The electors...
The Election

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liberal image. It does—tells better with its claim of bringing "freedom and democracy" to the rest of the world. If the liberals fail, as every sign indicates they will, the ruling class is preparing for that eventuality by consolidating its right-wing forces.

Prospects for liberalism are declining. In the context of U.S. imperialism, they are challenged by the forces of revolution on a world scale and in losing much of its economic and, hence, political maneuverability. Consequently, the question is not one of personalities but rather of objective economic and political developments. (Of course, I am宜昌ing his nails in church during services, his first day out of the hospital, isn’t being challenged by liberalism."

Adding to the problems of liberalism is the fact that people’s struggles are sharpening and spreading. The Administration, despite all the noise about the "great society," can’t solve the problems of the masses. The war sharply accentuates them, strikes are mounting and Black rebellions spreading. A good example of this contradiction is evident in the response of the "Civilian Review Board" in New York City. The liberals placed great stock in the Review Board gambit. With this device they thought they could say some time, they felt they could hoodwink the Black people into believing the police were being governed by an impartial body, which would lessen and halt police brutality. They felt this meaningfulness/creed would restore the Black people’s confidence in the state apparatus, and slow down or stop the rebellions. At the same time, they felt these "independent" acquisties would be just that, and see the board for the gimmick it was.

Two criticisms: police propagandists, and more so by the rise of Black militancy, thousands of normal functioning of the Review Board. Those who helped vote the board down. Apparently these votes had more confidence in the single tactic of brutality, thus the liberal leaders’ historic reliance on the dual tactic of terror mixed with a baleful of duplicity. The class outlook of the Jewish people—reflecting their enormous growth into higher economic brackets—prevailed over historic ethno oppression—namely anti-Semitism. The Conservative Party doubled its vote in New York’s Jewish areas in the election. In the election, the left, "new" or old was a minor factor. This is nothing to bemoan or even to speculate about. The "revolutionaries" have no base among the people—fortunately! Their greatest influence is within the "new left," which they try to mislead. The new independent forces have no base yet because of various reasons: they are new; they are centered among students and assorted intellectuals; as yet they have no mass line leading them to united action with sections of the working class; they still have not developed a revolutionary ideology.

For the left, elections in and of themselves have little strategic importance. U.S. imperialism will never be defeated at the ballot box. Socialism will never be voted in. The Trotskyite and Communist Party line of peaceful transition to socialism via "constitutional amendment" is a pipe-dream. This calculated illusion is designed to obscure the question of the eventual seizure of power by the workers, and the need to establish the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. In the short-range, the line of these opportunists acts to perpetuate ties of masses to current bourgeois heroes.

In addition, many working people, especially the most oppressed, do not vote. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the voting population at 118.6 million. Even with the record off-year election vote, only 56 million, slightly less than half (48%) voted. Probably a majority of working people did not vote.

Elections should be viewed by the left solely as a means of putting forward advanced radical and revolutionary positions to build permanent bases in important communities. The elections should be used to bring people into struggle with the system, not to accommodate to it. If election activity were to become a strategic instead of a tactical concept, it would be a big mistake. The vote that genuine radicals and revolutionaries receive when they run an occasional candidate can indicate the relations between the group and certain sections of the community. It also shows the level of activity carried on the year round.

But without the increase of class organizations and working class struggle in the communities and shops there is no way to overcome ruling class control of all the means of communication which dominate election results. Anyone who thinks that the mere running of a good candidate will gather in the potentially huge anti-ruling class vote is naive. A great deal more must be done if serious changes for the left are to appear in election results. If the left and revolutionary forces could win a number of seats in various bodies this would have a significant effect on changes. Changes will only come by sharp action by the working class and its allies on the job and in the streets. Only anything that the police will be controlled by pulling down a little lever in a polling booth. The police will only be controlled by workers who have their own power and have their own police. Some curbing of the ruling class ‘police’ might be accomplished by growth of political power and action of working people, but even that is doubtful.

NEED CONSISTENT WORK

Initial results by the Progressive Labor Party and others begin to show that consistent year-round work in key areas may show up at the polls. With a limited effort in Manhattan’s 69th Assembly District (see article p. 11 for more details) the PLP was able to get 2% of the vote. This was the ‘best’ effort of any of the independent candidates in New York. (We believe that had Leslie Silverman been on the ballot in Queens she would have done even better.)

The PLP campaign was particularly important because Wendy Nakashima ran as a community—not as an ‘independent candidate’—to a re- visionist in Brooklyn (although it is just as well that Aptaker’s charade of being a community is once and for all exposed). The best way to be for small favors), Wendy Nakashima also took a clear, sharp line on the war, and was able to link it to the other problems the people faced in the community. More important, out of the campaign came a clear case of giving people a clear choice.

This campaign revealed that consistent work revolutionary forces can build a base in the community around key issues.

Other real independent anti-imperialist campaigns got off the ground in New Jersey and in Connecticut, The Black Panther Party in Alabama made a real start (seearticle p. 12). They are all small but important beginnings. However, the ability to even get on the ballot is a clear field. (See article p. 11 for more information.) In Queens the incumbent, previously supported by the CIO, challenged Silverman. She had an effective campaign, One must keep in mind that the elections are the in- strument through which the bosses play a game, played on their terms. Advantages can be garnered only if elections are viewed as such and fought as such—fought to win power in the long run—one way or another.

Radicals must quickly develop an approach for '68. Otherwise the revisionists and their liberal allies will stampede the newly-emerging left forces into a Bobby Kennedy-esque rollercoaster. Conferences and consultations should take place now to organize the widest possible unity of the left for '68, around the following ideas: that the U.S. should get out of Vietnam Now; support for demands of Black power and self-determination; support of all strikes and other forms of improved conditions for workers; control of the universities by students and teachers; an end to the draft; lowering of food prices; reduction of all taxes on working people, local and national; and the huge arm’s budget, which enables the U.S. to carry on wars of aggression; an attack on the so-called ‘social benefits’ in every category, This program should help develop strategy for winning workers to alliances with students and Black liberation forces against the war and into struggles of mutual self-interest.

There are great opportunities to organize against imperialism. Millions of our people are in struggles against the long-range aims of the ruling class. These struggles, from the reduction of super-market prices to those against the war, should be broadened. Initial efforts demonstrate that people can be won to the left. Nobody says it is easy. Obviously the ruling class has many advantages. But the one thing it doesn’t have in the ability to satisfy the needs of the people. The long-range advantages can be overcome by base building among the people, using the line of our party.

Jonathan "peace offensive."