Interview with Jack O'Dell

"In many respects, we have picked up where Martin Luther King left off, and taken it further. He left us a legacy of non-violence, faith in the possibilities of human beings, and a commitment to the idea that every person has dignity and worth. Martin Luther King was a master at recognizing the moment, and we must continue to do so."
The Poor People's Campaign, an encampment, and we have entered the political arenas with our own candidate 15 years later.

You note that there is a realignment going on that will change the two-party system as we know it. Does that obviate the possibility that over the next 12, 20, or 20 years a third party, a more working people-oriented party, might arise out of the germs of the politics set forth by the Rainbow Coalition?

Well, I think exactly what I'm speaking to, but I don't see it taking that long a period of time. I think that a continuing process was begun, and we're out the parameters of the Democratic Party that represents the successor, the possible successor, to the Democratic Party, either through a transformation of that party or a replacement of it.

I avoid, in making this analysis, the concept of a third party. I think that the American people have an addiction to the two-party system, and once you perceive yourself as a third party, you have adopted a category that puts you outside the mainstream. I believe in arms control, I believe in environmental protection, I believe in the right to vote and I don't believe in the two-party system. I believe in the right to vote and I don't believe in the Rainbow Coalition commander's idea of the form or replacement of it.

This is rooted in the historical experience of the U.S. You recall that there was another crisis in the 19th century, the crisis of the slave mode of production. The Whig Party was a northern-based business party, which objectively opposed slavery because wage-labor, rather than slave labor, was their basic mode of growth. But they could not bring themselves to be a consistent foe of the slave mode of production. They compromised. Because even though the Whigs opposed slavery for themselves, in the North, the fact is that the cheap production of cotton and the export of it was in the interest of these northern shipper. So the Whig Party could not make up its mind to be anti-slavery party. The best they could do was compromise.

But they reached the point where compromising on civil rights was valid. The party had to decide whether it was going to be slave or free, and they chose free. We have to make up our mind. We have to make up our mind and look at the options. The Mondale/Ferraro ticket is not our ideal ticket, but it is a live option.

The Rainbow went to the people as an independent candidate within the Democratic Party's primary election system. We will become the second party before the end of this decade.

How did the U.S. left contribute to the Rainbow?

I think in the later stages the left in the U.S. recognized the significance of this candidacy. I think they were slow to do so, but they also take initiative, because they don't yet understand the historical significance of the Black community in the U.S. But they have born saying you must make room for us and you must take the country in a new direction. The Democratic Party is saying that we will make an increase in the military budget, but we're not going to decrease the military budget. The Black community is saying what's that mean that they were ever antagonistic to the Rainbow. I just don't think they understood it in its earlier stages.

But I think that now the whole left is asserting itself, and that's a much more positive way. I think their slowness affected the impact that the candidacy and the campaign had in the election year, but I think there's been a lesson learned. I think that they now will have a genuine political readiness to help in building the Rainbow.

BLACK LEADERSHIP

But they will have to accept that the Black community is the parent of this child. It can't be a third party, a junior, co-equal, or junior, co-equal, party, or any other; the will have to be the first Black leadership, will be coming from the Afro-American society, the Afro-American leadership, to make the necessary contributions.

What about the socialist and communist left in the Rainbow, and any coalition or did they too have a lowered and narrowed vision of the significance of this movement?

If it's going to be too broad, then I would question their understanding of this development. For example, without wanting to do injustice to anybody, Socialists could not make a case for mayor against Harold Washington. It was the Socialists, who I think, copiously and largely, who thought that was a close race and theoretically they could have polled a lot of votes. But what did they do to it, that is not a contribution.

I know that the Communist Party said that the Black party was not a party, whatever and said that they should help build the Rainbow and stuff like that. But I don't know, and I don't know, that they put out and get out and get put out for their own candidates in the general election. There was absolutely no contribution. Some of them may have rhetorically expressed real support, and that's not the same as critical work, if they took the time to field the own candidates even if it was for lesser one, I would say that some of the critical work was continued on p. 13

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Jordon Recognizes Egypt, Boosts U.S.-Israeli Hopes

By Phyllis Bennis

The new tussle between Jordan's King Hussein (left) and Egypt's President Mubarak (middle) has breathed life into the long-dormant Reagan Plan.

Jordon's recognition of Cairo was the first step in what many had anticipated, the step toward a peace treaty between the two countries. The move was seen as a major victory for Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who has long been pushing for a peace settlement with Egypt. Hussein's recognition of Cairo was also seen as a blow to the Palestinian cause, as it was seen as weakening the international community's support for the Palestinian people.

The move was also seen as a major setback for the PLO, which had hoped to use the recognition of Cairo as a springboard for its own recognition by the international community. The PLO, which had been the main representative of the Palestinian people, was seen as losing its influence.

The move was also seen as a major setback for the Jordanian people, who had been hoping for a peaceful resolution to the conflict with Israel. The move was seen as a blow to the hopes of the Jordanian people for a better future.

The move was also seen as a major setback for the United States, which had been pushing for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The move was seen as a blow to the hopes of the United States for a better future.

The move was also seen as a major setback for the Arab world, which had been hoping for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The move was seen as a blow to the hopes of the Arab world for a better future.

The move was also seen as a major setback for the Palestinian people, who had been hoping for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The move was seen as a blow to the hopes of the Palestinian people for a better future.