

echoed in his stands on a whole range of issues that raise the question of control.

Bowser opposes the demand of public housing tenants that they elect the director of the Housing Authority. He opposed the demand for a civilian police review board. In a question and answer session in Germantown, Bowser said he didn't think the people had the expertise to exercise control over these institutions. The bankers, politicians, and the bureaucrats presumably have the "expertise", so they should be allowed to continue running roughshod over the people of this city.

## MAYOR OF ALL THE PEOPLE?

Nor is Bowser's charge that the Human Rights Agenda is only in the interests of Black people true. The demands for more jobs, better services, greater democracy, tax reform and dozens of other measures are in the interests of *all* working people in the city. The Black Political Convention makes no demand for special favors for Blacks at the expense of white working people. Rather it rightly calls for an end to discrimination and real equality for minorities.

The reason Bowser objects to the Human Rights agenda is not because he seeks to be mayor of *all* the people, but precisely the opposite. He is eager to win the backing of a small segment of the people — namely the downtown power brokers who run the city from their corporate board rooms. Support for the Human Rights Agenda, which is support

for the interests of both Black and white working people, would definitely antagonize the Big Boys. Bowser was willing to risk losing the support of the Black Political Convention in order to prove to the city's ruling class that he could be entrusted with power.

Unfortunately the full content of Bowser's rejection of the Human Rights Agenda and his slavishness to Big Business was not brought to the convention floor. Bowser's aggressive supporters maneuvered to prevent a full exposure of his views. But many of these same supporters were themselves taken aback when they read Bowser's questionnaire. Many housing activists, led by Milton Street, were actively backing Bowser without realizing that Bowser does not support many of their basic demands. Some Bowser supporters were surprised to learn that Bowser opposes cuts in the military budget and shifting the tax burden from poor and working people to the rich, while supporting Carter's anti-inflation program. Bowser has come out in opposition to further cuts in social services, but he clearly has no program for paying for these services.

The most damning testimony against Bowser during the convention came from his own candidate for controller, Charles Ludwig. Ludwig, a white, center city lawyer with a background in real estate did not inspire a great deal of confidence in either himself or his running mate. Ludwig, who admits to sending his children to private school and has absolutely no credentials as a friend of the Black struggle, symbolizes who Bowser is

really trying to appease. It was evident to many delegates that Ludwig, while a fine candidate from the standpoint of Big Business, had no place on a ticket claiming to represent the masses of Black people.

In the end Bowser, nevertheless, succeeded in gaining the convention's endorsement, but it was much closer and more of a struggle than the 59 to 6 vote implied. Eight delegates abstained and some 35 odd delegates didn't vote at all, most of whom were not present when the vote was taken. Still Bowser got roughly half of the 101 possible votes. Had the full extent of Bowser's departure from the Human Rights Agenda been known his margin would probably have been slimmer. But in the minds of most of his supporters Bowser's appeal as the only Black candidate in a city which has never elected a Black mayor outweighed his liabilities.

There was a healthy recognition among the delegates that the business of the Convention isn't done and that it will be necessary to monitor the candidates between now and the election to see that they honor their commitments. A monitoring committee was created for that purpose.

That Bowser was able to win the endorsement in spite of such a miserable stand on the issues was a setback for the development of independent politics in the Black community. But the fact that this endorsement was won only after some intense struggle is a sign of the growing maturity of the movement.

# WHAT IS THE HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA?

June 1979

by Shafik Abdul Ahad

Many Black Liberation activists both of the past and present correctly attempted to analyze the Black Liberation movement of the 1960's in an attempt to review its strengths and weaknesses as well as ways of moving forward. One weakness that has been identified as a key weakness was the inability to form a national organization which could have given the Black liberation movement a single direction based around a united program. In 1968, 9000 Black conventioners gathered at Little Rock, Arkansas, and there formed the National Black Assembly which to date was perhaps the most serious attempt on a national scale to forge such a united program.

In the same spirit, this past December over 1300 members of the Philadelphia Black community representing Black elected officials, clergy, workers, women and students held Phase I of the Black Political Convention. After several days of workshops and serious discussion, resolutions which were passed

at the convention were written into a document now referred to as the Human Rights Agenda.

What is the Human Rights Agenda? Why was it called "unlawful" and "too based on skin color" by mayoral candidate Charles Bowser? First of all, let's take a look into this "unlawful" Human Rights Agenda and see what demands have been raised by the Black community.

1. Job opportunities should be increased by reducing the 40 hour week to 32 hours.

2. "No-strike" clauses in union agreements should be abolished.

3. The January 1st Septa fare hike should be opposed.

4. Work-study programs within the public schools should be created.

5. For a better quality education in the public schools.

6. Federal fuel subsidies to senior citizens must be available for those who cannot afford the price of fuel.

As one can see, these demands speak to the most basic needs of the Black community in a very real way — needs that, because of extreme racist discrimination, have been historically denied Black people. Where then, is it "unlawful"? Is it unlawful to want a job? Is it unlawful to want a decent education or decent health care? Of course not (unless you are a Black person living in South Africa). Is the Human Rights Agenda "based on skin color"? Once again the answer is no! Every person wants a decent job, not just Black people. Every person wants a decent house, a decent education, decent health care, not just Black people. Every other demand raised in the Human Rights Agenda would, if won, benefit all people, not just Black people.

The Black United Front, which was the sponsor of the Black Political Convention, should wage a continuous and uncompromising fight to see that the Human Rights Agenda is circulated and publicly discussed in the Black community and, wherever possible, in the



white community as well. It is in the interest of all people who are struggling for a better quality of life to champion the demands of the Human Rights Agenda in their workplaces, classrooms and communities.

The preservation and enforcement of the Human Rights Agenda would be a qualitative step forward for the Black, women's, and workers' movements here in Philadelphia as well as nationally, especially in light of the increasing racist and anti-worker offensive taking shape across this country. We are now witnessing an increase in unemployment, further attacks on affirmative action programs (like the Brian Weber Case), and a new deadly rise in police terror, to name a few.

A fight-back movement based on a program of demands such as those in the Human Rights Agenda would be a powerful movement centered around our most basic needs. Get a copy of the Human Rights Agenda and join now with those who are struggling for its realization.



Photo: Malcolm Gansley

## WOMEN'S ALLIANCE QUESTIONS MAYORAL CANDIDATES

April 1979

by Sara Murphy

A group of over 200 Philadelphia women met on International Women's Day to put their concerns before the candidates for mayor. A range of issues of particular concern to women were mailed to the candidates ahead of time, and they were asked to respond, then deal with questions from a panel and from the floor.

The issues raised included the need for affirmative action in hiring in all city departments and also affirmative action in upgrading, for minorities and for women. The special concerns of women in such employment included training women for non-traditional jobs and job categories, employing displaced homemakers, and the need for quality day care.

Other issues were the need for great expansion of city health services, particularly in the neighborhood clinics; the need for legislation to end discrimination against women and women heads of households in housing; the need for funded programs to protect battered women and a special rape unit in the

police department; an end to discrimination against gays.

Candidates who attended the forum were Bowser, William Green, Gaudiosi and Klenk, all democrats; L. Green, republican; A. Lieberman of the Consumer Party and Nora Danielson of the SWP. Unfortunately, all the candidates except for Klenk and the Consumer and SWP candidates left very early in the evening and did not see fit to stay and respond to questions from the panel or from the floor.

For the most part the major candidates were perfunctory and patronizing to the large gathering of mainly women. While assuring the audience that they were all for women's equality, for the most part, they failed to address women's actual concerns concretely or seriously. For example, aside from Klenk who sounded downright radical calling for an investigation of sexism in job classification in the city departments, the major candidates tended to reduce the entire question of affirmative action to appointing women to their administration.

Other major weaknesses of the candidates were the inability to address the question of racism, particularly in dealing with the interaction of racism and sexism leading to triple oppression of minority women. And all the promises of social service programs were so many empty campaign promises as not a single one addressed the question of funding and the need to shift the tax burden from the poor to the corporations and the wealthy. Unfortunately, these issues were not highlighted by the Alliance which organized the forum, or by the panel which attempted to sharpen the questions.

Unfortunately for the candidates, the time when politicians could walk into a meeting, pat the women on the head and tell them they would take care of everything, then leave for "more important business" is long past. Women in the city who are active in the struggle for equal rights, such as most of those present, and broader sectors of women engaged in fights for equality on the job, a decent standard of living, and against racism, will be looking for an independent alternative to Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee.