18% of the vote. Thus Tate will not be in the runoff election.

Enclosed is a copy of the Daily World's coverage of the Atlanta election results.

This correspondence is for the information of National Committee members and organizers.

Comradely,

Jack Barnes
Jack Barnes
Organization Secretary

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Atlanta, Georgia
September 17, 1969

Farrell Dobbs
National Office

Dear Farrell,

We are facing a tactical question here in relation to the mayor's race on which we would like your thinking. The question centers around the candidacy of Dr. Horace Tate, the only black candidate in the mayor's race, and whether or not we should apply our tactic of critical support to his campaign.

As you recall when we first discussed our campaign last April and May, we knew that Tate and maybe one or more other Afro-Americans would be in the race. At that time the relationship of forces behind Tate and the character of his campaign were not clear and we decided to let things shake out a bit during the course of the race. We also decided that regardless of our view toward Tate's campaign we would run our own socialist campaign, which we have done.

The qualifying deadline was yesterday, Tuesday, September 16, and we now have a clearer picture of where matters stand in regard to all the candidates.

First of all on the situation with our campaign. Despite our victory in abolishing qualifying fees for poor candidates and throwing the entire question into the Supreme Court, we were unable to obtain ballot status. There is a two year residency requirement imposed by the city to qualify for holding the office of mayor. Because the fight on the qualifying fee took so much time and energy and because we couldn't find any lawyers to wage a fight on the residency requirement, we were unable to win that battle, although everybody agrees it would have been a good case. Linda waited until the last hour of the last day before going down to qualify in order to extend the time of her "legitimacy" as a candidate. She filled out all the forms and crossed out the part specifying two years residence. The city clerk refused the forms. The entire scene was televised and carried as major news on the two main television stations. (We have received more coverage for not qualifying than some candidates received for qualifying.)

Tonight at a meeting of all the candidates, sponsored by the DeKalb County Democratic Women, Linda announced a major write-in campaign (copy of her statement is enclosed). The statement was picked up by one of the major TV stations and will almost certainly be in the newspapers and on the radio in the morning. The reception to her statement at the meeting and on the TV news was one of taking her write-in campaign very seriously.

At the meeting, for example, one of the minor candidates who entered the race a couple of weeks ago and has hardly said anything, indicated that Linda was "cheapening" the race to appear at meetings with candidates on the ballot. He was severely booed, and Dr. Tate and the woman in charge of the meeting came to Linda's defense.

The three major bourgeois candidates on the ballot are: Rodney Cook (liberal Republican), Sam Massell (liberal Democrat), and Everett Millican (the law-and-order candidate and a conservative Democrat). All three are currently elected officials.

There are three insignificant candidates on the ballot, none of whom has received even one-tenth the publicity that our campaign has.

The seventh candidate on the ballot for the "non-partisan" election is Tate, and the situation with his campaign is as follows:

(1) He is not receiving the support of the Democratic Party organizations in the black community. The major black Democratic Party politicians are not endorsing him; rather they are supporting Massell. This is the result of a deal worked out earlier whereby the black politicians would support Massell for mayor if the liberal Democrats supported Maynard Jackson, a black lawyer, for vice mayor.

(2) Tate is receiving very little white liberal support. Most of the support from this sector is going to Massell and Cook.

(3) His political base is the community organizations in the black community -- Tenants United for Fairness, National Welfare Rights Organization, SCLC, church groups, black teachers, etc.

(4) He has very little financial backing and his paid staff is very small. He depends almost entirely on volunteer workers from the black community. He has only one major office and is only now setting up two branch offices. All are in the black community.

(5) Although he is a Democrat, he does not promote the Democratic Party or any faction of it in his public speeches or his campaign literature. On the other hand, he doesn't attack the Democratic Party.

(6) It is clear that Tate does have support from a section of the black community, but how large a section we have no way of knowing. His bumper stickers and placards are displayed all over in the black community. Recently a particular incident of police

brutality against Afro-Americans has emerged as a major campaign issue and his identification with the protest has aided his campaign.

(7) As you can see by the enclosed platform leaflet, his program is not very good. It is a reformist program through and through.

It has only been in the last two weeks that we have been able to gather enough information to make the above observations. Given these facts about his campaign, what has been our perspective towards it and what line should we take in the less than three weeks remaining of the race.

Our line up until now has been to aim our greatest fire at the three bourgeois candidates. However, there have been a few instances where at public meetings Linda and Tate were in direct confrontation and disagreement on specific issues. This was a question of concretely comparing our transitional program to his reformist one. On one recent occasion, at a meeting of about 400 people in the black community protesting police brutality, Linda was asked what her position on Tate is. She told the predominantly Tate audience that she is opposed to the racist Democratic and Republican parties, that she supports the formation of an independent black party and all steps toward that goal, and if Tate will announce publicly his opposition to the capitalist parties she would be glad to support him. With that she received heavy applause. Earlier Maynard Jackson, the black vice mayor candidate, refused to endorse Tate and was booed off the platform. Since that occasion Tate has privately approached Linda twice and asked for her endorsement of his campaign. On one of the occasions he indicated that if she supported him he would be glad to have her go everywhere he does to speak (I'm skeptical of this particularly in light of the fact that he doesn't understand our concept of critical support and we'd be making a lot of criticisms of his program).

Now what should our line be for the rest of the campaign bearing in mind that we are now conducting a write-in campaign and the relationship of forces behind Tate is clearer. We have not discussed this question in the Executive Committee or in the branch yet but will be doing so on Friday and Saturday of this week, respectively. Consequently the views that I'm presenting are my own based on informal discussions with other comrades -- but they reflect the general line of the reports that I will be giving in the Executive Committee and branch meetings. We will send you a report on that discussion and our conclusions.

It is my view that to apply our tactic of critical support to Tate is within the framework of principle. Although this is

a non-partisan election, which is specifically designed to cloud over the relationship between the candidates and the capitalist political machines, I think that it is clear that the Tate campaign is objectively independent of the capitalist parties and has significant community support.

Thus the question becomes one of tactics. There are several tactical advantages to applying critical support. One is that we might receive a better hearing from militants for our criticisms of Tate's program and for our program for the black community, especially on the question of a black party. Secondly, it might facilitate our contacting black militants. Third, it might serve to demonstrate that we take seriously the perspective of intervening in the mass movement in the black community, especially in light of the fact that the alternative is simply a write-in campaign.

It is my opinion, however, that the tactical disadvantages outweigh the advantages. First of all is the element of time. By the time we discussed and decided in favor of critical support here, and then received P.C. approval, we would only have about one and a half weeks left of the election. This is too short a time for anything more than a token application of the tactic. In addition, we have the immediate problem of a perspective for the next week and a half. Second, we have the four and a half months of capital from our own election campaign which creates the basis for more than a routine write-in campaign. We still have a number of speaking engagements which we are going to bend every effort to hold people to, and in fact we are going to try to receive more. Third, during most of our election campaign, campuses were not in session. It is only the next three weeks that we will have the opportunity to take our campaign onto the campuses and use the political capital that we've accumulated this summer.

I've considered the possibility of running a write-in campaign and applying critical support to Tate. To formally endorse Tate, however, would make it impossible to run a write-in campaign that would be taken seriously enough to even obtain speaking engagements. I think that if Linda makes it clear in her speeches that we look at the Tate campaign in a different way than we look at the capitalist campaigns, and that the community organizations supporting Tate should take their experiences and apparatus from this campaign and use them for building a black party, we can use the example of the Tate campaign in an educational way. The approach should be one of friendly debate and of solidarity on points of agreement.

In general I am of the opinion that if there is a choice it is better tactics to run our own candidates than to apply the tactic of critical support.

There is one last point. It is almost certain that there will be a runoff two weeks after the October 7th election. If Tate unexpectedly gets into the runoff the question will again be raised for us. However, due to the fact that in the runoff totally new political alliances are likely to be established, we will reserve judgment on that until after the October 7th election.

We would appreciate your views or those of other comrades in the center on this matter. Several samples of Tate's literature are enclosed.

Comradely,

s/Doug Jenness