

# Michigan Democratic Convention Likes U.A.W., Loves L.B.J.

Rodger Robinson

1966

The State convention of the Democratic party of Michigan was with few exceptions a total victory for L.B.J. and his local apologists the U.A.W.-C.I.A. The workings of organized labor at the convention was not at all like the moderate socialists of yesterday but rather the National Socialists of tomorrow. This becomes much clearer if you break the convention into two areas: Platform issues, and the back room dealings to determine who will fill the various educational posts at W.S.U., M.S.U., and U. of M. and who would be the party nominee for Lt. Governor.

As a delegate from the 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional district I was able to observe first hand the division between the Negro districts and near destruction of its favorite son candidate. Also as an alternate to the platform committee I was able to get a true view of where the Michigan party stands on important issues.

Shortly before the start of the convention, word had gotten around that any attempt to put anything in the State platform that is at all critical of the administration would not be permitted. Also it seemed that there was a great deal of support for the conservative candidate for U. of M. board of Regents. This was confirmed when Bill Marshall (vice-president of Michigan AFL-CIO) was seen with a J.J. Collins badge and the convention later confirmed his nomination.

In both cases it was the efforts of labor, with the help of Senator Phil ("our President wants an honorable peace") Hart, that was able to completely smash a rather weak minority position on Vietnam. The main thrust of the minority report was to congratulate the five Michigan Democratic congressmen who wanted our government to disassociate itself from Premier Ky's remark of continued escalation in North Vietnam and war with China.

Senator Hart, Gov. Williams and the Establishment of the party felt this was much too critical of our good President, etc. Also, inside the Resolutions Committee, it was the UAW's people who cut apart a plank which would have put the Michigan party on record as supporting the Union's and Dr. King's position at the White House Conference on Civil Rights for a domestic Marshall plan of 10 billion for America. The grievance here was that this would tie our good congressmen's and Senators' hands in Washington and should therefore be rejected. It was.

The back room moves made by Labor were magnificent. After they had earlier in the year put out the word for a Negro Lt. Governor they completely ruined any chance for the Negro districts (1<sup>st</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>) to unify by an 11<sup>th</sup> hour tactic of putting in Rev. Jim Chambers (head of Negro Ministers conference and chairman of the Detroit Housing Commission) to block the name of Nat Conyers (John's brother) for trustee at M.S.U. This completely boxed up the 1<sup>st</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> districts and kept them from taking any action on Lt. Governor.

The one thing I got from the convention was a feeling of the complete bankruptcy on the part of organized Labor and the Democratic party toward substantive issues.

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