
U.S. DISCUSSION BULLETIN

10/83

The following position was endorsed by the I.S. PC in October. It is subject to amendment and refinement based on whatever events unfold.

THE JESSE JACKSON CAMPAIGN

In the minds of most people, the (still-pending) Jesse Jackson campaign in the Democratic Presidential primaries will appear as the first major national clash between Black America and the institutions of racism in the U.S. since the 1960s. It is quite likely that in a number of important urban centers -- in states that have primaries -- it will involve a spirited, though electorally limited, mass mobilization of Blacks not seen in years. If this is the case, it will affect the terms of political debate, not only in the Democratic Party, but in the nation as well. Its tone will be inspirational and radical. It will take on not only racism, but mainstream U.S. foreign policy. It will be an enormous attraction for the left as well as for the Black community. As a public event of about nine months duration (presuming, of course, it takes place at all), it is likely to be very attractive indeed. But attractiveness does not tell us very much about its objective political significance.

The Jackson campaign is an attempt to renegotiate the place of Black people in the Democratic Party voting coalition, and to put Black people's concerns higher on the agenda of that coalition. In most people's minds, this means that Jackson would play the role of "power broker" at the Democratic Convention. A cynical version of this view was expressed by Black Chicago columnist Vernon Jarrett:

"Jesse is not running for President. He's running for the office of chief power broker for Black people at the Democratic convention, where he will be televised and portrayed as a Black power broker. His agenda is the promotion of Jesse Jackson as the king, the emperor, the most important Black person of this century."
(Quoted in New York Times, 9/22/83)

A more political interpretation, one the left will no doubt promote, is that Jackson will try to maximize the number of appointments, job programs and other legislative gains the Democrats might be willing to grant in exchange for his delegate votes -- the old-fashioned horse trading of votes for promises. All this would make sense, if there were the slightest doubt about how either the Jackson delegates, or later in the general election, Black Americans generally will vote. But there isn't the slightest doubt!

Both the conservative (e.g. Andrew Young's) and the left's arguments that Jackson is a potential "spoiler" in 1984 are based on a misunderstanding of what is involved in the current candidate selection process. Things have been rerigged to make sure that the candidate will be selected by the powers-that-be at the convention, not through primary delegate elections which have been cut to a minimum. Most delegates will be chosen in bureaucratically run caucuses, where the Jackson forces will have little or no influence. Consequently, regardless of the visibility of the Jackson campaign, it seems certain he will have a much smaller delegate block than any other "brokering" force. But in any case, there is very little possibility that Jackson himself would do anything in such a way as to create a Glenn victory. In essence his delegation, insofar as he controls it, of course, is every bit as committed to a final vote for Mondale as those who vote for Fritz on the first ballot. The problem is that if you are not willing or able (by virtue of delegate numbers) to be a real "spoiler," then you have no bargaining power. Furthermore, there is no doubt

that Blacks will vote Democratic in the general election. The only real (and important) question here is the numbers: can the Black leadership produce enough votes to elect the Democrat? That is the real question in 1984.

While we do not know what Jackson or his collaborators actually think, the direction of his activity so far indicates that he is not primarily concerned with getting promises or cutting specific deals at the convention, which are usually meaningless even for better-organized forces like labor, but with what leverage the Black community and himself can wield after the election. He has repeatedly emphasized that the thrust of his campaign is to register Black Democratic voters. Given the likelihood of continued defection to the Republicans by traditionally Democratic white voters, particularly in the South, the idea is to make the newly awakened massive Black vote, North and South, a permanent lynchpin for any national Democratic victory -- to create a permanent Democratic dependence on the Black vote which would virtually preclude the dismissing of Black demands. To mobilize such a massive block Jackson needs to play up the radical-inspirational and racial tone of the campaign, and to play down the maneuverist aspects of which he will be accused. Also, obviously he cannot afford a 1964/MFDP-type humiliation at the convention.

Mondale's forces almost certainly understand all this. Whatever the rhetorical clash during the campaign, things are likely to go more or less smoothly at the convention -- although the potential for a rebellion of over-zealous Jackson delegates or uncontrollable racists in the Mondale camp are there. But the most important thing to understand about the real politics of this campaign is that the Jackson and Mondale strategies are perfectly in harmony. Mondale does need a large Black turnout to defeat Reagan in November '84, and so far only Jackson has a strategy for accomplishing this. The Jackson campaign is not a clash between Black America and the white liberal establishment, as many of the struggles of the 1960s were. Rather, it is the means for putting the liberal establishment back in the White House and potentially keeping it there.

The irony is that since Blacks have -- as things stand -- "no other place to go, the campaign is fundamentally incapable of forcing a basic renegotiation of Black influence in the Democratic Party's ruling circles (as opposed to winning some concessions), precisely because it is unwilling to be a "spoiler."

Despite the flair of rhetoric and the originality of its tactics, the strategy is not very different from the traditional labor strategy of delivering a big vote and negotiating appointments and legislative agenda afterward. Unfortunately for the Black community, what is won after the election depends much more on organization and social power -- what the voting block as a social force is willing and able to do independently of the new Administration. For all his willingness to curtail struggle before the 1964 election, Martin Luther King understood that action after the election was essential for winning the movement's legislative agenda in 1964-65. The current "strategy" of the Black leadership, applauded by the left, is strictly electoral and completely dependent. Given the current state of organization and political dependence, the Black community has very little to bargain with after the election. The bitter irony of the entire strategy is that it is self-defeating in its own terms.

The conventional argument coming from the white left, previewed in its support of the Harold Washington campaign, is that the Jesse Jackson campaign will provide another good opportunity to build organization within the Black community and to strengthen or construct alliances with the left, labor, etc.

The heart of the campaign, however, is not independent organization of any variety but voter registration, without which the whole strategy makes no sense. No projection of any ongoing organization of Blacks or coalitions has been made, except what may accrue to PUSH or existing groups that may participate in registering and turning out voters. The campaign is not meant to produce independent political organization, even in the distorted sense used these days to denote "independent" centers of influence within the framework of Democratic Party politics. Only leftists will make such claims -- only leftists will fail to grasp the real significance or intention of the Jackson campaign. It is an attempt to re-establish the permanent majority status of the Democratic Party. Within that framework it seeks to increase the proportional and political weight of Black America. It is the opposite of a "break-out" strategy or of independent political action.

It is also, however, a contradictory phenomenon. In order to work, it must register large numbers of Blacks to vote in the primaries and the general election, solidifying the interpenetration of the Democratic leadership with the Black community, increasing their mutual (but unequal) dependence. But to do this successfully, it has to ruffle the feathers of some liberals and Black leaders, not to mention the problems this will raise for many labor leaders. We abhor the former (the dependence) and welcome the latter (the feather-ruffling). We cannot support an effort to stabilize the Democratic Party, which would cut off future progressive possibilities; yet a radical protest campaign is something we are sympathetic to.

As Marxists we must choose our position on the basis of the campaign's real political significance, not its style. Nevertheless, we believe the contradictions of the campaign offer the opportunity to say a number of important things to sections of the left.

We are not really in a position to influence events or intervene in the 1984 elections with much force. Furthermore, insofar as we can concretely act, we should do so by supporting and building the Citizens Party or other such non-sectarian independent campaign as may exist. However, the reality is that our main constituency will be other sections of the left. Aside from committed third party supporters, any left campaign we work in or any line we pursue will be mostly directed at those who are currently advocating what is known as an "inside/outside" strategy, versions of which are widespread among M-Lers, DSAers and even Citizens Party activists. In essence, that strategy says the best way to work for IPA is to be both inside the Democratic Party working for a split down the road, and also outside, creating a home for the splintering forces. There is a mass of confusion about just what is either "inside" or "outside," but the big problem is that the "outside" aspect just somehow never seems "realistic" and hence never happens. Thus the usual direction of activity for inside/outside is from the outside to the inside.

We can use the contradictory nature of the Jackson campaign to confront this mentality -- it is not really a strategy at all -- and to promote the idea of Independent Political Action. It is a challenge to the "inside/outside" on the left to prove the "outside" part of their program means anything. The I.S. position on the 1984 elections should center around the following points:

- 1) The I.S. believes that there should be an independent radical Presidential campaign in 1984. If there isn't, the left will be invisible in 1984, particularly once the Jackson campaign folds into the Mondale campaign. This would most certainly mean the absence of any real anti-war presence in the election and the reduction of all social issues to some bland version of "industrial policy." The Right would have all the initiative following the Democratic convention.

For the I.S., calling for an independent radical campaign would provide a vehicle to confront the "inside/outside" of the left and to influence third party advocates. We might be in left field, but we would be off the bench and in the game. While a radical independent candidate would not be running against Jesse Jackson, it is clear that in the spring and summer months one must make a choice if any third party is to get on the ballot anywhere. The CiP plans to challenge for ballot access in 30 states; we should support this effort as best we can and support the CiP or whatever third-party coalition efforts of a non-sectarian character are fielded. Ironically, the best circumstance for an effective independent campaign would be an independent Jackson campaign following the primary. Therefore:

2) The I.S. should call for an independent Jesse Jackson campaign for President in the general election. We realize that Jackson has no such intention. Neither we nor the left generally have the power to make it happen. Hence, its possibility is remote in the extreme. Nonetheless, the arguments we can make for it are powerful. If Jackson wants to move the Democrats substantially, he must force them to compete for Black votes, and he must be in a position to vocally define the issues around which such a contest takes place. That means running in the general election, which can only be done as an independent.

Further, we argue that Black political power can only be increased through independent organization at all levels -- political, direct action, etc. -- and that folding his operation into the Mondale campaign will leave everything in the hands of the part professionals, big business bankrollers and labor bureaucrats. To the "inside/outside" we argue that here is a chance to prove that there is an "outside" in their strategy, without demanding that they break from Jackson -- that is, is their loyalty to the radical protest campaign or to the Democratic Party? The argument that you must go on to support Mondale (or whoever) is nothing more than an argument that a break to the outside of the Democratic Party is always wrong, since it always means the worse candidate might win -- in other words, there is no "outside" in such a view.

3) We are not demanding of Jackson that he quit the Democratic primary. We ask only that he be consistent in the fight to put Black, anti-war and other issues onto the political agenda by continuing his campaign into the general election. We should be frank that we think working for these goals in the Democratic Party is self-defeating and futile; we are not Democrats and have no intention of intervening in the candidate selection of that capitalist party. At the same time, since we are sympathetic to the stated goals -- as distinct from its actual strategy -- of the campaign, we urge are friends who are "inside" the Democratic party framework of politics to support Jackson and more important, to fight for the radical character of the campaign. In effect, we challenge them to show that radical ideas can get somewhere beyond symbolism, by pushing hard for those radical ideas and resisting attempts to compromise them. As already stated, we are of course already arguing that they push for an independent campaign after the convention.

(The "Exceptional Democrat" hypothesis. In the entirely unlikely event that Jackson were to announce, before the Democratic convention, his intention to continue his campaign in the general election -- thereby campaigning in opposition to the Democratic candidate -- we should at that point declare our support for Jackson during the primary. That is, while we don't believe that working in the DP for a "breakaway" is correct or even realistic, it is obvious

that a genuine left-wing breakaway based on the Black community or labor or the women's movement, etc., would be an entirely supportable phenomenon. We are willing to show our consistency in support of IPA, in a way the "inside/outside" seldom are. It is under such circumstances that we would have come across that rare "exception" to our opposition to supporting Democrats. This would not mean that we would register as Democrats, register others as Democrats or work through Democratic Party organizations, but that from a position of independence we would campaign for the politics of the Jackson primary campaign as a way of building for the subsequent independent campaign. We use this hypothetical case as an illustration of our method, not in any way as a concrete expectation in 1984.)

--- produced through the collaborative efforts of KM and DF

THE POLITICS OF THE JESSE JACKSON CAMPAIGN

by Dan L.

Jesse Jackson, President of Operation PUSH, may seek the Democratic Presidential nomination for 1984. This brief paper was prepared for the P.C. to give some background on Jackson, PUSH, and the candidacy and to layout a tentative position for the I.S. on his campaign.

JACKSON AND OPERATION PUSH

Rev. Jesse Jackson, age 42, is the President of Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity), a civil rights organization based on the South Side of Chicago but with a national network. The organization was founded in 1971 after Jackson split with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Jackson is the self-proclaimed President, as he has frequently said, "I am annointed, not appointed," that is he is not elected. Chairman of the Board of Operation PUSH is Gary, Ind. Mayor Richard Hatcher. Historically, Operation PUSH has received much of its money from corporate foundations and from the U.S. government Democratic Party administrations.

The main strategy of Operation PUSH since the late 70s has been the boycott. Working with Black businessmen and ministers, Jackson has led PUSH to fight for franchises for Black businessmen from major corporations. Agreements were reached with Coca-Cola Co. in Aug. of 1981, with Heublein Inc.'s Kentucky Fried Chicken in March of 1982, with Seven-Up Co. in July of 1982, and with Burger King Corp. in April of 1983. The agreements provide for a certain percentage of franchises or a certain dollar amount of business to go to black owners. While the immediate winners in such agreements are Black businessmen, they also have indirect beneficiaries in the form of Black workers, since Black businessmen are more likely than white businessmen to hire Black workers. Jackson recently failed to win an agreement with Anheuser-Busch breweries but ended the boycott saying that Busch had improved its record.

Operation PUSH worked to support Harold Washington as candidate in the Democratic Primary in Chicago. It was the Washington victory which in large measure motivated Jackson to carry out a presidential campaign. PUSH remained neutral in the fight between Lu Palmer and Charles Hayes for the 1st Congressional District seat vacated by Washington. Hayes, the candidate backed by Washington, defeated Lu Palmer.

FRIENDS AND FOES

Jackson's candidacy is opposed by a number of important Black religious, civil rights, and political figures. The Rev. Joseph Jackson, former president of the National Baptist Convention with 6 million members opposes Jackson, largely because Jackson helped to defeat him in the church's last election. More important, both Benjamin Hooks, Pres. of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and John E. Jacob, Pres. of the National Urban League oppose Jackson's candidacy. Three important Democratic Party Black politicians also oppose Jackson: Coleman Young, Mayor of Detroit; Andrew Young, Mayor of Atlanta, and Rep. Charles Rangel (D.-N.Y.). The last three are all committed to Mondale.

Religious supporters of Jackson include Rev. Cameron Alexander, head of the Georgia State Baptist General Convention, and H.H. Brookins, head of the Los Angeles district of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Two important political backers of Jackson are Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary and Rep. John Conyers (D. Mich). Rep. Ron Dellums (D. Calif) is also willing to support Jackson should he run for Pres. Hatcher is the head of the "Jackson Presidential Advisory Committee" formed in August. Both the Black Leadership Family, made up of prominent Black civil rights leaders, and the Black Caucus of the Democratic Party have voted to accept "in principle" the concept of a Black presidential candidate, but declined to back Jackson explicitly.

THE STRATEGY

The Jackson strategy is made up of two parts: "the Southern strategy" and "the rainbow coalition." Both should be seen in the context of the Black population and its voting pattern. Blacks make up 12 percent of the U.S. population and 20 percent of the vote of the Democratic Party. (Only 1 percent of all public officials, however, are Black.) There are 10 million registered Black voters, but over 18 million are eligible to vote. It is estimated that over 90 percent of all Blacks who would register would vote Democratic. Some 52 percent of Blacks still live in the South--that accounts for the "Southern strategy." There are 86 congressional districts in which Blacks make up 20 percent or more of the population, and those districts account for 300 Democratic Party delegates. So Blacks are, of course, a minority, and that accounts for the need for a "rainbow coalition" of Blacks, Hispanics, women, and working class and poor whites. Most recent polls conducted several months ago showed Jackson getting 9 percent of the vote from all voters. A recent poll in Ebony magazine (Oct. 1983), showed that of readers responding over 60 percent preferred Jackson to all other potential Black candidates.

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Jackson has made it clear that he is only considering running a campaign in the Democratic Party, saying he would not be a "spoiler."

THE CAMPAIGN

The Jackson campaign has two goals: voter registration and testing the possibility of a Black candidacy. In the summer Jackson engaged in what he called the "Southern crusade" aimed at registering hundreds of thousands of the four million unregistered Southern voters. Jackson was in all of the Southern states and had an important impact on several. In Mississippi he pointed out racist practices which militated against Black voter registration and got the Reagan administration to send Federal marshalls to insure Blacks could register. In North Carolina he got assistance from Democratic Party Governor James Hunt who promised to support legislation which would allow High School librarians and principals to register voters among the students. (Hunt will be a candidate against Jesse Helms for Senate in 1984.) In Baltimore Jackson supported Black candidate William H. Murphy for Mayor (the NAACP supported the liberal white incumbent William Schaefer.)

In the Fall, Jackson went to Europe for 11 days, where, while he failed to meet with European heads of state as he had hoped, he spoke to U.S. military troops, praising them for stopping Russian expansionism, but also saying that democracy had to be defended at home as well as abroad. He also appealed to Blacks in areas of London like Brixton and spoke out about justice for the Third World. He cancelled a trip to Russia after the U.S.S.R. shot down the Korean airliner flight 007 killing 269.

Jackson has also been meeting with and speaking before a number of important organizations. He spoke before the Alabama legislature, he spoke before the Women's National Political Caucus in support of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). He spoke before the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and called for Black and Hispanic unity. He has also been attending meetings of the National Democratic Party. He and his supporters have been meeting in secret talks with Mondale aides, from whom they've received information on party rules and election laws, as well, no doubt, as discussion the Jackson campaign and the Democratic Party program.

THE PROGRAM

Jackson's political program has not (as far as I know) been made explicit in the form of a political position paper or campaign document. Jackson has come out strongly in favor of rescinding the tax cuts of the Reagan administration. He has made statements about a transfer of resources from the military budget to social programs. He is strongly in favor of affirmative action (quotas). On foreign policy matters, he has criticized Reagan for "being on the wrong side" in Central America, he is against the Apartheid system in South Africa, he says that while he "supports Israel's right to exist" that he is in favor of a Palestinian homeland in the Middle East. He has spoken out against nuclear weapons. In many respects on domestic issues Jackson is a 1960s liberal and more outspoken and critical than most liberals on foreign policy questions.

Jackson has not elaborated on his position on labor issues. He has said that foreign slave labor is hurting union labor here in the U.S.

THE CONTROVERSY

The controversy both within the Black community and the Democratic Party over the Jackson campaign revolves around the question of what Jackson hopes to accomplish and what the affect of his campaign will be on the other candidates. The Democratic Party will not run a Black for president, so what does Jackson hope to accomplish by running in the Democratic Party? It seems clear that Jackson's candidacy is intended to renegotiate the role of Blacks within the Democratic Party (or one might put it more critically to renegotiate the dependent role of Blacks within the Democratic Party). However, it is feared that Jackson may draw votes away from a more liberal white candidate (away from Cranston or Mondale) resulting in the nomination of a more conservative one (such as Glen). The Jackson supporters argue that a big vote in the primaries and the convention for Jackson would push the Democratic Party to the left and force it to improve its stand on the issues of race, sex, social programs, and foreign policy. The Mondale supporters such as Coleman Young and Andrew Young, and the NAACP and the Urban League, argue that Jackson would draw votes away from the liberal and allow the Democratic Party to be captured by the neo-liberal or conservative elements. The example is given of Shirley Chisholm's 1972 race in the North Carolina Democratic Party primary when she pulled votes away from liberal Terry Sanford and George Wallace won. These arguments have more weight among Democratic Party officials and local activists than they do in the Black community where there is tremendous support for a Black presidential candidate, and specifically for Jackson as demonstrated by the Ebony poll.

OUR POSITION

The Jackson candidacy (if it takes place as it seems it will) is indeed an exciting and important development. Especially given the insipid character of the other Democratic Party candidates and the lack of a viable independent political movement of any sort. Jackson simply by virtue of his color raises one of society's most important political problems--racism, for his campaign would inevitably evoke a racist reaction. Jackson is also an outspoken liberal, and his liberal positions on taxes, affirmative action, ERA, and foreign policy issues like Central America, Apartheid, and Palestine cause more controversy than the positions of a white liberal like Cranston, because Jackson's convictions on those issues seem and are stronger. There will be great enthusiasm for Jackson among most Blacks and it is likely to grow, particularly where Blacks have been involved in local campaigns such as those of Washington, Wilson Goode, or Mel King.

It is likely that the "Southern strategy" could be largely successful; that is, many Blacks will be registered to vote, and if Jackson runs, many Blacks will vote for him. The "rainbow coalition" is likely to be a failure. While nationally there is a kind of tenuous political coalition (that is an organizational coalition) among Blacks, Hispanics, and women), most of the organizations will be committed to Mondale. The NAACP and the Urban League, old, conservative civil rights groups will not be able to keep their rank and file from voting for Jackson. NOW will endorse Mondale. The AFL-CIO will endorse Mondale. LULAC will endorse Mondale. At the local level, there is just not enough activity to talk about any meaningful coalition. For example, in many cities, Blacks and Hispanics are often fighting each other for a shrinking pie. Recently to take just one case there were several articles by Black commentators supporting the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill--not the kind of thing likely to lead to unity between Mexicans and Blacks.

We should not support Jackson as long as his campaign remains within the Democratic Party, and we should only consider support for his campaign if he were to leave or be forced out of the Democratic Party and be forced to launch an independent campaign or a third party. (And then we should reconsider.) Why should this be our position? First, because Jackson is strongly

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committed to the Democratic Party. He rejects an independent campaign and he doesn't want to be a spoiler. Second, Jackson's politics are the politics of liberalism. Third, there is no reason to believe that the Jackson campaign would achieve an electoral coalition, much less go beyond that to a real grass-roots coalition. Jackson wants to renegotiate the subordinate role of Blacks within the Democratic Party. He wants Black people to have a large role in the Democratic Party and in society--but Blacks will still be subordinate. As the Guardian asked in the special Summer, 1983 supplement: "From now until next summer's convention, a call will likely be heard across the country to 'get on board the Jackson Express.' But will this locomotive lead Black folks to the 'Promised Land' of opportunity and power, as he (Jackson) claims, or back in a circle to where they started." Unfortunately, it seems clear that this is one of those little trains like the ones in the park that do go around in a circle. As socialists, we are concerned about the development of the independent character of working class politics and of the politics of oppressed national minorities. There is nothing organizationally or politically independent about the Jackson campaign, and therefore, it should not be supported.

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