

IN THE NATION

ELECTION

Rent control behind Berkeley loss

By Walt Milliken

Berkeley. The progressive electoral coalition here, Berkeley Citizen's Action (BCA), suffered a major setback in elections April 19. All three of BCA's candidates for the four open positions on the City Council lost narrowly, and BCA-backed rent control and tenants' union measures lost heavily.

Last November's election of candidates sympathetic to the BCA to a county supervisor and a state assembly seat had created hopes that the ten-year struggle for a left majority on the city council would result in a victory. Instead, with the defeat of BCA incumbent Ying Lee Kelley, BCA is left with only two of nine council seats.

The defeat has been blamed variously on a smear campaign by the opposition Berkeley Democratic Club slate, dissension among Berkeley leftists, and increasingly conservative students. A study of voter turnout indicates, however, that the major factor in the coalition's defeat was the rent control issue. Traditionally left-voting students stayed away from the polls apparently confused by arguments that the passage of rent control would drive students out of Berkeley. Meanwhile, more conservative voters turned out in large numbers to defend private property.

Anti-rent control forces raised more than \$150,000 and hired Don Solem, successful manager of the opposition to

last summer's statewide nuclear safeguard initiative, to run their campaign. The pro-rent control campaign could only raise \$5000 and hired an inexperienced nineteen year old campaign coordinator in the last month. Even some of its defenders agreed that it was a badly written law.

A previous rent control measure in Berkeley and its subsequent overruling by the state supreme court had convinced many Berkeley activists that a rewritten measure meeting the court's objections could easily be passed. The initial drafting of the measure was left to a group of lawyers and local housing activists. But the Berkeley Tenants Union agreed to participate only if they had a veto over the bill's final wording.

The BTU then insisted that small landlords renting only "in-law apartments" or single units be included in the measure and that consideration of tenant's income be part of the rent raising process.

The anti-rent control campaign, financed largely from outside Berkeley by realtor associations and savings and loan groups, was consequently able to claim both that the measure would drive small property owners out of Berkeley, and that landlords would be discouraged from renting to low-income and transitory students.

► Caught between left and right

The BCA candidates might have been able to overcome the difficulty with the rent control measure if they had not



P. Keich

also allowed themselves to be caught between the left of their own coalition and their opponents, the Berkeley Democratic Club.

About 25 percent of the Berkeley electorate or about 10,000 voters are firmly on the left. Their position, as represented in a programmatic book, *The Cities' Wealth*, calls for the municipalization of housing and utilities, the creation of a city bank and the development of city owned and worker controlled light industry. In a watered down form much of this program is reflected in the platform adopted by the BCA convention.

During the BCA convention this group joined with members of the BCA Third World Caucus to support the candidacy of an articulate young black member of the Communist Party, Mark Allen, for the fourth position on the BCA slate. But partly out of what many observers felt was a fear of redbaiting and partly out of a disagreement with the politics of the Communist party, the already elected members of BCA strongly opposed an endorsement for Allen. A compromise was finally reached when the convention endorsed three candidates and left the fourth slot open for Mark Allen's independent candidacy (IN THESE TIMES, Feb. 16-22).

Actual precinct work was little affected

by this split; most workers carried literature for both and organization of precinct work was coordinated so as to avoid duplication. In fact Mal Warwick, BCA campaign manager, reports that more precincts were worked than ever before.

The public campaigns of the BCA candidates were, however, seriously affected. They spent a considerable amount of time insisting that they were not running with Mark Allen. In the black community BCA candidate Margot Dashiell ran virtually her whole campaign against Mark Allen. (In the final results, Allen came in behind the BCA candidates.)

The Cities' Wealth also became an issue when none of the BCA candidates would admit to a local conservative paper ever having read the book. Thus the candidates spent much of the election defending themselves against the charges of being associated with their own left supporters.

The Berkeley Democratic Club slate, holders of a lackluster record as the city council majority, were thus able to show the BCA slate alternately as a Trojan horse from the left or as ignorant, confused and vacillating.

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Coors

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going with anybody, if you have sex and how often" as well as questions about homosexuality, drug use and crimes the job-seeker may have committed without being caught. Other workers verify Sickler's version, but a company spokesman told IN THESE TIMES that no sex questions are asked.

Once inside the plant, the worker is subject to an amazing list of reasons for immediate dismissal. Written into the recently expired contract (and proposed for the new one) are provisions that allow for immediate firing of any employee who makes "disparaging remarks" about the Coors or their beer, whose conduct on company grounds "violates the common decency or morality or the community" and who refuses to be frisked by a plant guard. The contract also demands that workers cross picket lines the brewery's other unions might set up.

Added to the proposed contract's reasons-for-dismissal list (the company is always adding to the list, says Heilman) is a requirement that all workers must submit to a physical any time the com-

pany asks. Union business agent Ken DeBey calls the provision an outrage because physicals are partly designed to detect the presence of alcohol in workers' bloodstreams, yet the company permits workers to drink beer on breaks and at lunch. Intoxication is another cause for immediate dismissal.

► Seniority at stake

Some workers have given up fighting the polygraph and dismissal list. Uppermost in their minds is the seniority issue, a complex fight over whether the company can arbitrarily assign workers to rotating shifts or shorten their work week or lay them off without regard to longevity. The company claims it's always had that right; the union says it hasn't had and shouldn't have that kind of power, which could lead to hurting experienced employees in favor of newer, lower paid workers.

Union officials aren't discussing other issues much. The G.I. Forum, a chicano veterans group, just ended its nine-year-old Coors boycott after members became relatively satisfied that the company was making an honest effort to hire minorities. The Department of Agriculture's OEO has approved Coors' affirmative action plan, but the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission labels it a "paper" plan.

Coors, says Sickler, has called the company-union struggle a war, and the old contract provides "us with our guns. We're tired of having him use his profit at our expense to dispense his philosophy. He likes to compare the quality of his beer, why can't we compare the quality of our contract and jobs? Other breweries function well by giving workers dignity. Why can't this one?"

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Joe Coors's rightwing past

For some Coloradans the three-week-old boycott against Coors has little meaning: they have refused to drink the company's beer for years. The chief target of their protest is not brewery president William Coors, who is rarely in the political arena, but his younger brother Joe.

The third son of Adolph Coors Jr. (another brother was kidnapped and murdered in 1960), the 59-year-old Cornell graduate in chemical engineering has made his mark in politics.

His six years as regent at the University of Colorado spanned the most active period of student and antiwar protests, and he was frequently assailing what he saw as campus Reds. After the CU president permitted Students for a Democratic Society to hold a nationwide convention on campus in 1968, Coors called for his resignation. He also funded and tried to control a short-lived alternative in competition with the progressive student newspaper.

His stands against minorities; his porcelain plant's production of missile nosecones and helicopter armor for Vietnam and his John Birch Society contributions drew numerous student protests. By the time campus reform allowed beer in the student union, Coors' brand was prohibited.

In 1968, he met Paul Weyrich at the GOP National Convention, where Coors was a Ronald Reagan delegate. Weyrich became a Coors' darling, eventually setting up the Heritage Foundation, a research institution created to compete with Coors' concept of leftist foundations like the Brookings Institution.

Heritage led to the Committee for the

Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC), an organization devoted to unseating 100 so-called "radical" Congresspersons in the 1976 election. Coors provided the seed money, but Weyrich claimed the brewer had no control over the committee. Among the first 20 designated "radicals" were two of Colorado's five Representatives.

In 1972, Coors initiated Television News, Inc., a conservative syndicate to compete with "leftists" like Harry Reasoner and Walter Cronkite. TVN employees who quit working for the syndicate said Coors' hand-picked director tried to get them to slant the news, and the operation was the subject of a scathing article in the *Columbia Review of Journalism*.

On Aug. 7, 1974, the day before he resigned, Richard Nixon nominated Coors to the 15-member board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Considerable opposition arose from those who claimed Coors could be expected to use his board seat to censor public television programs. But it looked as if he would get the seat.

Before Senate hearings on the nomination, however, a letter Coors wrote to CPB President Henry Loomis was made public by the *Washington Post*. In the letter, Coors complained about an upcoming program on funeral rip-offs: "I am not yet familiar enough with the interconnections between PBS and CPB to know whether you can do anything about this, but it is the type of thing which I will be very interesting in watching closely if I ever become confirmed on your fine board." He wasn't.

-T.L.

LABOR

ILWU convention confronts job crisis

During his long career retiring president Harry Bridges has been denounced as a Communist and a class collaborator.

by Stefan Ostrach

Seattle. For more than two hours on April 22, 30 delegates to the 22nd Biennial Convention of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) took the floor to pay tribute to Harry Bridges, Lou Goldblatt and Bill Chester, who were stepping down as officers of the West Coast waterfront union. The delegates also voted to give a \$13,000 retirement bonus to each of the three men.

During his long career Bridges, who is still physically active and mentally sharp at age 76, has been both denounced as a Communist and accused of being a class collaborator.

In 1934 he was a central figure in the San Francisco General Strike. Twice—in 1939 and 1941, the federal government tried to deport him to his native Australia for being a subversive. And in 1950 he was jailed for opposing the Korean War.

More recently politicians have praised him as a labor statesman, and in 1970 he was named to the San Francisco Port Authority.

Bridges continued his enigmatic ways at this year's convention. He warmly embraced conservative Washington Governor Dixie Lee Ray and argued against demanding 40 hours pay for 30 hours work. But he also told a press conference: "I'm not proud of bringing peace to the waterfront. It's only a truce. There will never be peace as long as there's the eternal conflict between those that own and those that don't."

►A progressive union.

The ILWU and the United Electrical Workers (UE) are the only two of eleven left-wing unions forced out of the CIO in 1949 that survived the red-baiting offensive of the 1950s. Resolutions passed by the convention reflect the union's progressive tradition.

The ILWU called for "restoration of full relations, including trade, with Cuba, Vietnam, and the People's Republic of China."

Support for the liberation struggles in Southern Africa was unanimous, although a boycott resolution was carefully worded to comply with contractual requirements. The delegates voted "to begin exploring and, wherever possible, to implement immediately means through which to stop all handling, warehousing, and transportation of all goods to or from South Africa and Zimbabwe." They also voted to notify employers that no future contracts would be negotiated which require them to handle such cargo, although the present dock contract extends until July 1978.

The convention went on record in support of cutting military spending and transferring funding from the Pentagon to job-creating social programs. Another resolution demanded environmentally-sound full employment.

The ILWU pledged itself "to take whatever steps are necessary to wipe out any discrimination" in the union and declared, "This union will not join in any agitation or legislation to punish alien residents for the hard times and unemployment which have been caused by our big-business oriented economic policies." The delegates unanimously supported the Campaign to End Discrimination against Pregnant Workers.

The union attacked multinational corporations for exporting capital and jobs and demanded the "curbing of



A serious shortage of jobs face lonshoremen due to the rise of mechanization and containerization.

Paul Sequeira

U.S. corporate investment abroad" and "an end to U.S. tax privileges for such foreign investment."

The delegates hailed the recent agreement between the United Farm Workers and the Teamsters and renewed their strong support for the farm workers' struggle.

►A crisis of jobs.

While the progressive political consensus distinguished the meeting from most U.S. union conventions, the Bridges era is ending at a time of crisis for the ILWU.

As a rank-and-file longshoreman (who was not at the convention) declared, "The convention is just window dressing." He described a serious shortage of jobs on the waterfront caused by mechanization and containerization.

Back in 1960 Bridges decided that technological progress on the waterfront could not be resisted. He negotiated a mechanization and modernization agreement that he said would share the advantages of automation with the workers. Bonuses were paid and pensions raised to encourage early retirement, and union members were guaranteed their pay whether there was work or not.

Since then, cargo tonnage and company profits have increased, but jobs have steadily declined.

In the San Francisco Bay area, second largest port in the U.S., the situation is critical. In spite of record tonnage moving through the port, longshoremen are averaging only 13-15 hours of work per week. While the union contract provides a pay guarantee plan (that excludes pensions and fringe benefits), it also requires that workers at "low work opportunity ports" can be forced to move to other areas or forfeit their pay guarantees.

Many Bay Area longshoremen don't want to move, however, and longshoremen at other ports don't want increased competition for jobs in their locations. In some cases resistance to transfers also involves opposition to an influx of Third World workers.

So far the Bay Area has been able to dodge being declared a low work opportunity port, but the trend is inevitable.

►Hawaiian sugar companies running away.

In Seattle, where the problem is not yet as serious, tonnage has doubled in the last five years, but man-hours have declined, according to Local 19

Secretary, Del Castle.

In Hawaii, where the ILWU is the most powerful union, the organization also faces a crisis. The union organized 30,000 workers on the islands in just 18 months during World War II and represents workers on the docks and also in the sugar, pineapple, and tourist industries.

The last time around, the sugar workers won a pacesetting agreement with the sugar companies that prohibited the employers from closing down any operations for the life of the contract.

When it expired in March, however, the Big Five sugar producers served notice that they would not renew this provision because of their desire to move to low wage areas like the Philippines.

The union persuaded them to extend the contract until November, hoping in the meantime that Congress would act to protect the Hawaiian sugar industry. If it doesn't, Hawaiian sugar workers face runaway plantations and mass unemployment.

►New officers nominated.

The last business "on the deck" at the convention was nomination of candidates to succeed the retiring officers.

For President, the candidates are Jimmy Herman of the San Francisco clerks' local and G. Johnny Parks, a Portland longshoreman. Both men are in their fifties and have been loyal supporters of Bridges' administration. Herman, who has Bridges' support, is considered to be the more progressive and is expected to win. He was screened off the waterfront during the Korean War and more recently has actively supported the farm workers. Parks is Northwest Regional Director and is known most for his role in opposing government limitations on the export of whole logs—a and that helped preserve jobs on the docks but hurt northwest sawmill workers, who face competition from exploitation of low-wage Asian workers.

Rudy Rubio, a Los Angeles longshoreman, was nominated for the Vice President slot without opposition as was George Martin of Hawaii, the incumbent Director of Organization.

In the race for Secretary-Treasurer, the favorite is Curt McClain, a black who is president of the San Francisco warehouse local. He is opposed by Fred Huntsinger, a Portland longshoreman.

Union members will vote by secret ballot in mid-June. The results will be announced and the new officers will take

up their posts in July.

►30 for 40.

The new officers will inherit a union that has largely given up the struggle at the workplace in recent years. By accepting mechanization and containerization in 1960 the ILWU gained a large measure of economic security for its older members, but it lost control of the work process that had been won in the great 1934 West Coast waterfront strike.

For the most part these problems simmered below the surface of the convention, although they were expected to emerge at the division caucus meetings (which were closed to the press) immediately following the convention. Only during discussion of a demand for forty hours pay for thirty hours work did the internal problems of the union emerge in public session.

The shorter work week was offered as the solution to the shortage of jobs on the waterfront. Bridges argued against it, saying that thirty hours work at no reduction in pay was an impossible demand. A resolution calling for thirty hours at no reduction was defeated and the issue was referred to the longshore caucus.

►A democratic union.

The new ILWU leaders are unlikely to change the union's established policies or to take a more militant stand. But the union's constitution provides for considerable internal democracy. Officers on all levels must stand for election every two years and are subject to recall on petition of 15 percent of the membership. All major policies, including contracts, must be discussed in division caucus and ratified by the members affected.

The convention itself was run as democratically as a large meeting can be. Delegates were free to take the floor and did not hesitate to argue with Bridges. Bridges himself asked for convention approval of controversial rulings. He dominated the convention by force of personality and reputation, not manipulation.

As conditions on the waterfront, in Hawaii, and in the world continue to develop, the ILWU rank-and-file have the means at hand to again put their union at the forefront of the class struggle.

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