

“New Politics” Hits LBJ

Chicago Convention planned for Labor Day

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Organized political opposition to the Johnson Administration will be mapped in Chicago Labor Day weekend at a nationwide convention of grassroots activist organizations in the peace, civil rights and student movements. The convention, “New Politics—’68 and Beyond,” is expected to draw more than 2,000 delegates representing more than 200 local and national groups, said William Pepper at a recent news conference. Pepper is Executive Director of the National Conference for New Politics, sponsor of the convention.

Keynoting the meeting, which will be held in the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, August 31 September 4, will be the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Other speakers include SANE Co-Chairman Dr. Benjamin Spock, Georgia State Representative Julian Bond, RAMPARTS magazine editor Robert Scheer, Pepper, and two founders of Students for a Democratic Society, Tom Hayden and C. Clark Kissinger.

The convention is an effort to develop a unified political strategy for the 1968 elections and for future organizing, Bond said at the news conference. He outlined six of the major tactical approaches proposed by the various participating organizations:

1. Running a King-Spock third-party presidential ticket
2. Running civil rights-peace candidates in the Democratic primaries
3. Running independent “favorite son” candidates in separate states in the general election
4. Concentrating solely on movement candidates in state and local elections
5. Coordinating a nationwide coalition of state and local candidates
6. Holding a mock presidential election and boycotting the November contest.

Sponsors hope to find agreement on one of these approaches or an alternative that might emerge from the meeting. While admitting the near impossibility of winning a presidential contest, the NCNP emphasized that splitting large blocks of Negro, peace and civil rights voters from the Democrats could bring about Johnson’s defeat in close contests in several crucial states.

Vietnam and inaction on civil rights and social reforms to end poverty are the key issues in the movement, said Chicago Alderman A. A. “Sammy” Rayner, Jr., who cited the first major national effort to translate the massive protest movements into an effective organized political force.

“We intend to build a different American future,” says the official conference invitation sent out last week to the more than 200 invited organizations. “We intend to end the destruction of Vietnam and end poverty, fear and despair at home. We intend to make the election process meaningful again and make it available to those who have been excluded from it.

“We plan to invent our own institutions. We will not be trapped inside the old parties; and we will not be trapped outside of them. And if we should build a party, it will be not merely a party, but a movement.”

Also to be discussed at the convention will be the “new politics” relationship with and possible support for the draft-resistance movement.

The two-year-old NCNP is headed by Bond and Simon Casady, former president of the California Democratic Council. It gave financial support and sponsored peace and freedom candidates in primary and general elections of 1966 and 1967 at all levels of government.

Several candidates it backed hold state or municipal office; others garnered more than 40 percent of the vote in congressional primary elections, and one brought about the defeat of a Democratic congressional candidate by siphoning away sufficient votes to permit the Republican opponent to win.

Detroit groups which have been invited to attend the convention include the Inner City Organizing Committee, the West Central Organization, and the Detroit Citizens for New Politics. Other groups interested in sending delegates or observers should contact NCNP convention headquarters at 1517 W. Howard, Chicago, Illinois, 60626.

The convention coordinator is Michael Wood who exposed CIA financing of the National Student Association (NSA).

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