

another example of why the Democratic Party is not and cannot be the vehicle for genuine progress. David Marston hopes that Bill Green's dilemma will be his opportunity. But the idea that the Republican Party can serve as any kind of progressive alternative to the Democrats has nothing to recommend it. It is the Party of Nixon and the Party of Meehan and Devlin; it is even more tied to big money and hostile to the interests of working people than the Democrats. A vote for Marston might punish Bill Green and the Dems, but it won't promise any changes at City Hall.

### NEEDED: AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDACY

Green's dilemma means that the time is ripe for a real break from the Democratic Party. What is needed is an alternative to Rizzoism, to the mealy-mouthed corporate liberalism of Green and the naked opportunism of Marston. What is needed is a genuinely independent candidacy for Mayor, independent of big business and

their two parties, and based on the needs of all working people.

The embryo for an independent movement already exists in the Black Political Convention. The Convention adopted the Human Rights Agenda (see related article), a platform for real change in Philadelphia. The Convention is also on record as supporting the formation of an independent Black political party. During the campaign, in which the Convention endorsed a number of candidates, the Convention also functioned as the left wing of the Bowser forces.

Many activists now favor a rapid reorganization of the convention to check the move toward Marston and to initiate a broad-based independent ticket running on the platform of the Human Rights Agenda. Such an initiative could create a pole to which progressive forces from labor, the women's movement and other elements of the coalition that beat Frank Rizzo could be rallied. Besides running a mayoral candidate, independents could

be nominated for council and row offices. Such a ticket should include support for those Democrats who have backed the Human Rights Agenda or have generally taken a progressive anti-Rizzo stand.

Another factor in assembling an independent ticket is the Consumer Party which has ballot position and is on record as favoring cooperation and united action with other independent forces. The Consumer Party platform is consistent with the Human Rights Agenda and poses a definite alternative to the two capitalist controlled parties.

Both Green and Marston will be wheeling and dealing in the next month. They will be offering jobs and making promises to try to capture the support of Charles Bowser and his supporters. This sordid maneuvering has nothing to do with the real interests of the people of Philadelphia. Only independent political action by and for ourselves will serve our interests.

## Black Political Convention to Reconvene MOVING TOWARD AN INDEPENDENT TICKET

July 1979

by Jim Griffin

Voters who think there's not a dime's worth of difference between David Marston and Bill Green, who rightfully suspect that neither mayoralty candidate offer the people real change, may very well have a real alternative this November. Efforts are underway to put together an independent slate based on a genuinely progressive platform that speaks to the needs of Philadelphia's working people.

### INDEPENDENCE FORCES

This activity is coming from two sources, the Black United Front and the Consumers Party. The BUF is reconvening the Black Political Convention, which earlier this year adopted the Human Rights Agenda, backed a number of progressive candidates in the primary and supported the candidacy of Charles Bowser for mayor. The Human Rights Agenda calls for a whole range of reforms directed against racist, corporate domination of the city and aimed at improving the conditions of life for both Black and white working people. In the wake of the defeat of Charles Bowser, who refused to support this program, the more independent activists of the BUF see running a slate based on the Human Rights Agenda as a logical and necessary alternative to supporting either of the two parties, or sitting out the election.

The Black Political Convention is scheduled to convene on July 15th.

Convention planners see the need to support progressive candidates running in the Democratic column as well as nominating independents to oppose Rizzoites and fencesitters in the councilmanic and row office races. There is a determination to reaffirm the importance of the Human Rights Agenda and not allow the question of program to be pushed to the background as it was during the primary.

The convention will need to decide whether to utilize the offer of the Consumer Party (C.P.) to place its ballot position at the disposal of a broad people's movement or to run a slate under the auspices of a new organization. The practical advantage to running on the Consumer Party line is that it avoids a time consuming petition drive. Politically speaking, as the C.P. is an already established Party with a clear commitment to independent political action, this route would have the effect of strengthening the independent character of the campaign.

The Consumer Party has taken initiative on its own to build an independent slate with a broad based appeal. Early last month the CP called on city councilman Lucien Blackwell to run for mayor. Blackwell responded by indicating that while flattered, he would not consider such an option until the question of Bowser's challenge to the legality of the election was settled. The Party has since organized a "Draft Blackwell" campaign aimed at showing him he has the support to make a bid.

Some BUF activists were disturbed by this unilateral effort on the part of the Consumer Party, feeling that it upstaged the Convention and would thus foster division in the ranks of independents. The Black Political Convention, as the broadest expression of the independent movement, is the natural vehicle for determining a mayoralty candidate.

The Consumer Party, however, has clarified its position. It is prepared to accept the verdict of the Convention and plans to bring the Draft Blackwell campaign into the Convention rather than counterpose it to the Convention process. The Consumer Party also unites with the basic thrust of the Human Rights Agenda. Its own program coincides with it at many points. The Party argues that Blackwell as a councilman with a progressive record and a leader in the Black movement and the labor movement would be an effective candidate against Green and Marston.

### DIVISIONS IN ESTABLISHED BLACK LEADERSHIP

A key question is, where does Charles Bowser stand? Bowser retains a strong influence on the basis of his primary showing and his championing of Black anger over election irregularities. From all indications, Bowser is seeking to consolidate a position as power broker from which he can deal with the Democratic Party leadership. From this standpoint the option of supporting an independent slate has a certain appeal but so does the Marston gambit. Both options

are possible tactics to maximize leverage within the Democratic Party rather than leading to a real break with it.

Bowser encounters a real difficulty if he opts to support Green in exchange for greater influence in the Party and city government since he made much of Green being the tool of the old Rizzo machine. For the time being Bowser is keeping his options open. Independents must bring pressure on him to respect the verdict of the Black Political Convention.

Meanwhile two influential Black leaders, Congressman Bill Gray and State representative John White, have come out for Green. Both had been compelled to support Bowser during the primary in the name of Black unity, but now are following their own lights and have thrown a monkey wrench in Bowser's vision of a political brokerage house with himself as chairman of the board. In yet another

development, Milton Street has threatened to throw his support to Marston if Bowser does not proclaim a slate of his own.

All these maneuvers threaten to whittle away the broad Black unity that has emerged over the last year. It also indicates the readiness with which some Black leaders are prepared to trade their influence with the masses for a few crumbs from the political establishment. Neither the Democrats or the Republicans offer a way out from poverty and racism. "Lesser evilism" and pragmatic calculation which sells the Black vote to the highest bidder among the capitalist parties will not produce Black political power, but only a new cycle of raised expectations, defeat and demoralization. Leadership which proposes such a course, no matter how great their present credibility, does a disservice to the Black community.

## FROM THE BOTTOM UP

With or without the established Black leadership, BUF activists are proceeding to mobilize for the July convention. Community groups, rank and file trade unionists and a variety of political organizations are expected to attend.

While the convention grows out of the Black people's movement and reflects the special concerns of the Black community, convention planners envision a multi-national slate that can unite Blacks, whites and Hispanics around a program of demands that serve all working people. In all likelihood the Convention will be followed with a broader meeting that can build this kind of unity for the campaign.

# BLACK POLITICAL CONVENTION ENDORSES HUMAN RIGHTS SLATE

August 1979

by Mike Simmons

Phase III of the Black Political Convention was held on July 13, 14 and 15 at Tendely Temple AME Church. During the weekend meeting, 2,000-3,000 people from a broad spectrum of organizations met to debate the critical issues facing the Black community and to consider endorsements of candidates for the November election.

At Phase II of the Black Political Convention, a slate of candidates was endorsed with Charles Bowser at the head of the ticket. John Street was the only endorsed candidate who won, although there is strong evidence that voter irregularity may have prevented Herb DeBeary from claiming victory over Joe Coleman in the 8th Councilmanic District.

The convention was held against the backdrop of the bizarre events surrounding Charlie Bowser (see adjacent article). After making a deal to support Bill Green for mayor, Bowser abruptly "resigned" from public life and failed to show up at a scheduled press conference to announce the Green endorsement. Many observers speculated that Bowser and Green's announcement was scheduled to undermine the Black Political Convention process.

At the opening session, State Representative David P. Richardson spoke on the politics of political brokerage. He said that "there is a new day in the Black community. No longer can our so-called leaders go behind closed doors and make deals on our behalf. No group of 'leaders' can claim to speak for

the Black community. They must come before the people and account for their actions."

This set the stage for the major struggle at the convention: who to endorse as mayor. It was clear throughout the convention that participants were not enthusiastic about the choice between Bill Green and David Marston. By a 71-8 vote, with 15 abstentions, the delegates drafted councilman Lucien Blackwell for mayor. The debate around Blackwell's draft was centered on whether independent politics was a viable option. One delegate at the convention summed up the feelings of many delegates when he said, "We lose whether the Republicans or Democrats win. It is time for us to really win."

This statement was verified earlier in the day when candidates came before the convention. When Green was barred from speaking by his continual refusal to sign the BPC pledge, Marston felt he could capitalize on the hostility toward Green. However, Marston's presentation was limited to vague statements on recycling jobs and education. During questioning by the delegates, Marston refused to speak to the Republican party's support of Rizzo during Rizzo's administration or to disavow his support of Ronald Reagan during the 1976 Republican convention, and generally failed to offer any clear program to aid the Black community.

The seriousness of the delegates at the convention was highlighted by the treatment of Augusta Clark, Democratic candidate for Council-at-Large. Clark, though she did not receive the endorse-

ment at the Phase II of the BPC, was clearly a favorite of many convention delegates. Her victory in the primaries almost assured her endorsement at Phase III. However, during the question and answer session, Clark was asked if she would support Rizzocrat James Tayoun for President of City Council. Clark's response of, "If there were not a qualified Black candidate I would support Tayoun," was met with a rain of boos. Many felt that this political pragmatism lost Clark the expected endorsement.

Earlier during the convention, there was a political forum that included Ralph Wynder, Consumer Party, Congressman William Gray Jr., Sladin Muhammed, African Peoples Party, Butch Cottman, Convention Planner, and State Representative John White Jr. This forum brought the struggle of independent politics versus the two party system out front. All of the speakers except Gray and White put forward the need to develop an independent party. Moreover, those in favor of independent action challenged the behind-the-scenes deals many Black politicians had made with Bill Green and David Marston as a continuation of the "lesser of two evils legacy."

Gray attempted to side-step the issue by stating that there was a need for the style of a Malcolm X and the style of a Martin Luther King. Many delegates resented Gray's attempt to counterpose Malcolm and King, ignoring the fact that both Malcolm and King saw the need for a mass based organization that determined their political direction.