

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 6, February 12, 1977

Present: Blackstock, Garza, Hawkins, D. Jenness, L. Jenness,
Jones, Lovell, Lund, Miah, Rodríguez, Seigle, Stapleton,
Wohlforth

Guests: Heisler, Jaquith, Matson

Chair: Stapleton

AGENDA: 1. District One Election Campaign
2. Death Penalty
3. "Militant" Sales Campaign

1. DISTRICT ONE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

(González and Zimmermann invited for this point)

González reported. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

2. DEATH PENALTY

(Hart, Pérez, and Sedwick invited for this point)

Hart reported on activities against the death penalty
including April 9 demonstration planned for Atlanta.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. "MILITANT" SALES CAMPAIGN

(Baron and McArthur invited for this point)

McArthur reported. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

District 1 School Board Elections

by Nelson González, February 18, 1977

The District 1 School Board elections on the Lower East Side of New York will be held on May 3, 1977.

A Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese parents coalition has been formed to select and run a slate of candidates on a Por Los Niños/For the Children ticket. These candidates will run on a program calling for Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese community control of the schools. The 14-point program approved at the last coalition meeting is essentially an updated version of past Por Los Niños programs. (Copy attached.) It is a program that the Socialist Workers Party supports.

In the past, the SWP has been an active supporter of the Por Los Niños campaigns and has played an essential and respected role within the coalition. Members of the SWP have been part of the Por Los Niños coalition as parents, teachers, and community activists.

The Lower East Side branch and the New York Local Executive Committee think that this year, in addition to supporting and building the Por Los Niños campaign, we should run Nicomedes Sánchez as a Por Los Niños candidate. Sánchez is a member of the Lower East Side branch and well-known community activist on the Lower East Side and in New York City as a whole.

Sánchez has been a Por Los Niños candidate twice before-- before he joined the party. Both times he received very high votes. Several leading parents in the community have asked Sánchez to run again and we think he should.

We do not know if the school board elections in District 1 this year will create the same level of struggle and intensity as they have in past years. For one thing, the community has suffered a series of defeats as a result of the cutbacks and there is a certain degree of demoralization and resignation. On the other hand, there is still a layer of parents and community activists who are willing to fight for control of their schools and against the cuts. Also, the initial coalition meetings indicate that most of the rift between the Puerto Rican and Black communities in the Lower East Side has been overcome and that a united ticket and effort is possible.

It is important for the SWP to participate. We are considered a real component of the struggle, and District 1, regardless of the level of struggle, is still looked to by activists around the city for example and leadership in the fight for community control.

We think that Sánchez's candidacy can set an important example for the other Por Los Niños candidates and for the community. As a candidate, Sánchez can explain accurately and

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honestly where the struggle stands and what must be done to move ahead. He can explain the need for unity not only on the Lower East Side but for the District 1 coalition to link up with other districts and struggles. As a candidate, Sánchez, along with other Por Los Niños candidates, can speak around the city and the region about the District 1 fight and what it means.

It is not out of the question that Sánchez could win the election. If that were to happen, an SWP member on the school board would be a model to others.

1977 Proposed Platform for Por Los Niños/Save the Children Ticket

Introduction:

It is the obligation of our school system to provide all children with a quality education relevant to their needs; children must learn basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The educational process in District I fails to meet these needs. Seventy-five percent (75%) of our children read below national reading norms.

Our present school board is not representative of the needs and goals of the parents and the children in District I. The three POR LOS NINOS minority members on the school board have struggled against the ineffectiveness of the majority, but until the parents and community can secure a responsive majority our children will continue to be the victims.

1. The fiscal crisis in this city has resulted in the heaviest attacks against education in district I as well as in other communities. The difference has been that while other school boards have heroically made some effort to fight the cuts in education the majority on our local school board has stood by, taking a cowardly stance while our children's programs are destroyed, schools are closed, school day cut, and teachers and paraprofessionals fired. NONE OF THIS CAN BE TOLERATED! The board must be held accountable to the parents and community in District I.

2. The parents and children (at intermediate schools) have the right to participate in the selection, evaluation, and dismissal of school and district personnel, including the COMMUNITY SUPERINTENDENT, and in matters concerning use of funds and the selection/evaluation of curricula and programs. All school and district personnel must be accountable to the parents.

3. All principals, assistant principals, supervisory and District personnel who were screened by the parents and have been illegally fired without parent consultation by the present board, must be reinstated. No personnel be removed without the recommendation and consent of the Parents' Screening Committees.

4. All school board committees shall be open to membership by parents. It is the law that all board executive meetings shall be open to parents and community residents. Parents must be consulted for Public meeting agendas. The majority of our present board has blatantly and continuously ignored and circumvented this law.

5. Budget cuts cannot be tolerated in our District. There must be enough to provide for the educational needs of the children in this District. The Board should be active in ensuring adequate funds to meet the needs of our children as well as in seeking new sources of funding. The majority members of the present board have permitted massive budget cuts and have used existing funding sources to establish discriminatory hiring and firing practices. It is the obligation of the board to investigate and ensure to the parents that every source of funding available has been exhausted.

6. Bilingual, Black Studies and multi-cultural education should be available to all children. Every child should have the right to learn in the child's dominant language and the right to learn about their own culture. The composition of the teachers and paraprofessionals in these programs should reflect the cultural background and language of these children. Programs that have been cut by the board majority should be restored and further expanded. 334,000.00 in Federal funds to implement Bilingual programs under Title 7 was refused by this majority causing the program which has existed in our district for 6 years to be dismantled!

7. Job security of paraprofessionals, bi-lingual, Black Studies teachers and community workers in the schools should be protected by including them in the permanent (tax levy) educational budget instead of year-to-year Federal or State funding. All paraprofessionals, bilingual and Black Studies teachers dismissed by the present board must be reinstated.

8. All manifestations of racism must be eliminated from our schools. This means striving for staff that more closely reflects the racial and ethnic balance of our school community, the elimination of racist textbooks, as well as the "tracking system", where Black, Puerto Rican and Chinese children of poorer families are railroaded into curricula which trains them only for non-professional, unskilled and low paying jobs.

9. Schools must be made attractive and safe for the children, the staff, and the parents by providing an exciting and relevant education as well as adequate community supervised and approved security guards.

10. No Schools should be closed. P.S. 122 must be re-opened! The present board majority ignored and deceived the the parents by allowing it to close.

11. Discrimination on the basis of sex must be eliminated for adults as well as for children. All school programs must be open to both sexes on an equal basis, and textbooks and curricula should reflect equal respect and opportunity for women and men.

12. Children should be educated to respect the culture and contributions of all ethnic groups and working class people.

13. Schools must be available on a year round, 24 hour basis to be vital centers for adult education, food programs, senior citizen programs, child care, health services, recreational and cultural activities.

14. Our schools should be open to all community residents regardless of whether they are citizens.

Report to Political Committee on 'Militant' Sales Drive

by Harvey McArthur, February 12, 1977

The spring sales campaign will be a bigger challenge to the party than we had thought originally. At the time of the party plenum, the Business Office proposed sales goals to the branches that totalled 12,000, but this was clearly overly optimistic. After the drive was discussed in the local areas, branches took goals totalling only 10,600. Thus we have set the national sales goal at 10,000 a week, not 11,000 as originally projected.

This reflects the fact that we have not had a major single-copy sales campaign in over a year. Branch sales have been low in general, and many comrades have not participated regularly in Militant sales. Newer comrades have not been involved in a single-copy sales campaign at all. Although the subscription drive was a big success, it demanded a different kind of organizing and participation than a sales campaign, where there is a weekly goal to be met over a longer period of time.

The single-copy campaign will help branches increase comrade participation and per capita sales and re-establish all the organizational norms of regular sales. But some comrades felt uneasy about starting off with goals as high as the Business Office had proposed. They felt their branch could not make them until very late in the drive, so they took lower goals that could be met and sustained earlier in the drive. Many branches feel that they may be able to raise their goal once they have made it several times.

Establishing regular plant-gate and factory sales is a new focus of this drive, and will take a lot of attention from local and branch leaderships. However, these sales will not usually be a large part of the branches' total quota. Comrades will have to participate in both workplace sales and other community sales to make the projections of the drive. Some branches felt that lower quotas would enable them to both make the goal and give the attention needed to workplace sales.

Like the party, the YSA has not had a major single-copy sales campaign recently either. They have to go through a similar process of establishing sales, so some chapters took lower Young Socialist and Militant goals than originally proposed.

It will take time to establish a high level of regular sales in all the branches, and we do not expect to make the 10,000 national goal in the very first weeks of the drive. Sales were very low during January, especially with the cold weather, and many branches plan to take several weeks to work up to the goals they have taken. The total branch bundle for the first week of the drive was 10,200--4,500 more than the week before, but not enough to sell 10,000 copies. This should increase as sales are better organized and as comrade participation increases, until we can make the 10,000 goal regularly.

Several branches have already indicated that they may be able to raise their goals once they have made the present one. By the middle of May, we may be able to go well over the 10,000 goal.