

## SECTION III:

# Toward an Independent Politics in Philadelphia

## BLACK UNITY DAY: A CALL FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION

October 1977

by JIM GRIFFIN

September 10 was Black Unity Day in Germantown. Several hundred people attended the rally and cultural event in Vernon Park sponsored by the Black Independent Political Party. In the words of the Party, the event was aimed at "bringing together the many elements of the community to struggle for the common objectives of the masses of people."

Clearly, everyone in Germantown did not share these aims—Rizzo's Rangers for one. According to BIPP spokesmen, the police harassed the organizers of the event, stooping to tearing down posters all over the community.

These tactics hampered publicity and made for a poor turnout. As a result the march planned to kick off the day was cancelled. But the fact that the guardians of the established political order found it necessary to resort to these measures indicates that the BIPP must be doing something right.

### FOR BLACK INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION

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It's not too hard to figure out why Rizzo and company feel threatened. The BIPP's purpose is to develop an independent Black politics and break the dependence of the Black people on the two established parties, particularly the racist, Rizzo-dominated Democratic machine. The BIPP's independence extends to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

As Melvin Burgess, BIPP President put it: "White liberals are afraid of strong Black leadership because strong Black leadership means Black people pick their own leaders. White liberals love to pick Black leaders. They like Black leaders who they feel they can talk to. White liberals will take leadership in the Black community if we allow them. The old saying 'the natives can't do without me' is their hope. If I can't become a leader on Snyder Ave., why should they be leaders in our community?"

While focusing on the need to develop a base for independent politics in the Black community, the BIPP recognizes the need for coalition with progressive whites who actively oppose racism and respect the right of the Black community to determine its own political destiny. What the BIPP rejects is the paternalistic missionary complex and political vacillations that are so characteristic of the traditional white liberal "allies" of the Black people.

### REAL POLITICAL FORCE

In its five years of existence, the BIPP has shown that it is a force to be reckoned with in local politics. Beginning at the Northwest Political Caucus some five years ago, the organization has mobilized sizeable support for independent-minded Black candidates. BIPP members knocked on doors, ran voter registration drives, and organized motorcades down Germantown Ave.

They campaigned for six Black judges, Dave Richardson for State Representative and Councilman, Hardy Williams for Congress and Ben Johnson for city council. Two years ago the group changed its name to the Black Independent Political Movement and recently to the Black Independent Political Party. Members now say their emphasis is working outside rather than within the Democratic Party to bring about an independent Black politics.

### ACTIVIST APPROACH

The activities of the BIPP are not just limited to election day. The BIPP aims at being a year-round force in the community. BIPP members are active in community struggles, have begun publishing an issue-oriented newspaper, *Black Explosion*, and also plan to develop service programs.

The group also has a political education committee and is seeking to deepen the community's understanding of the predicament facing Black people and what can be done about it. The BIPP seeks to build a broad organization and is open to any interested Black person. Its present membership includes people in their mid-teens to early forties, but most members are in their twenties.

The BIPP represents part of an extremely important trend toward independent political action on the part of Black people all over the U. S. While this move to date has been largely within the framework of the Democratic Party, important forces have broken away from the two party system, and this trend is likely to grow given the nature of the Democratic Party.

As a party committed to maintaining profits and stability for the monopoly corporations, the Democrats' commitment in words to racial equality is nothing but idle talk and racist hypocrisy. Smilin' Jimmy Carter represents just the latest in a long line of betrayals by fine-talking white liberals.

More and more Black people along with growing numbers of Chicano voters are realizing that there's no future in a party that talks about equality while supporting the likes of Frank Rizzo and James Eastland. . . that there is no future with fair-weather liberals who have tested the political wind and decided that the gains of the civil rights movement are expendable. This independent trend on the part of the organizations of national minorities needs to be emulated by the whole working class.

### FLUNKYS FOR DEMOCRATS TAKE HEED

The critical importance of independent political action on the part of Black people was highlighted in a speech at the Black Unity Day rally by Rosemary Mealy of the Third World Coalition: "Black people historically have never been passive observers of the struggle between other forces over the question of slavery or freedom. We cannot be passive observers today. . ."

"Our struggle is not a popularity contest where the hungry and jobless stand on the sidelines watching the Andy Youngs, the Robert Nixes, the Earl Vances and Joe Colemans apologize for apartheid in South Africa, for racism in America, and for police brutality and repression in Philadelphia. Upholding the free enterprise system is their answer to our plight. That is why the likes of them are not here to address us today and will criticize us for holding this event tomorrow. . ."