

King-Spock Ticket Discussed at Conference

Harvey Robb

At this point, the only safe speculation regarding the New Politics Conference to be held in Chicago over Labor Day is that you shouldn't believe what the underground press is going to say about it.

The key debates at the Convention will center on 1968 electoral strategy.

Should energy and resources be expended on a national presidential campaign or a series of local insurgent campaigns or both? Should campaigns be conceived as one-shot protests against the war and racism or should they be viewed as mere organizing devices to create long range radical institutions? Should campaigns aim to bolster Reform and "Concerned" Democrats and "peace candidates" or is it necessary to abandon attempts to reform the two party system, creating a third party?

KING-SPOCK?

The widely discussed possibility of a national Martin Luther King-Benjamin Spock ticket has both adherents and opponents at many points along the left political spectrum, and debate on this issue does not necessarily divide neatly between right and left New Politics groupings.

One scenario has it that King and Spock would provide legitimation and focus for building independent local political movements, helping to wean people away from the Democratic Party. But some radicals argue that a King-Spock ticket would waste local energy on a reformist national effort which would do little to strengthen local insurgents.

Others contend that King-Spock would be valuable as a temporary anti-Johnson measure to strengthen peace forces until the Democratic Party can be put into "safer" hands in 1972. One proposal is that King, Spock, and other prominent peace and civil rights figures stage a mock presidential campaign, stumping the country in support of local New Politics candidates within or without the Democratic Party.

Some New Politics groups are less concerned with national figures and presidential strategies than the positions which the national organization take on U.S. intervention in the Third World, ghetto rebellions, and economic solutions to the crisis in American cities. The debate over Black Power may well be crucial in determining what sort of forces coalesce in the national organization.

BLACK LEADERS

A group of black leaders including Julian Bond, Dick Gregory, Floyd McKissick, and Al Raby has issued a cautious call to black militants to attend the conference. In the call they stated "We understand the reluctance of many of our black brothers to involve themselves in the political arena, especially in alliance with whites. But if we are to continue the spirit of unity begun at the Newark Conference, we must begin to use every form available to us."

The tone of these black leaders suggests that the New Politics Convention may be one of the last opportunities for coalition between white and black radicals. Many grass roots black groups will be attending the conference as skeptical observers to determine whether white people are serious in accepting the notion of black self-determination.

It seems obvious that if New Politics is to become meaningful in the big cities, it will occur only through the initiative of large numbers of black leaders who speak to the reality of ghettoized black people. Whether white "progressives" are ready to accept such initiative remains to be seen.

The National Conference executive board has adopted a resolution calling for "an end to economic exploitation of the ghetto through collective ownership of property and control of business by the people of the local community." Implementing such a program will certainly involve an analysis of America's economic realities, and this promises to be one of the more heated subjects to be discussed.

Many peace activists are committed to programs like the "freedom budget" which would reallocate war money to reconstruct American cities and create a real war on poverty.

A small number of New Politics people (such as the 19th Congressional District CIPA in New York) argue that the only realistic path to economic justice is an independent socialist party which can attack the power of American corporations.

DETROIT MEETING

In Detroit, a newly-formed Citizens for New Politics met to discuss perspectives for the Chicago convention. A group of about forty people decided that there was presently insufficient organization in Detroit to warrant delegates to Chicago, but a number of observers will attend to report back on national strategies and positions.

The Detroit group took a firm stand on making the world safe from American Democracy, calling for immediate withdrawal of U. S. troops not only from Vietnam, but from everywhere outside the borders of the United States. A position affirming that black people should control the political, economic, and police institutions within their communities, was also adopted.

The Detroit group will meet to consider local political strategy after the Chicago convention, which should be the most exciting and confusing (and hopefully the most effective) New Politics event since 1948.



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