BY RIAN SHANNON, Socialist Workers party candi-
date for Berkeley City Council

On January 9th over sixty young socialists and
antiwar activists gathered in Stiles Hall on the
Berkeley campus to hear Peter Camejo, former
National Secretary of the Young Socialist Alliance,
and now a student at the University of California,
discuss his campaign for Mayor of Berkeley. This
meeting was an initial working meeting of sup-
porters of the Socialist Workers Party ticket headed
by Camejo, and following the reports the gather-
ing broke up into smaller meetings of several
committees that were set up to carry on the cam-
paign.

I have participated in socialist election campaigns
before but never have I witnessed the enthusiasm
that has been generated by our campaign in Oak-
land and Berkeley this spring. Already we have
received considerable publicity and are winning
more and more supporters every day.

Besides Camejo, the SWP is running Paul Mont-
tauk, 44, for Mayor of Oakland, Montauk is a
longtime labor organizer and Oakland’s labor movement
and was one of the organizers of the original

As candidate for the Board of Education in Berkeley,
the SWP is putting up Ernest Erbcek, a member of the
Berkeley Vietnam Day Committee, former chairman of the Berkeley YSA, and presently
manager of the University Book Store in Berkeley.
Jaimey Allen, 21, and Ove Aspoj, 21, both active
members of the Berkeley Vietnam Day Committee
and members of the Berkeley YSA are running for
City Council in Berkeley along with myself.

Our campaign press conference on January 4th, where we pointed out that our primary emphasis
would be to speak out against the Vietnam
war. The problems of the poor, the power of
racial, sexual, and economic inequality, of
women’s and gay people’s rights cannot be solved so long as our national resources are
grounded towards a brutal and racist war in
Vietnam. The first four points of our platform call
for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops, a
national referendum to decide whether the U.S.
should get out of Vietnam, defense of the constitu-
tional right of soldiers to discuss war and
speak out against it, and for an end to the draft.

The main activity of the campaign so far has
been an attempt to place a referendum on the
Vietnam war before the voters of Berkeley and Oak-
land. When Paul Montauk went before the Oakland
City Council with a proposed referendum he was
flatly rejected. A seemingly more favorable response
came from the Berkeley City Council. It was
proposed by Mayor Learned and candidate Camejo. Several
Councilmen said they thought it was a good idea
and the proposal was endorsed by Mayor Wallace
Johnson. Endorsement was received by several
persons prominent in the antiwar movement and
a committee was formed including Cliff Humphrey
of the United Committee Against the War, Robert
Sheer of Ramparts magazine, Robert Avakian of the
Community for New Politics, Reginald Zel-
nick of the Faculty Peace Committee, Bettina Apte-
ker, student strike leader, Janet Longmead, of the
California Democratic Council, Carl Frank of the
Vietnam Day Committee, Max Scherr, editor of the
Berkeley Barb, Peter Camejo, and others.

Instead of acting on the proposal, the City Coun-
cil appointed a subcommittee to study the idea of
a “poll.” When questioned by Camejo the Council
agreed that a “poll” would be fair only if it was
in the form of a vote. However, when a member
asked how soon the committee would report back
and whether it was their intention to have the poll
along with the City Election on April 4, the Council
gave no definite answer.

Without notice to the persons interested and with-
out even placing the matter on the agenda (which
is always posted in a public place in the City Hall)
the committee made a formal report back to the
Council on January 24 in order to recommend
that the poll not take place in connection with the
City Election on April 4. The official explanation
was that no “objective procedure” could be estab-
lished. However the reasons given did not relate
in any “objectivity” of the poll but to the supposed
impropriety of discussion of “national policy” dur-
ing a local campaign “concerned with local issues.”

As a face-saving gesture the committee is being
continued in order to “explore the possibilities

SOCIALIST
ELECTION CAMPAIGN
IN BERKELEY

of an informational poll which could be conducted
this spring.”

Meanwhile those interested in placing the poll
on the ballot on April 4 had drawn up a suggested
wording. Five alternatives were proposed:

1. I favor a more aggressive U.S. government
    war policy in Vietnam.

2. I support the present administration’s war
    policy in Vietnam.

3. I believe the U.S. government should stop
    bombing north Vietnam and should negoti-
    ate with all parties concerned.

4. I favor an immediate withdrawal of U.S.
    troops from Vietnam.

5. I do not agree with any of the above, I
    believe . . . . . . . .

By the time the City Council had ruled out a poll
in connection with the City Election we had collected
the signatures of almost a thousand supporters of
this proposal.

At present there is no legal way to force the City
Council to conduct the poll at the City Election,
but the committee for the opinion poll decided that
if the City Council will not do it perhaps the anti-
war movement and the civil rights movement
would hold mock elections for disenfran-
chised Negroes in order to organize people and
expose the lack of democracy. The antiwar
movement can set up tables at the polls on elec-
tion day and hold a “freedom election” to allow
Berkeley voters to express their opinion on Viet-
man. At the same time we would allow 18 year
olds to vote, tabulating their ballots separately.
It has also been suggested that at the same time
we could ask voters to sign a petition calling for
a special election in order to vote for a city ordi-
nance that would make “legal” polls possible in
the future.

We don’t know yet if we can do it because
the polls are open for 12 hours; and it will require
at least 500 people to organize the printing of the
questionnaires and the proposed city ordinance,
and to set up and man the tables. To gain the
largest possible support we are asking groups not
generally associated with the antiwar movement,
such as the League of Women Voters, to help in
this project. We are also making an assessment of
the number of workers the student groups can
provide.

“NO Tuition—Tax War Profits”

In order to meet a budget crisis California’s new
Governor, Ronald Reagan, has proposed a per
cent cut in the state budget, with a proposed 30
percent cut in the budget of the Berkeley campus
(where the Regents of the university were meeting)
to protest the proposed cut in the University bud-
get and imposition of tuition. Students showed
great interest in Camejo’s charge that the infanta
resulted from the Vietnam war was responsible
for both national and state budget crises and that
cutting back on state welfare and university education was related to the nation’s financing of
the Vietnam war at the expense of working people.

“Are millionaires going to keep their money and
get richer while students find part-time jobs?” he asked. In light of Camejo’s anti-establishment weekly, reported that the greatest student applause came when Camejo said that in order to balance the budget without charging tuition Reagan could lay off industries 100 percent, a

Liberal Opposition

In addition to the SWP’s slate of candidates the
Community for New Politics (CNP) is running
three candidates for City Council and one can-
didate for city auditor. According to its spokes-
man and candidate for City Council, Bob Avakian, the
CNP is a “coalition of radicals and liberals” that is
attempting “to educate people about the causes of
war, racism, and exploitation and to relate these
issues and to the structure and forms of power in this society.”

This is certainly a worthy objective. However,
in our socialist campaign program we go further and point out that "both the Democratic and Republican parties are controlled by big businessmen and are committed to the preservation of the capitalist system. In our opinion neither party will take any stand that runs counter to the interests of the capitalists who profit from war and racism." For this reason we call for a break with the two parties of "war, racism and exploitation" and support black independent political action such as the Black Panther Party in Lowndes County, Alabama and "general working class independent political action and the formation of a labor party."

How about the CNP? Does it "educate people about" the Democratic and Republican party's role as the props of "the structure and forms of power in this society" and point out their responsibility for "war, racism, and exploitation?" Does it, for example, agree with Stokely Carmichael who has said that "the Democratic party is the most treacherous enemy of the Negro?" Not at all. In fact the CNP is merely a radical faction of the Democratic party and is attempting to elect its "good guys" in place of the entrenched "bad guys." In one of their campaign brochures they explicitly state: "We will only support candidates who fight for our needs whether these candidates are Democrats, Republicans, or independents."

The CNP is the organizational continuation of Robert Scheer's (an editor for Ramparts magazine) unsuccessful Democratic party primary campaign against the incumbent congressman last spring. The $70,000 campaign began when some dissident Democratic party liberals became dissatisfied with the incumbent's support of the Vietnam war. Scheer is young and articulate and as a well-known Bay Area spokesman against the war he was able to win the support of many students.

A few of Scheer's supporters even thought that they could use the campaign as an educational

"Whenever a new radical protest movement comes along the liberals have tried to encompass it and thus make it impotent. This is usually done by corralling the radicals into some sort of Democratic party reform movement, but it can also be achieved by temporarily stepping out of the Democratic party framework to get the radicals huddled up with the liberals. In this manner mass radical protests have collapsed into a whimper. Through this political alliance the radicals are harnessed, silenced and kept from becoming a threat to the system. They become full members of that Community for Old Politics (COP) which has been around in one form or another for a long time."

(Peter Camejo in an article in the Berkeley Barb, Jan. 13, 1967)

vehicle against the Democratic party, but they soon dropped out of the campaign after learning that Scheer was not against the Democratic party—only against certain Democrats. They also learned first-hand the impossibility of attacking the Democratic party while supporting candidates in the Democratic primary.

It was clear at the beginning of the Scheer campaign that this was basically a reform movement of Democrats, and not a genuine break with liberal capitalist politics.

The further evolution of the CNP has only confirmed this. Its candidates for city council and city auditor were chosen at a general meeting of the CNP. Mike Shute, who was seeking the endorsement of the CNP, complained that before the nomination of candidates there should be a discussion of program. His suggestion was rejected and Shute himself, who asked for votes only if they agreed with his program of "breaking with the Democratic party" and "devising a strategy to aid Negroes in their fight for political power," received only 15 per cent of the votes.

An Educational Campaign

The YSA-SWP campaign was conceived of as primarily an educational one around the points I have outlined above particularly opposition to the Vietnam war and the need for independent political action. This, however, doesn't mean that we aren't conducting an active campaign. Our press conference received wide coverage on TV and in the daily press and over fifty articles have appeared in local newspapers about our campaign. In addition to the media coverage we have printed and distributed over 2,000 posters with the following slogans: "Let the People Vote on Vietnam," "Nationalize PG & E and Pacific Telephone," "No Tuition—No War Tax—100% Tax on War Profits," and "End the War—Bring Our Troops Home Now." We are also selling two buttons—one saying "Vote Socialist," and the other "No Tuition—Tax War Profits." As the campaign moves along we expect to receive even more opportunities to speak on radio and TV.

Recognition of the need for a labor party, an independent Negro freedom party, and a socialist transformation of America, will be brought about not only by socialist education but by events and struggles that will show their necessity in order to end war, racism and exploitation. We will be satisfied if in the course of our campaign we can convince a few people that real change and real power for Negroes and workers will come about only when they organize politically—indepentndnt of the capitalist class and its political parties.