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February 24, 1970

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND NC MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a report given to the Political Committee on
February 20, 1970 on the Chicano movement.

Comradely,

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National Office

REPORT TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE ON THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

By Joel Britton

The Crusade for Justice, located in Denver, is hosting a "Chicano Youth Liberation Conference," March 25-29, a major focus of which is to be the need for an independent Chicano party. A couple of days of the conference will be on the Chicano youth movement, one day on the independent Chicano party, and the final day called the "Congress of Aztlan."

Projected attendance at this conference, according to Crusade for Justice spokesmen, is 3,000, and facilities are being sought with that figure in mind.

The first Chicano Youth Liberation Conference was held last March, and attracted between 1,500 and 2,000. That conference adopted the plan of Aztlan, which is a program based on Chicano nationalism, the concept of Chicano control of the Chicano community, self-defense, promotion of Chicano culture, and reclaiming the land stolen from the Mexican people living in the Southwest, or what they call "Aztlan." (Aztlan was a term used by the Aztecs for their ancient homeland before they settled further south in what is now Mexico.)

Three Latino comrades attended last year's Chicano youth conference and participated in a rather large "revolutionary caucus" which proposed that the conference adopt a plan of liberation, a concrete revolutionary program for self-determination. They projected the need for a social revolution to abolish the system that oppresses them; outlined the double oppression Chicanos suffer as a national group, that is, as Chicanos and as workers, since Chicanos are predominantly urban and working class. They explained the need for the Chicano movement to not only be nationalist, but internationalist minded, and explained why it was necessary to build a revolutionary organization. There was discussion in the caucus and in some of the workshops on the question of building an independent Chicano party.

One of the points in the "Plan of Aztlan" is a call for an independent Chicano political party, on a local, regional, and national basis. The exact formulation used in the plan that came out of the conference was: "Political liberation can come only through an independent action on our part, since the two-party system is the same animal with two heads, that feeds from the same trough. Where we are a majority, we will control. Where we are a minority, we will represent a pressure group." And later on, under action proposals, the plan calls for the "creation of an independent local, regional and national political party."

Not much was done to implement these proposals until a discussion took place in November 1969 at Cal State Hayward where a Chicano Liberation conference was organized. Originally

this conference was to deal with many varied questions. But the focus was changed to center more directly on this question of independent Chicano political action. Tony Camejo and Froben Lozada participated in a panel on the need for a Chicano party, along with Corky Gonzales of the Crusade for Justice and others. Some of the other participants argued for supporting Cesar Chavez in the Democratic primary. There was talk at that time of Chavez, the leader of the farm workers, running in California in the Democratic primary for Governor.

The predominant sentiment at the conference, which was attended by 400-500 Chicanos, mostly young, was in favor of setting up an independent Chicano party. It was agreed that there should be a conference some time in the spring to form such a party. And on December 11, Gonzales announced plans for the March Denver conference.

This is a very promising development. An independent mass Chicano party is one of the necessary steps for the Chicano movement to mobilize their people, to break the grip of the Democratic Party in the Chicano community. It will of course have other salutary aspects, such as the example it will give to Black people and to the labor movement for independent political action. This is an interesting example of uneven and combined development, where the Black movement (among other factors) inspired the Chicano movement, and now we see the emerging Chicano movement building on the foundations laid by the Black movement, on the basis of a nationalist outlook. And now the Chicano movement is advancing toward the establishment of an independent party.

The present state of the Chicano movement would indicate that the most likely development would be the formation of a party in Colorado, where the Crusade for Justice has considerable strength and is the dominant Chicano organization; and in parts of Texas, where it was recently announced that in a couple of counties in West Texas a Chicano party has been set up and is going to be contesting for local elections this fall.

There's no Chicano group or coalition of groups in the Southwest -- in Aztlan -- that has hegemony in the Chicano movement. There are liberal Democrats of the Cesar Chavez type in California and elsewhere who have a major influence in some areas; there's the land grant movement in New Mexico, the Alianza, which is influenced by the CP. Reis Tijerina, the main spokesman for this group, has done such things as nominate Bobby Kennedy at the P & F conference and carried out a generally reformist orientation.

Gonzales is the other major Chicano leader, and is more and more coming into prominence. He is very well known, especially among the Chicano militants. He's a former liberal Democrat, who, as recently as 1964, opposed independent Chicano political action,

and was deeply involved in the Democratic Party. He has lent considerable support to antiwar developments within the Chicano movement and has been one of the main spokesmen for Chicano nationalism. Now the call for an independent party puts him way out in front of the other Chicano leaders politically.

Apparently Gonzales is one of the few Chicano leaders who reads much. He is interested in political ideas, he's been ordering literature from us and apparently reading and using it in his movement. He's the head of the Crusade for Justice, in Denver, which was formed in the mid-60's and whose concentration up to now has been on civil rights activity -- fighting against police brutality, racist teachers, racist principals, on housing problems, civil liberties fights, and cultural programs.

They have begun organizing Chicano workers, and are presently involved in organizing the sanitation workers in Denver, who are overwhelmingly Chicano in composition. They are also organizing postal workers. The Crusade exists only in Colorado, and only in Denver, although it has connections with other groups in Colorado, and around the Southwest.

Apparantly Gonzales himself, and the Gonzales family, is a major influence in the Crusade. From what we can find out, 20 or 30 families form the base for the Crusade for Justice, as far as being the main activists and financial supporters. They involve in projects and demonstrations several thousand of the 80,000 to 100,000 Chicanos who live in Denver. In the last few months, because of the high school actions they called in September for Mexican independence day, there's been an influx of high school students, and this has been a certain pressure on Gonzales, apparently, to move to the left. He's very sensitive to that kind of pressure.

We don't know too much about the leadership of the Crusade aside from Gonzales. They have an executive board that makes policy. One of the primary spokesmen for the Crusade during the last couple of years, a person who tended to be influenced by CP politics, has played a less prominent role in the last few months. He has taken a "Model Cities" job, and apparently because of that he has come into disfavor in the Crusade. They make a big point about not accepting money from the government or from foundations.

We also know that at least one person who was trying to push ultra-left kinds of activities inside the Crusade for Justice was moved out of the Crusade a couple of months ago. We were told that Gonzales used the Camejo pamphlet on how to make a revolution in the U.S. to counteract ultraleftism because of the problem of the Weathermen SDSers trying to influence the Crusade and some of the young Chicanos themselves being influenced by ultraleftism.

The Crusade has several public functions every week, one of which is a weekly assembly, a mass meeting where people can come and discuss problems, and where they try to educate people about political issues, about what's going on in Mexico, discuss antiwar actions, and so on.

We had some preliminary discussion in the administrative committee, and with the leading Third World comrades, both during my brief trip to the West and here in New York, and we feel that we should have the following orientation toward this conference and toward this development:

It's clear that our Latino comrades have already influenced this development and can influence this conference. We should learn from the Freedom Now Party experience in Michigan and nationally, in 1963 and 1964. One of those lessons was avoiding the kind of demoralization that can set in when goals are projected beyond what can be reasonably achieved in a relatively short time. We should avoid the projection that it can immediately become a mass party, winning elections, getting that kind of a base in a very brief time. Such projections would only result in demoralization when that doesn't happen.

It will be important to point out that there will be certain necessary stages of development. The key stage now is to propagandize, to campaign for this idea of a Chicano party, with perhaps organizational steps being taken in Colorado because of the strength of the Crusade, and as has started to happen in Texas and perhaps some other local areas. A Chicano party or Chicano slates, can be run in various state or municipal elections -- the most likely possibility on a state basis will be Colorado. It's important that the Chicano party should have the perspective of becoming a mass party, but that will take some time and effort.

On the program of such a party, we feel that such a party should start with the Plan of Aztlán, approved at the last conference, and should be fleshed out with democratic and transitional demands to lay a basis for mobilizing Chicanos, dealing with their demands as an oppressed nationality and their demands as workers. We will have suggestions along these lines from comrades who have been active in the Chicano movement.

Our intervention in the Denver conference will be a national intervention, organized by the YSA and party centers.

We have reported this development in The Militant and further material will be run in coming issues. A YSA pamphlet is being put out with material on the Chicano struggle, and a Pathfinder pamphlet is being prepared.

And, as I said, we want to get as many of our Latino comrades to attend the conference as possible. We have a good number and in the Chicano movement, Latinos who are not necessarily of Mexican

ancestry are more than welcome. They can participate in a leading way, as we have seen by the influence Tony Camejo and other comrades have had, as well as by the leadership role played by other Latinos who do not have a Mexican background.