

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

May 1, 1974

No. 10

NEC Present: Clark, Finkel, Hildebrand, Little, Mirelowitz, Perez,
Pulley, Welch, Whicker

NC Alt. Present: Freiwirth

Chairman: Finkel

Agenda: 1. San Jose Critical Support

1. San Jose Critical Support

Finkel reported on the recommendation of the San Jose local that the YSA give critical support to the candidacy of Jack Kurzweil, a Communist Party member who is running for tax assessor in Santa Clara county. (See attached letter.)

Discussion

Motion by Finkel: To concur with the San Jose local recommendation that the YSA give critical support to the Jack Kurzweil campaign.

Carried

Meeting adjourned.

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April 5, 1974

National Executive Committee
Young Socialist Alliance

Dear Comrades,

The San Jose local voted on March 28, 1974 to request permission of the YSA NEC to allow the San Jose local to give critical support to the candidacy of Jack Kurzweil, Communist Party member running for tax assessor in Santa Clara county, a "non-partisan" office. The election is June 4. The following letter explains why we feel this would be to our advantage.

Is it principled?

As can be seen by the brochure, which is Kurzweil's main programmatic piece of literature, he is running as an independent in a "non-partisan" election. However, he is identified in his material as a member of the CP and the CP has publicly endorsed him. He is a well-known member of the CP in the San Jose area. Further, he is running against incumbent Dwight Mathieson (party affiliation unknown). For these reasons we feel we would not be crossing class lines to critically support his candidacy.

Tactical considerations

There are three things we should consider before looking into what advantages we can get out of critically supporting Kurzweil.

The San Jose local leadership, in collaboration with the regional organizer, the SWP and YSA organizers in Berkeley and San Francisco, and the coordinator of the statewide SWP campaign committee discussed very seriously the possibility of the San Jose local running a candidate for congress or mayor. It was felt that we would not be able to run even a low-keyed campaign. The local has neither the size (11) nor the financial resources to do so. In addition, we decided against financial backing from the San Francisco and Berkeley campaign committees as they simply could not extend this and run our other congressional candidates. Nor could there have been the necessary close collaboration needed between the north and south Bay Area due to the time and effort needed in running the other congressional candidates as well as the statewide tours, etc. While we felt it would be better to run against Kurzweil than to critically support him, we found we just did not have the forces to do so at this time.

Secondly, the CP in San Jose is relatively strong vis-a-vis us and our other opponents. This is where the Angela Davis trials took place and they undoubtedly made gains in San Jose because of

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this. They run a public bookstore in the downtown area. The People's World sustaining fund drive quota in Santa Clara County is one of the largest in California. Kurzweil is a delegate to the Santa Clara County Central Labor Council. They are the dominant influence in the Emergency Committee to Defend Democracy in Chile, a relatively active group. However, the CP is not as much out in the open as they could be. There is no YWLL chapter on any campus. The most they do is run a Marxist class series in a coffee shop. The one time our comrades ran into a YWLLer, he told us the YWLL "was doing nothing." We have found the PW available only in their bookstore.

Thirdly, it appears that the CP is trying, or is being pushed by its more militant younger members, to come out in the open. The leadership response is to run for tax assessor as a way to relieve the possible pressure, but at the same time not to challenge their fundamental line of class collaboration. They could have easily run for mayor, congress, or even governor, but this would be too bold. To make it appear that this is an important campaign, they have exaggerated the importance of the office of tax assessor.

Advantages of critical support

We think the tactic of critical support would enable us to do the following:

1. Better explain our position of independent class politics. We would support the fact that a CP member is running against the capitalist candidate and that this is a step in the right direction. We encourage everyone who is concerned about the energy crisis, Watergate and the attack by the corporations and government on the standard of living not to seek the solutions in one of the two capitalist parties, but to act independent of them.

2. Gain a hearing from CP youth, YWLL members, their milieu, and those independents who are attracted to Kurzweil's campaign about our criticisms of the CP.

3. By giving critical support we can more easily ask his supporters to support our candidates for governor, U.S. senate, etc., as positive alternatives to the Democratic and Republican parties. This will enable us to drive home the contradiction of running for tax assessor as a communist but also giving backhanded support to liberal Democrats for other offices.

4. There is an apparent internal struggle in the CP as we have seen by past few years. The expulsions of Dorothy Healy and Al Richmond are examples. The latest development is the recent denunciation of Bettina Apthekar (married to Kurzweil) in the World Magazine section of the PW. While it is difficult to tell exactly what is going on and precisely what effect our extension of critical support will have on them, it can only help in stirring up the centrifugal forces between the CP leadership and some of their more militant younger members.

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Of course, Kurzweil's campaign does not call for socialism, but merely tries to reform capitalism -- in one city. Big surprise. We propose to give 1% support to his candidacy and 99% criticism of his program. We will support his candidacy as a positive alternative to the capitalist candidate and ask people to vote for him on this basis.

The thrust of our criticism of his program will be to point out that as a whole, it is totally inadequate to meet the needs of working people and the oppressed nationalities of Santa Clara county. We would not say his program is a step in the right direction, but insufficient.

Our main weapon of intervention will be a leaflet, in the name of the Young Socialists for Rodriguez. Before making it public, a draft of the leaflet will be sent to Barry Sheppard, the statewide SWP campaign coordinator, and the SWP and YSA organizers and campaign directors in San Francisco and Berkeley.

We are late in asking the NEC permission to extend critical support. We now have about 1½ months to fully take advantage of this situation. We would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible.

Comradely,

Glenda H.
YSA Organizer, San Jose

Tom T.
Regional Organizer, No. California

cc: SWP Statewide Campaign Coordinator
Berkeley SWP Campaign Director
S.F. SWP Campaign Director
SWP Organizer, S.F.
SWP Organizer, Berkeley
YSA Organizer, S.F.
YSA Organizer, Berkeley
Political Committee, SWP
Barry Sheppard