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THE LOS ANGELES ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By Hal Draper

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This review of the Los Angeles election campaign is written for comrades elsewhere in the field. As such it is intended not only as an organizational report of work accomplished, but as a description of a certain type of election campaign.

As a result of the experience of our campaign I have no hesitation in saying (and so, I believe, do the very few other comrades here who had participated in a party election campaign before) that the type of election campaign we carried on is the indicated one for our party branches in any city, given the present semi-propaganda, semi-agitational stage of our movement.

This is not to say that it is a "new idea." Quite the contrary.

If our experience has value, it is merely to demonstrate that it can be done and to describe the forms and methods by which it was done, at least under one set of local circumstances -- which circumstances, however, showed no local peculiarities that might militate against its adaptation anywhere else.

From this point of view, our election campaign had two salient characteristics:

(1) CONCENTRATION. The aim was: not to reach as many people as possible, but to reach AS SMALL A SECTOR AS NECESSARY with the kind of election work which is directed most immediately toward party-building rather than mere propaganda. And this kind of work is "electioneering" through --

(2) PERSONAL CONTACT and house canvassing, rather than diffusely broadcast propaganda.

Naturally, the word "mainly" should be inserted in the foregoing sentence. The two methods do not exclude each other but the number of our active forces is very small. At our stage of party development it is that which compels a choice in emphasis.

In running a candidate in an election, the party's difficulty has been to restrain itself from using the opportunity merely to spread a thin film of propaganda over a large electoral area. The temptation to do so comes partly from the opportunity, partly from the impression that bringing the party's name and face to the cursory attention of many people should stir at least a select minority to seek us out under their own steam.

This does not happen. The expectation is a misconception. This very general statement becomes less applicable in proportion as the social thermometer rises and certainly as we become a mass party of action; but we are dealing with the party as it is now.

We did not take advantage of all the possibilities that were before us in this campaign, not by a long shot. On the other hand, we

did realize those possibilities considerably more than we expected to at the start, given our scanty manpower and, especially, money. In last August's PARTY BUILDER, I wrote that the campaign projected "is somewhat beyond the reach of our present forces, WITHOUT, however, being beyond the reach of what we CAN do, given the will and the devotion and the energy which we must demand." As all party semanticists know, this is a diplomatic way of saying that the campaign as planned was mainly a mark to shoot at and god knows whether we can do half of it. But the most optimistic expectations were exceeded. There is absolutely no doubt in my own mind that chief credit goes to the type of campaign it was.

Lastly: We were not campaigning in an area that had been previously tilled by the party; we had very little of a base there to begin with. Whether the party follows up the campaign with actual recruitment depends on what and how much the branch members do now. What the campaign has already contributed is a first foothold such as we could not have gained in any other way in any comparable time. That is the only job any campaign can do; that was its job -- the follow-up is ours.

The following review does not deal, except in passing, with any political problems which we met in the campaign. The most important of these -- the question of the role of the bourgeois "race candidate" in a district with a large Negro population -- will be dealt with at length in a separate article.

The Conditions of the Campaign

Planning for the party's participation in the Los Angeles councilmanic election, just ended on April 1, began in the middle of last year. It turned out that starting nine months in advance was none too early for what we wanted to do. What this was is described in an article in Vol. I- No. 2 of the PARTY BUILDER (August 1946): "Los Angeles Plans a Pre-Election Campaign."

This article gave the background of the Los Angeles branch which set itself this project, the municipal electoral set-up, and the plan of action to precede the election campaign proper. To summarize:

The Los Angeles branch (not to be confused by easterners with the San Pedro branch which is only 25 miles away) was comparatively young. A branch in the city had been reconstituted only two years before, after some years of virtual non-existence while war-time work was concentrated in San Pedro. It had a largely inexperienced membership, few "old-timers," fewer "politicos," and no axis of activity. The planned campaign was naturally not expected to solve the basic lack of industrial roots but could play a role in providing a framework to integrate the branch's activity.

We decided not to take a flyer in the congressional elections of 1946, the ante being too high, but rather to begin immediately to prepare for the City Council election on April 1, 1947. The election would be for the 15 Councilmen, elected by Districts, but not for the mayor. It was fortunate that this was not a mayoralty year because otherwise we might have been tempted to jump into the city-wide contest, without the forces to conduct a meaningful city-wide campaign. As it was, we had only one candidate available, myself,

and the eligibility requirements therefore determined automatically the councilmanic district we had to run in.

This was District 7 and it was a break that it was one of three districts with a special claim for socialist intervention, since it contained a big chunk of the working-class Negro "Central Avenue neighborhood," as well as a more petty-bourgeois Negro section. We would, it goes without saying, have preferred to put forward a Negro socialist candidate in this district, as the party has done in New York; but we had none; the campaign, indeed, had to make the start for us. It was out of the question to follow the crassly opportunist line of the SWP in supporting the "race candidate" put up by the local Negro petty bourgeoisie (Caston). In spite of the formally "non-partisan" facade of the city election set-up, we planned of course a party and socialist campaign.

The election campaign proper could not start until January 27 when nominating petition blanks first became available. The projected pre-election campaign was designed for the 6 months or so previous to that date. We said its aims would be: (1) to publicize the name of the party and of the candidate as widely as possible in the district, so that they would be at least known when the election period proper opened; and (2) to build up our list of LABOR ACTION subscribers and contacts in the district to the maximum extent. (A by-product of this plan was that it solved in passing the question of how to follow up on LABOR ACTION subs: the election campaign would be the automatic follow-up.)

The Pre-election Campaign

Point No. 1 in the pre-election campaign, therefore, was LABOR ACTION sub mobilizations regularly in the selected district. Up to January, then, these took place about once a month, four or five being held between September and January, netting about 120 subs. This was not particularly good and reflected the level of activity of the branch as it was before the campaign started as well as the weariness with "subbing" that followed the then-recent intensive sub drive. But, although we had aimed to have at least 200 subs in District 7 under the belt by the start of the election campaign, it was a good head-start. The campaign experience later, in hindsight, made more vivid to the comrades the importance of this preliminary subbing. Those who follow after may take due warning.

Point No. 2 of the pre-election campaign was the publication of a pamphlet on "Jim Crow in Los Angeles," to be based on local material, to be spread especially in the district, for a few months before the campaign started as well as afterward. Some comrades at first viewed such a publishing venture as over-bold for a branch of 25 members in spite of our successful experience with the pamphlet on Smith, having not yet gotten used to the idea of Los Angeles acting as a dual or auxiliary publishing center. But especially after the National Office kindly agreed to set it up in type for LABOR ACTION (saving us the lino cost) we went ahead with it. A first draft was ready in September; it was mimeographed to be read for revision by comrades here, by the National Office and by a couple of local Negro leaders, the mimeographed copies also to be used to solicit contributions from sympathizers. However, to make a sad tale short, as a result of delay in action by the National Office followed by another two-month delay in the LABOR ACTION shop, the

pamphlet did not see the light of day until the week our petition drive was already under way at the end of January. It therefore did not figure in the pre-election campaign at all but came only in nick of time for the election drive itself.

This was a great pity and perhaps the biggest missed opportunity of all, besides greatly complicating the three-pronged financial squeeze that hit us simultaneously at the end of January (of which later). To have been able to push the pamphlet in the district for 2-3 months prior to February (and there was no good reason why the pamphlet should not have been out in November) would have been the very best preparation for the campaign. It is obvious, however, that if we had not initiated the pamphlet so long in advance, it would not have been out at all till the next mayoralty election.

The idea of the pre-election campaign therefore was only partly realized and partly remained...a good idea. An effect not yet mentioned but anticipated was that it also served to warm up the branch membership to start cooking on January 27.

Financial Foot-note

On January 27 nominating petitions became available at the election bureau and a \$144.00 cash filing fee had to be slapped down to get them. This was an unusually steep price for the democratic right to be defeated for office; but on the other hand, only 500-1000 nominating signatures were required on the petitions.

From the coldly financial standpoint, our whole election campaign idea was strictly a wild-eyed gamble to begin with. Actually the branch was barely paying the rent right along. We originally figured that the pamphlet would be published on a loan in the fall, that at least \$144 worth of copies would be sold by January to cover the filing fee, and that once that burdle was over, campaign-generated contributions would somehow or other carry us through the rest of the way. This might have worked out too, but --

First of all, since the pamphlet was not published in the fall, it could produce no money by January, but on the contrary the outlay to both the printer and the City Clerk fell together on January 27. Secondly, the National Committee opportunely decided on a party Fund Drive for January and, with perfect timing, neatly siphoned off about \$150.00 exactly before we had to break the bank to cover the already unexpectedly large initial outlays. (Not that we begrudged the money to the National Office, you understand, but it operated somewhat like a blood-letting before an athletic contest.)

How, in spite of all, we managed financially to run an election campaign at all is still not entirely clear to any of us; and the details would be boring, especially to the Chicago comrades who raised over \$700 at one meeting. That is roughly \$400 more than we spent in the entire campaign, including the "non-productive" outlay of \$144 for the filing fee.

Election Literature

To launch the campaign we had two pieces of literature: (1) the pamphlet on "Jim Crow in Los Angeles," about which more later, and (2) a four-page election folder.

As should be clear from the preceding, after sending in \$150 for the Fund Drive, \$144 for the filing fee, and \$110 for the pamphlet, we had no money to print any literature at all. We got out the four-page election folder in spite of that by utilizing the fact that one of the comrades had the use of a "Multilith" machine (pint-size photo-offset duplicator), on which he produced for us a two-color illustrated printed job, at the cost of a mimeographed leaflet. The main slogan was "Vote to Drive Jim Crow out of Los Angeles," "Vote for the Socialist Candidate," etc. The pamphlet already contained a specific program against Jim-Crowism in Los Angeles, which was reproduced on the back page of the folder; and we had drawn up a general 8-point city election program which appeared -- each point illustrated -- in the center spread. Within the technical limitations enforced by the method of printing and the cost, we aimed for a striking appearance with a minimum of copy, rather than a lengthy dissertation on the election issues; for the same reasons, the election program was kept down to eight short points briefly worded, the only blurb on the folder emphasizing: "Vote for a working-class, Socialist candidate, not for a capitalist politician."

It should be mentioned here that, in spite of our previous lack of knowledge and experience regarding municipal problems, the election program stood up 100% under the test of the ensuing election discussion.

It was our intention to use the folder during the petition canvassing and then produce thousands more for distribution throughout the neighborhood; but the latter half of the plan became impossible when our comrade lost the use of the Multilith before enough could be produced. The folder served only through the petition drive and for canvassing a couple of weeks after, when (just in time) the special Los Angeles page of LABOR ACTION became available to us.

The Concentration Area

A keynote of our approach to the campaign was concentration. At no time did we make an attempt to bring our campaign to the whole district, it being more than obvious that we did not have the forces to do so and still make the kind of campaign we wished. The district divided up, as far as social composition went, into four areas: (1) the east side "Central Avenue neighborhood," predominantly Negro working-class; (2) the west side "Jefferson tract," predominantly Negro petty-bourgeois; (3) the west side lily-white residential sections, predominantly white small home-owner and middle class; and (4) a more "plebeian," but not really working-class, neighborhood in the middle of the district. (The main white working-class sections of the city are not in District 7.)

Eliminating the third-off-hand, we decided long in advance that the first would be our main concentration, and that we would see if we had the forces to touch the second and fourth. It turned out that the east side area (#1) was our exclusive concentration, outside of a one-mobilization nibble at section 2.

Actually, therefore, our campaign took place not in District 7 but in the east end of the district only -- this section being about one-third of the district in area and in total vote cast. The

limited size of this area may be seen by looking at the map which forms the cover background of the Jim Crow pamphlet, between the author's name and the price; it is the quadrangle formed by Vernon, Main, 25th Street and the bottom of the cover (in clockwise order).

A street map of this area was mimeographed and used throughout the campaign to keep a record of activity done from precinct to precinct as well as to hand out specific assignments for block coverage.

The Petition Drive

This was the real start of the campaign proper. The period legally allotted for collection of signatures was January 27 to February 15, about two and a half weeks. Our aim was 1000 signatures. We girded ourselves for the usual grueling grind of "petitioning."

In the first place, we decided that we would not follow the New York practice of getting the signatures by button-holing passers-by on busy street corners; but rather, entirely by house-to-house canvassing. This decision was made in spite of our then impression that the former method was faster, and partly because the busy street-corners here are neither as many nor as busy as in New York. The decisive reason, however, was the fact that the house-to-house method, while it might be slower, would make the petition work an integral part of the propaganda campaign-- and not merely a legally-required nightmare -- since we could discuss with the people in their homes as we went along, at least to some extent, as well as sell and place our literature.

The pleasantest surprise of the campaign was the fact that the petition drive took only six days, instead of the two and a half weeks that we fully expected.

This was done by full branch mobilizations every day that week from Monday to Friday (the regular branch meeting being cancelled) -- from 5:30 or 6 to 8 or 8:30 P.M. (any work after that hour being useless) and on Saturday afternoon. Preparing the sheets for submission took all of Sunday for three of us, and they were filed Monday morning, the whole round being completed within the week.

The turnout of the comrades for this frenzied week was better than excellent, on the whole (the exact forces at our disposal for the whole campaign will be considered later). But since this was not unexpected, it does not account for the "pleasant surprise." The explanation, however, was quite obvious as the petition work was carried on. In addition to the extremely high degree of electoral awareness among the Negro workers due largely to the preceding year's FEPC campaign -- that is, they were acquainted with the petition process and what signing meant; very few signatures, if any, were obtained from people who didn't know what they were doing -- the over-all reason for the tempo of the petition drive was the response of the Negro workers to our "line." While comrades' selling-talks varied of course, they were mainly a straight-out appeal to put an anti-Jim Crow candidate on the ballot for a militant campaign against race discrimination and for socialism, with the party's record in the fight against Gerald Smith being a powerful point of support (reinforced by the Smith pamphlet).

Three things did not happen, to any significant extent:

(1) The street-corner button-holing approach of "Give us your signature, anybody ought to be able to get on the ballot, it's just a legal formality anyway, and be a good fellow" was not particularly effective or even used by most of the comrades; the main approach had to be and was on "what we stand for."

(2) The fact that the petitioners and the candidate were white, in a solidly Negro section, seems to have played a far smaller role than we expected, once we explained our line. The fact is that for many of the comrades, including those doing this kind of work for the first time, the percentage of people signing among those we could talk to was often as high as two out of three or even more, even counting the fact that we declined to take signatures from those who were not registered but willing to sign.

(3) The fear felt by some that the Negro workers' reaction to our line might be merely a wearied "Oh, Jim Crow - we know all about that" did not materialize at all, nor did we expect it to. As mentioned above, the result was quite the reverse.

Our petitioners were equipped with: (1) the election folders, which were left at every house on the street; (2) Jim Crow pamphlets for sale, beginning Thursday when it came off the press; they were instructed to show them in line with their sales-talk but not to spend time pushing their sale; in spite of that over 100 were sold in three days of this petition work alone; (3) sample copy of the Smith pamphlet; (4) instruction sheet; (5) contact sheet for names of prospects; (6) LABOR ACTIONS, and (7) the petition sheets themselves.

Considering a block as one side of a square (one side of the street), about 100 blocks were covered in the six days of petitioning. It should be borne in mind that there are practically no apartment or tenement houses here.

For an evening mobilization, all comrades reported to a given street corner in the district, where they were assigned nearby blocks from an auto used as mobile headquarters. Petition sheets and contact lists were returned to the car after each mobilization. The same procedure was used on all subsequent mobilizations in the campaign.

The quick accomplishment of the petition drive meant that the comrades' energies were not exhausted on this phase of the campaign and also that we could start other campaign work more than a week earlier than we had expected. It was also a big morale uplift.

Sunday Mobilizations and Pamphlet Sales

Beginning on the week-end immediately following the petition drive, we started a two-month-long series of Red Sunday mobilizations in different parts of the concentration area, plus pamphlet sales at meetings during the week.

Pamphlet sales were conducted at meetings, etc. in any part of the city, with preference being given, of course, to opportunities in District 7. This was necessary in order to turn the pamphlets back into money as quickly as possible, to hold up the sagging financial end, even though it might mean the diversion of some forces from

the campaign in the district. Some churches in the district were also covered on Sunday mornings. The pamphlets were placed on a few newsstands in the district. Pamphlets sold in the district were accompanied by election folders.

The Sunday mobilizations (from 11 A.M. to 2 or 3 P.M.), in which each comrade was again assigned specific blocks to cover, consisted entirely of house-to-house canvassing, with the exception of the last two before election day to be mentioned later. There were six such mobilizations for house canvassing, from February 9 to March 16. The comrades knocked on the door, opened up with the Jim Crow pamphlet and went through the gamut on electioneering. Besides general election propaganda person-to-person, the aim was to sell the pamphlet, leave the election literature, and cull out names and addresses of those most interested. About 150 contact names were handed in, in the course of the petition drive and (mostly) the Sunday mobilizations -- with comments by the canvassers -- divided between those it would be worth while to follow up and those who were merely to be mailed the weekly campaign newsletter.

This was the heart of the election campaign work.

About 125 blocks were covered in these six mobilizations. The comrades were armed with: (1) pamphlets; (2) election folders, and, later, the special Los Angeles issue of LABOR ACTION; (3) sample copies of the newsletters; (4) LABOR ACTIONS and sub blanks; (5) sample Smith pamphlet.

In the course of two months, about 1500 copies of the Jim Crow pamphlet were sold altogether, most of them in the house-to-house canvassing.

Newsletter and Press Releases

Beginning after the petition drive we began mailing out once a week a campaign newsletter (mimeographed on a Multilith-printed campaign letter-head) dealing with issues and activities in the campaign -- mailed to all contacts in District 7. The mailing list started with about 100 and rose to 230 by the end of the campaign. About six newsletters were issued.

Using the same letterhead, press releases were sent out every week to the four metropolitan papers and three Negro newspapers. This was done by the campaign publicity director, who also had the job of sending in a campaign story to LABOR ACTION each week. Newspaper interest in the election by the general press was weak, and only in the last couple of weeks of the campaign did we get a release into the Daily News. Two releases appeared in the Sentinel, the leading local Negro newspaper. One of these, especially favorable in its effect, dealt with the speech to the Crenshaw Chamber of Commerce attacking them as a Jim-Crow force, which was reported in full in LABOR ACTION.

Contact Work and the "Enlarged Campaign Committee Meeting"

Theoretically, while all this was going on, the comrades were supposed to be doing individual contact-visiting too. The Los Angeles branch has always been weak in this respect; and if, with the exceptional piling on of super-added campaign work, this were

no weaker than usual, it could be understood. But the fact is that this, together with and partly because of the weakness of the branch's political cadre, is very bad.

At the beginning of the campaign, we set a target for campaign contact work. It was a long shot to begin with, considering that this was our first election campaign in the city and our first work in the east side area, but it was worth while trying out, if nothing else as a feeler or experiment.

We scheduled a meeting for February 28 at the Elks Temple (located in the heart of the concentration area) which we called an "enlarged campaign committee meeting" and to which, during the month of February, we invited all contacts and interested people we ran into. It was not to be an "election rally" or a primarily propaganda meeting in any sense, but a gathering to involve contacts in the work of the campaign itself. We told our contacts, "Help us in the campaign. Come to the meeting on February 28." We received a great many promises and assurances to do so (not counting those made out of "politeness" or otherwise fairly obviously unmeant).

The result was so-so. Six Negro contacts showed up. This included three with whom we had been in contact before the campaign, but upon whom the campaign had a stirring effect. We got a better idea of the difficulties we confronted later on, as I shall mention, but I am still sure that better contact work, such as the Los Angeles branch lacks at all times, would have brought a more satisfactory turnout.

Just before this meeting, the newsletter went out with a self-addressed postcard enclosed, stating "I want to help in the campaign," etc., for anyone who was unable to attend the meeting. We got three of these back.

The Special LABOR ACTION Issue

The whole back page of the March 3 issue was given to the Los Angeles campaign. The page was planned so that it could be reprinted separately for mass distribution. We got 2500 copies of the 8-pager and 5000 of the single page reprint -- 7500 altogether.

With the exception of a couple of hundred which were distributed at a meeting, all these LABOR ACTIONS and reprints were distributed house-to-house -- left at the door or in mailboxes, not passed out broadside on the streets. Here again, the latter method could have "gotten rid of" the papers faster; but we considered that it was more effective for the people to get it at their homes, and it also provided us with a means of checking on where our propaganda was going and what its effect was. (See analysis of the vote.)

In this operation, about 400 blocks of the concentration area were covered with LABOR ACTIONS. Most of this was done in two branch mobilizations: the last Tuesday branch meeting night before the election being used for this purpose as well as the Red Sunday previous, plus individual assignments. I estimate that perhaps 75% of the concentration area was covered in this way.

March 30 Election Rally

We had decided at the beginning to hold only one election rally in the district, a wind-up affair the Sunday evening before the election. Here again we found that our judgment had been correct. What brought this home very sharply, and also provided a measuring rod for our own meeting, was the experience of the Caston Housing Rally on March 9, which is useful to mention.

The Rev. Caston was the Negro candidate in the district, supported by almost the whole Negro press, by the Stalinists, by almost all the Negro "big shots" of the community (professionals, ministers, publishers, lawyers, NAACP and National Negro Congress leaders, business elements, some CIO and AFL leaders, etc.) plus, last and not least, the SWP. He was billed as the "(Negro) Community Candidate" by his supporters, including again the SWP.

On March 9, under the sponsorship of a local Negro veterans' organization of the Stalinists, these forces held a Housing Rally at which "Community Candidate" Caston was the featured speaker. In addition, an imposing array of Hollywood and artistic talent, Negro and white, graced the bill as the entertainment attraction (Canada Lee, Karen Morley, two playlets, Negro singers, etc.), all receiving reams of publicity in the local Negro press. The hall seated 2000 The result was a fearful flop. There were about 65 present when Caston spoke and another 15 or so drifted in later for the entertainment; the total including many whites.

Our original feeling that indoor election rallies would not "draw" was confirmed. We felt this was due partly to: (a) the generally suspicious attitude of the Negro workers towards being "propagandized," not to speak of going somewhere to be propagandized; (b) the fact that people generally were more used nowadays to getting their election propaganda from newspapers and radio than from popular gatherings; (c) the fact that, given Caston's racist approach and lack of emphasis upon a militant program, the Negro workers of the district were not being stirred by the election campaign at all -- a condition which we could overcome only insofar as our personal and printed propaganda managed to reach them.

On March 30, we therefore considered our meeting quite successful when it was attended by an audience of about 35 including 15 Negro workers from the area. Moreover, the response of the latter at the meeting itself was extremely encouraging; many questions were asked, all remained to the end displaying great interest and approval of what we had to say, and many remaining afterward to buy literature and discuss further.

Of course, all our campaign work and house-to-house canvassing during the previous period had been the most important preparation for this rally; but outside of that, there had not been much done to build up the rally specifically. We did not have the money even to put an ad for it into the Sentinel. Five thousand leaflets had been printed and were distributed mainly on street corners; printed tickets were sent out with the newsletter. But very little or no individual contact-visiting was done for it immediately prior to the rally.

What Else Should Have Been Done?

Besides the lacks noted in the course of the report above, most of the things we wanted to do but didn't do were ruled out by the very annoying fact that there was no money. (Borrowing any further would have been simply asking for contributions under false pretences.)

I explained at the beginning that what was different about our campaign was its concentration on personal-contact work rather than broadcast publicity. That's fine as far as utilization of man-power is concerned. But an additional couple of hundred dollars or so (or even a good deal less) would have permitted us to supplement this with publicity media which would have taken little or no man-power. Such things are: (1) stickers and posters, (2) newspaper ads, especially in the Negro press -- very reluctantly omitted; (3) mobile loudspeaker, especially in the last few days of the campaign; (4) bill-boards. All these media would have been especially effective on the basis of our principle of concentration. More money would also have permitted a wider mailing of the weekly newsletter.

It is not at all my intention to depreciate the usefulness of these publicity methods as a means of providing a context in the neighborhood for our personal-contact work. If looked at in that light, they have a role to play even in our kind of campaign, not only as far as the size of the vote is concerned but also as an aid in using the campaign for party-building. This is so because the people heard of us in the campaign mainly when we came to their door or when they saw the special LABOR ACTION. They did not see us where they saw the other leading candidates -- in ads, bill-boards, posters, etc. We would have been more effective at their door if the more conventional means of electioneering had already established us in their minds as "in the running." It is in this sense that broadcast publicity can be a supplement. It is important to make this point in order to avoid a too one-sided view of this type of campaign.

Outside of our house canvassing we reached the people mainly with the distribution of the special LABOR ACTION. This was the only over-all free distribution of the campaign -- one only, and in the last couple of weeks of the campaign only! Obviously not enough-- a similar wide-distribution coverage with another piece of literature should have been done in the earlier part of the campaign. This was our intention with regard to the election folder, but we did not have the money to get it out in the quantity required. If we had had the money, our available man-power would have been strained to the utmost to accomplish it, but we would have tried.

During most of the campaign, we also cudgled our brains for an idea for some "action" which would point up our campaign and net us publicity. Reserving the details, we did not think of a method that was within our means nor of a situation that we could take advantage of in that respect (like a particular case of police brutality against minorities occurring at the right time, etc.). A series of disgraceful police raids towards the end of the campaign might have provided the opportunity if they had occurred earlier.

Branch Organization during the Campaign

Available Man-Power and the Response of the Comrades

Of one thing there is no doubt at all; and that is that in toto the activity-level of the comrades during the campaign was extremely high. That goes not only by comparison with previous activity here, and not only by comparison with experience in New York election campaigns, but even with reference to "absolute" standards of what could humanly be expected of individual comrades with given problems and difficulties (like illness, babies, working-hours, etc.). That this is obviously so is shown by the amount of work that a relative handful of people accomplished.

The branch has 27 members on the books. Of these, 2 are only formally attached inasmuch as they now live in other parts of the state, leaving 25 members in Los Angeles. Of these two more were physically incapacitated during the period of the campaign, leaving 23 available on their feet.

Of this number, sixteen (making necessary allowance for the aforesaid illness, babies and working-hours) varied in activity from very good to excellent to wonderful, the large majority being at least "excellent." Three more were only partially active, mostly for understandable but not mandatory reasons. That leaves 4 who were inactive, 3 of whom came to at least two mobilizations and did some other kind of work during the period.

It should be mentioned that during the two months of the campaign there were 15 mobilizations held, this being only part of the work of the campaign. In the course of these mobilizations, the comrades spoke to between 3000 and 4000 Negro workers at their door in the process of canvassing.

Division of Work

Given the composition and size of the branch and of its leading cadre, the organizer was also the "campaign manager." An Executive member who did not work acted as "assistant organizer" during the campaign, this including not only branch details outside of the campaign but also many campaign details and contact work. The regular literature agent also handled the sale of the Jim Crow pamphlet at meetings, newsstands, etc. The work of the campaign publicity director has been described. Another comrade was in charge of getting financial contributions. The regular educational director functioned as such.

Functioning of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met twice a week: a long 2 or 3 hour meeting every Sunday afternoon following the weekly mobilization, and a short consultation before branch meetings. Without the excellent functioning of the Executive during this period, the branch meetings would have been impossibly congested.

Branch Meetings

The press of business at branch meetings during the campaign was simply immense. This was so because: (a) We did not adopt the way

out of voting "full power to the Executive" and using branch meetings only for instructions -- an expedient which is all right if necessary but really less effective in the long run if it is at all possible to get along without it. While the Executive Committee came in with fully worked-out plans and proposals for each period and week ahead, they were gone over with the membership as a whole; the over-all effect was to keep the comrades more on their toes. (b) We had just about gotten started when the new unity developments hit us, as everybody else, like a ton of bricks. A part of every business meeting had to be devoted to an informational report on local and national developments and some discussion. (c) The Gates tour and preparations for it came smack in the middle of the campaign. While a national tour is welcome at any time, it is still a fact that the tour did not dovetail with our campaign activities and objectives as much as abstract considerations might lead one to believe, or as much as it might have in the Chicago campaign. However, it ought to be mentioned at this point that the social affair held for Gates on March 15 was very well attended by campaign contacts. (d) Business meetings were further complicated by the fact that the campaign raised for us a couple of political questions which had to be discussed and decided to arrive at a policy. These related to the SWP policy of supporting Caston as a bourgeois racist candidate, and to the question of support to certain "union-sponsored" candidates in other districts.

Yet, in spite of all, we even managed to hold educationals at branch meetings; at one, a long initial report on the new unity developments was the educational, and, if I am not mistaken, some kind of educational was skipped at only one meeting. Branch meetings continued to end near 10 or at the latest 10:30, but they started at 8 sharp.

Two branch meetings (the first and last of the campaign) were, according to plan, turned into neighborhood mobilizations -- the first to give the petition drive a send-off and the last in the final week of the campaign.

Branch Educationals

Our plan was, during the campaign, to have all educationals connected with the work going on. One of these was on the Stalinist line on the Negro struggle, and another was on the Cannonite line of supporting bourgeois Negro candidates like Caston. Two others were planned; among other things, the unity events and the Gates tour broke in on the plan.

Analysis of the Vote

As reported in LABOR ACTION, the vote we got well exceeded our expectations, to put it moderately. The vote was 286 (District 7 being about 1/15 of the city).

We had an objective measurement on expectations, too. Just before the vote was counted, I put the following scale before the branch:- 50 votes: so-so... 75: pretty fair... 100: good... 150: very good... 200: wonderful... 300: miraculous... 400: impossible.... A "pool" taken up among the comrades disclosed that the estimates (backed by 50%) ran from 30 to 150, with the exception of the winner who took a flyer on 251 despite his better judgment.

The only thing we had to go on was that in the previous city election, the SWP candidate for mayor had gotten only 62 votes in District 7 (with an organization boasting 150 book members, radio programs, etc.) and that in 1946 the very powerful CP organization had gotten only 333 votes for its write-in candidate for governor.

After the results were in, the branch received a three-page statistical analysis of the vote, by precincts, which confirmed with amazing closeness and clarity what we felt should have been true about our campaign. Because of the type of activity conducted, we could objectively divide our east side concentration area into five groups of precincts, depending on how much work had been done on each precinct -- from precincts which had been hit by all we had (petition drive, Sunday mobilization, LABOR ACTION, etc.) to precincts that had not been touched.

What stood out was that the vote we received followed with remarkable faithfulness the amount of work put in on each precinct, the figures showing the trend without variation from one group to the next. If this does not seem remarkable to our dear reader, then it is because we have had different experiences in life... and in campaigns. Most of all, to those who worked in the campaign, it gives the feeling of the immediacy of the connection between grueling work put in and its effect upon the workers, and of what still can be accomplished. Few if any of our votes were "accidental" or adventitious; by and large they were the result of a political impact. The very character of our campaign, with its almost total lack of general broadcast propaganda, points to that; the analysis of the vote confirms it.

Follow Up

As stated at the beginning, if we do not recruit a single worker to the party as the result of the campaign, it will be our fault, not the campaign's. Unlike the situation of a mass party of action, no action or campaign can by itself recruit to our party -- it can only give the possibility of recruiting. This takes personal contacting and visiting and follow-up to carry through and I have already stated twice that the Los Angeles branch has been very weak in this respect. The campaign had a very good effect upon our existing Negro contacts; it gives us a real foot-hold among workers in the district, where we started with scarcely a look-in; it has been a lift to the morale of the comrades (because -- to take the risk of being very frank -- we think we did a darn good job).

Our immediate follow-up is taking the form of trying to organize old and new-found contacts from the campaign into a party class. (Plus turning every campaign contact into at least a LABOR ACTION subscriber.) If we can get enough intensive work in this direction from the comrades now, we will recruit. Otherwise we will have to rest content for the nonce with the lesser gains of the campaign, of which there are many.

ANALYSIS OF DRAPER VOTE IN EAST SIDE AREA OF DISTRICT 7
ACCORDING TO DEGREE OF CONCENTRATION - - - BY PRECINCTS

	Total Vote Cast	No. of Prec.	WP Vote	Aver. Vote per Prec.	% of Total Vote
"A"	1003	7	49	7.0	4.89 %
"B"	1224	9	33	3.67	2.70 %
"C"	2512	20	63	3.15	2.58 %
"D"	1293	12	25	1.92	1.86 %
"O"	2535	21	31	1.48	1.22 %
A/B/C/D	6032	48	168	3.5	2.79 %
A/B/C	4739	36	145	4.03	3.06 %
TOTAL	8567	69	199	2.89	2.32 %

NOTES

- (1) Area here considered is that part of District 7 east of Main Street - the "Central Avenue" district." With the exception of one mobilization, all campaign work took place within this area.
- (2) In order to arrive at the breakdown given above, all precincts in this area were first divided in accordance with the amount of work done affecting each -- i.e., extent to which there took place in each precinct a mobilization to sell the pamphlet or obtain petitions, whether the LABOR ACTION special page was distributed there, and also taking into consideration to a lesser degree whether there was a sub mobilization there in the months preceding the campaign. On this basis, "A" marks the precincts where MOST work was done, and so on to "D" which marks the precincts barely touched by the campaign. "O" marks the precincts where no work at all was done.
- (3) The important columns are the last two vertical ones. Note the remarkable closeness with which the number of votes obtained follows the degree of concentration!
- (4) This is shown by the downward progression (in the last two vertical columns) from "A" to "O". The same fact is further reinforced by the horizontal columns where "A/B/C/D" gives the results for all the precincts where any work at all was done; and "A/B/C" denotes the precincts which were more than barely touched.

REPORT OF SUB DRIVE - DETROIT BRANCH MARCH 1-APRIL 4

By Bill Miller, Labor Action Agent

* * *

The Detroit branch in preparing for the subscription drive rejected the recommendation of the Executive Committee at the beginning of the drive to increase the quota from 120 to 150. This was due to a feeling on the part of most branch members that the branch should not waste efforts in house to house work. In previous drives, in one of which our branch had a quota of 750 subs, we spent months in fruitless activity piling up huge quantities of subs and developing a list which was so large that contacting was automatically precluded.

In approaching this drive the feeling of the Executive Committee and the branch was that the emphasis of subs should be on quality instead of quantity. This, I in particular feel, is gauging correctly the strength of the party in the fractions and shops and other spheres of activities. The 120 quota accepted by the branch was therefore a realistic quota which permitted the branch to carry on this activity within the limits of its strength and without involving it in the wasteful house to house work. (I would like to say parenthetically that in the discussion on drives at the last party convention I was opposed to sub drives as we have had them in the past and voted against the motion suggesting this. I feel that the last drive was as far as our branch was concerned a real, practical and party-building activity.)

The drive took on two aspects: (1) house to house work and (2) fraction activity.

We planned a single branch mobilization for house to house work. This was held on March 2. Sixteen branch members were present. The mobilization was held in a neighborhood where we are planning to do tenants work. Not only this, but several comrades were specifically assigned apartment buildings and told just to work in one or two buildings getting subs and making contacts to possibly give us an "in" for tenants committees in these buildings. Here, again, all comrades were instructed to take time in talking to people; where a sub was sold, comrades were asked to get all manner of details and information about the subscriber and write them on the rear of the sub blank.

Our first drive brought in 18 subs and we realized immediately that there was a tremendous amount of sales resistance. From our own experiences here it is difficult to say what caused this resistance, but we do know that we never before encountered such difficulties.

There was another aspect of house to house work. We had accumulated here a large number of expired subs and the National Office had sent through many more. We separated these into neighborhoods, and broke them down into blocks. The result was about 10 maps covering three or four blocks containing from 20 to 50 expired subs on each map. The rest of the expirations, covering too great an area, were destroyed. These maps were assigned to comrades NOT in fractions. Here we met the same resistance. Several comrades

went out and spent whole evenings - the result only one renewal. This was consequently given up. Although it did not work in this drive, this is something that might be tried in other drives. It requires a good deal of paper work in arranging the maps, but it simplified things for the comrades and facilitated their visiting.

House to house drive proved to be a flop, but inasmuch as we had counted little upon it and put almost the entire emphasis of the drive on the fractions, we were not worried. The real reason for our one mobilization was to provide the branch with a "bank" of subs to carry us until the fractions started turning in their subs.

The fractions and the sub drive:

The breakdown on fraction assignments was as follows:

Fraction 1	-	20
" 2	-	15
" 3	-	25
" 4	-	5
" 5	-	10
Wayne	-	10
Misc.	-	13

98

Thus almost the entire drive was assigned to the fractions, 98 out of 120. No. 1, our most important fraction was assigned a quota of 20 because of the still comparative newness of the comrades in this shop where they have accomplished so much.

No. 2, our next fraction, is equal in size to No. 1, but two of the comrades are new to the shop, and one is new to the party.

No. 3 is our oldest fraction, which though small has accomplished much. Since in a previous drive they had undertaken a quota of 50 and accomplished it, we felt that a quota of 25 was reasonable. Wayne, where we have a number of comrades, was assigned 10 in view of the many contacts we have on the campus. The other quotas were assigned to shops having one or two comrades and two union forums the party was been participating in and working around.

All of the comrades in the fractions accepted their quotas. The beginning of the month, at least the first two weeks were completely taken up by local union elections. In our three major fractions, Nos. 1, 2, 3, all of them were competing for office, directing election campaigns, etc., etc. This left no time for the sub drive and only seven fraction subs were turned in, of these 3 from Wayne. Even after the conclusion of the elections, in the third week, the fraction subs were still slow in coming in. Comrades were completely exhausted by the elections, and were exuberant over our victories and were not able to push for the subs the way they should have. In the fourth week, the Executive Committee took up the question and this matter was called to the attention of the branch. The financial intermission at the branch meeting was extended to permit short fraction meetings to discuss only one point: the LABOR ACTION drive. Consequently, in the last week about 30 subs were turned in, in spite of the flu epidemic which completely

tied up our No. 1 fraction in the last week. The Executive Committee therefore recommended extending the drive beyond April 1 to April 4 thereby giving the fraction one whole week in the shop to work on the drive. This motion was passed.

During the last week, I began a campaign to constantly keep the drive in the minds of the fraction comrades to insure their not forgetting the drive. All comrades with telephones received a call every evening in which they were asked how many subs they had gotten that day, how many they would get the next day. All comrades without telephones received letters or cards each day asking the same questions. This little campaign only cost about \$1.25 and brought in 24 subs during the last week.

The result of the drive among the fractions was:

	<u>Quota</u>	<u>Results</u>
No. 1	20	13
No. 2	15	13
No. 3	25	10
No. 4	5	2
No. 5	10	12
Wayne	10	14
Misc.	13	<u>0</u>
		64

Thus, 59% of the 107 subs were gotten by the fractions.

The greatest lack in the drive in the fractions was the general failure of the fractions to meet and consider the drive as a serious point on the agenda meriting a thorough individual discussion. The comrades just handled the drive as individuals functioning in the shop. With the exception of the No. 1 fraction, the drive was not handled as a fraction activity. In this fraction, the matter was considered at three meetings, which may account for the fact that they did get the best percentage of fractions, 13 out of 20.

Comrades will say, "Wait a minute, what about No. 2 which got 13 out of 15?" Actually, this quota was set for a fraction of three members. These comrades got three subs, the other ten having been gotten by the newly recruited comrade in this shop. The biggest disappointment was the No. 3 fraction. But even here during the last part of the month, there was a tremendous layoff in which two comrades were laid off and the resulting chaos left little opportunity for the other comrades to work.

A few words must be said about the three comrades who brought in the most subs. Comrade Don turned in 12 subs of which 11 were from the No. 5 fraction. Seymour turned in 12 of which 10 came from Wayne fraction and Leo turned in 10 subs all from the No. 2 fraction. It would perhaps be more valuable for the party if these comrades were to write articles on the drive for the PARTY BUILDER than this review of the drive.

On the whole we are very satisfied with the results of the drive. Even though we failed to get our quota, the good quality of the subs obtained in this drive makes the drive a valuable adjunct

of fraction activity. Out of the 107 subs I feel sure that about 80 will have to be revisited in six months for renewals and will re-subscribe, and this all makes us feel that the drive was a valuable party-building activity without having the tremendous wasted effort of the previous drives. We feel in the future sub drives like these should be carried out.

One of the lessons which we have learned from the drive is the necessity for a consistent sub drive to be carried out by the fractions, or, as it has been called in the Branch Executive Committee, a "permanent sub drive." The value of a group of LABOR ACTION subscribers in a shop is so obvious that it must be mentioned again. Aside from the general political education that LABOR ACTION does, agitation and so forth, it provides our comrades with a political milieu in which to work, gives them a good, solid political base in the shop. Fifty LABOR ACTION readers in a shop of 1000 people can exert a tremendous influence.

Consequently, the drive for LABOR ACTION is not one which we must carry on lackadaisically until a sub drive comes along upon which we go through much activity for a month or so and then revert to our old attitudes. On the contrary, the drive must be carried out systematically throughout the year. LABOR ACTION must be a point on the agenda of each fraction meeting and it must be discussed seriously and not with the attitude of "Well, here's another chore for us to do." Comrades who are stewards or committeemen will find it a lot easier to get subs inasmuch as they can circulate through the shop, and those subs will provide an invaluable base for the comrades and the fractions. And comrades who are not able to circulate will find it more difficult to get subs. But getting the paper into the shop will build our fractions and the party. Our efforts must be directed continually at getting LABOR ACTION subscriptions. The permanent sub drive must become a permanent feature of party activity.

FROM THE LITERATURE MAIL-BAG

* * *

Chicago
April 17, 1947

Dear Comrade Judd:

Bob Ferguson, our organizer, has probably already written to you about the action taken to revive LABOR ACTION as an integral part of branch life. In brief, the work on LABOR ACTION was divided into 2 categories: Public distribution and sub-getting. Sara is the LABOR ACTION Director in charge of subs; I'm in charge of the public sales. Since I've been functioning in the past two weeks in that capacity, I thought a report on progress should be made.

1. Due to the extremely bad state of the branch, little or not work had been done previously. Hence, in order to even get comrades to work it was necessary to whip up some tiny bit of enthusiasm. I gathered some of the younger and more energetic comrades and held some informal talks on the need to build LABOR ACTION. They agreed to work for a change but were pessimistic as to what we could do.

2. Last week we held one sale at a meeting of the Citizens Committee (C.P.) which protested against the government stand on Greece and Turkey. WE SOLD \$5.25 worth of LA's. We sold out all of that week's bundle and most of the old copies on hand.

3. This week's sale was even better. At the CIO protest meeting we sold \$12.00 worth of LA's. Next week, I plan to hold three sales.

4. At both these meetings, the SWP and CP were out also. However, we sold more (according to all the comrades on the distribution) than both the SWP and the CP. Why? Well, I'll discuss that later. At the Greek meeting, the SWP had about twice as many out as we did (we had four sellers) but we made enough noise hawking for a couple of dozen and attracted that much more attention.

You'd have died laughing if you were on the sale at the CIO meeting. We had 7 sellers, the SWP approximately the same; the CP who only had 3 at first, gathered their forces and had about 30 out later in the evening. Any worker attending the meeting really had to walk the gauntlet. Despite this we sold many, many more LA's than were Militants or Stars sold. I doubt whether the SWP hawked even half as many. The CP purposely gathered their extra forces for the end of the meeting, because the Trotskyites out-numbered them at first. However, at the end of the meeting, the SWP'ers were gone and we were faced with 30 Stalinists. One old CP'er suggested loudly to the others that they should run us out, but except for continual heckling and dirty cracks, there was no violence. The CP'ers, however, commented that "those Trotskyites sure can hawk." In order to prevent us from selling at the close of the meeting, the Stalinists surrounded us football style so that we could hardly even see the workers coming out of the meeting. Nevertheless, we shouted over their heads so loud that we sold about another hundred, even though those who bought LA's had to come to us instead of vice versa.

5. I think our success was due to the hawking techniques we used. At the Greek meeting (not having the excellent signs as yet from the N.O.), we had our hand made poster signs which we wore around our

necks. At the CIO meeting we used the signs you sent. But aside from that:

(a) We made ourselves known. We shouted slogans very loudly and aggressively.

(b) Every time a worker came by, we'd rush to greet him with an LA, remembering to rush fast enough to get ahead of the Stalinists (it didn't take much effort to out-sell the SWP).

(c) We didn't ask "Will you buy a copy of LA" but rather put the LA into his hand confidently saying, "Here's your copy of LABOR ACTION the best labor paper in the country." Since we said this rather loudly, and since the paper was already in the workers hand, it took less effort on his part to pay a nickle than to return the paper. It is interesting to note that some of the comrades who were too inhibited to use this technique sold very little in comparison with those who did.

Well, here's hoping this'll give our branch a shot in the arm.

Best wishes,

Shirley Waller.

San Francisco:-

..... As regards the LA sales squad concerning which you inquire, there is really not much to tell you. The organization of the squads is somewhat loose, and we have never considered them as such. It was more or less automatic. The comrades have regular assignments to specific meetings, and extra sales are handled by everyone available. We find that if the same comrades sell at a certain meeting time after time, and manage to become acquainted with some of the members of the union (or whatever it is) sales increase, and sometimes a good contact may result, whereas if the salespeople shift around there is not a very good chance. Everyone in the branch who is able (who is not barred by occupation, etc.....) sells the paper.

Comradely,

Peter Marlow
Literature Agent
San Francisco Branch

Philadelphia:-

..... Regarding the literature situation in the branch:

1. The branch voted to offer all Workers Party Publications at cost in order to increase sales on these. I will get around to bookstores and arrange to have them sell our stuff.

2. N.I. - The late delivery has dropped newsstand sales from 18 to 6. However, we have exchanges of NI and FOURTH INTERNATIONAL with the SWP. Last week another comrade and myself sold 8 copies at

a Scott Nearing forum. We intend to use such meetings in the future but during the summer we won't have too many such opportunities. Our experience is that the NI sells well at public meetings.

3. Public sales of LABOR ACTION at union meeting have not worked out. We tried and gave up. However, we are going to try again at Westinghouse Local #107 meetings on a regular basis. The paper is well known there. Also we are going to try a weekly sale regularly at the Philco plant.

4. We have lots of NI and LA resubs to work over. We had tried to work these in with contacting assignments but the assignments were poorly carried out so we are setting up a resub crew of 4 - 2 with cars - whose principal party task will be resubs. Our new subs are coming from good sources, from personal friends, shopmates, vets, etc. so that if we could constantly get 75% renewals, the subscription deal would be on a healthy basis. This is what we are aiming at.

Comradely,

Frank Harper
Philadelphia Branch
Literature Agent.

NOTES

The Secretariat has called to the attention of the Editor the fact that there is no space limitation on material submitted for publication in the PARTY BUILDER. The 8-page limitation applies only to the PARTY BULLETIN

Despite efforts made to solicit articles for the PARTY BUILDER, the response of the comrades has been most unsatisfactory. For the past few weeks we have been waiting for an analytical report of the Chicago election campaign. We were finally compelled to publish this present issue without such an article.

The PARTY BUILDER can only appear when and if there are articles for it. Hence, the regularity of its appearance is, for the most part, the responsibility of the party comrades.

- Editor