

SAN FRANCISCO

By Chester Hartman

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SAN FRANCISCO MAY WELL BE on its way to losing its reputation as a progressive city. November 6th was a disaster for the left. Voter initiatives on housing cost controls, high-rise height limits, shifting the local tax base to large businesses and abolishing the police vice squad (this last proposal emanating from the Libertarian Party) all lost. In the mayor's race, conservative Supervisor Quentin Kopp (slightly refurbished for the occasion with a "neighborhood" veneer) trailed incumbent Dianne Feinstein (herself a middle-of-the-roader) by just 3,300 votes and has a good chance of winning the Dec. 11 runoff.

The city's voters even approved (although by only 54 percent compared with its three-to-one statewide margin) the local spending control initiative pushed by Proposition 13 co-author Paul Gann. All in all, not a terrific day here.

The weather on election day lent these results a natural as well as political explanation. Threatening skies began to open up around 2:30 p.m. and by 6:00 p.m. it was raining hard, leading many to head home after work instead of making a quick polling booth stop. The 54 percent turnout—very low for a San Francisco mayoral election—was in part attributable to this and in part to the lack of exciting candidates, particularly for the citywide offices. Curiously, although the left placed some provocative and important initiatives on the ballot, there were no citywide candidates who served to bring out left votes.

Perhaps most painful was the drubbing received by Proposition R—the Affordable Housing Initiative. Only 41 percent of the voters said yes in a 70 percent renter city. The measure was put together by a coalition of labor, neighborhood, church and other groups (some 50 in all) working together since January. It was a comprehensive housing reform proposal—controls over rents, evictions, condominium conversions and housing speculation, with provisions also to aid homeowners and add to the housing supply. Most polls had it well ahead two weeks before election day.



Quentin Kopp

Dianne Feinstein

Left initiatives lose in San Francisco

Even though seven of 10 residents are renters, rent control lost badly in a conservative sweep.

But in the final two weeks the town's real estate interests (aided by brethren in other parts of California and the nation) poured over a half million dollars into a media blitz of unprecedented proportions for San Francisco. On a per capita basis, they spent three times what the tobacco industry spent to defeat last year's statewide measure to limit smoking in public places. Based on reports filed two weeks before election day (and representing about two thirds of what will finally be reported) the No on R campaign had secured 191 \$500 contributions (the legal maximum), 407 contributions in excess of \$200. Over 10 percent of their money (including 33 of the \$500 contributions) came from outside the city or state.

The No on R money was used to saturate TV and radio with 30- and 60-second spots. A dozen pinpointed mailings went out to computerized lists of voters (homeowners, gays, small landlords, public housing residents, newly registered voters, tenants, blacks, etc.) Some households reported receiving as many as eight pieces of mail from the campaign in a single day.

A widely shown TV commercial, designed to capitalize on the post Prop. 13 aversion to bureaucracy, showed a landlord and tenant carrying a carpet into a tenant's apartment, at which point an "inspector" appears from behind the bushes to ask whether the tenant has gotten approval from the govern-

ment rent control board for this, and then asserts to the surprised pair that under Prop. R the board "has to approve every rent agreement, whatever the reason." The proposed ordinance contained no such requirement. Prop. R backers offered a legally binding \$100,000 reward to anyone who could prove that it did, but that didn't stop the commercial.

The spectre of the Bronxification of San Francisco was harped on constantly, playing on the city's narcissism (and to an extent on the East Coast roots of many current residents).

San Franciscans for Affordable Housing, the Yes on R. coalition, managed to raise some \$45,000, a respectable figure, considering that many traditional sources of liberal money were unavailable. The relative scarcity of funds meant little access to direct mail and television and radio.

Tenants were reluctant to place Yes on R signs in their windows for fear of landlord reprisal. Owners of apartment buildings, construction sites, parking lots, and realty offices (of which there are some 2500 in the San Francisco yellow pages, for the most part located on well travelled streets) plastered No on R signs (with the message "Build Housing, Not Bureaucracy") all over their properties.

One of the most difficult hurdles the campaign faced was the fact that the Board of Supervisors—as a way of heading off the initiative—in June had unanimously passed both rent control and condominium conversion control ordinances. Although the city rent control law is probably the weakest in the country, the appeal of the "let's give the new law a chance" argument was hard to fight. The city's law permits seven percent annual rent increases over and above increases needed to cover repairs and improvements, permits landlords to raise rents at will in between tenancies (which predictably led to a big increase in evictions) and expires next September. Under Prop. R, rent increases could be obtained only for documented cost increases (or to achieve a fair rate of return on investment). New as well as existing tenants were covered, arbitrary evictions were controlled and the ordinance would have stayed in effect so long as the housing crisis persisted.

CALIFORNIA

The spirit of Proposition 13 survives a second test

But the state propositions that won had little serious opposition from liberal forces.

By Wink Glennon

SANTA BARBARA, CALIF.

CALIFORNIA'S NOV. 6 SPECIAL election, only the 12th special balloting called since the turn of the century, was originally seen as a political battle of major proportions. But by the time voters went to the polls, it had turned into little more than an expensive opinion poll. The issue that prompted the California state legislature to resort to the little used special election procedures was an anti-busing measure sponsored by State Senator Alan Robbins, an anti-busing leader who represents voters in the integration troubled Greater Los Angeles School District.

The legislators, fearing a fierce and emotional battle, wanted to avoid voter fallout in next year's scheduled election, when one third of the senate and the entire assembly would be on the ballot. Once the special election had been called, three other proposed constitutional amendments were tacked on. Two of them, a measure to change the state's outdated usury laws, and a measure de-

signed to protect veterans property tax exemptions in the wake of Proposition 13, which last year slashed property taxes to 25 percent of their previous level, had little opposition. The other, Proposition 4, was officially titled "The Spirit of 13" and was designed to limit increases in state and local government spending to the increase in the consumer price index.

Both the anti-busing proposition (Prop. 1) and the spending limitation (Prop. 4) were heavily financed by business and conservative interests and major opposition never materialized.

The anti-busing proposal was designed to circumvent the usually more liberal California Supreme Court by requiring the state to follow federal busing guidelines. At the time the measure was put on the ballot, the U.S. Supreme Court had only required forced integration in cases where segregation had been caused by government intent, but the California Supreme Court had insisted that segregation be eliminated where reasonable and feasible, regardless of cause. Since the special election was called, however, the U.S. Supreme Court moved much closer to the position taken by the California court. In two Ohio cases, the fed-

eral court ruled that segregation need not result from direct government action with discriminatory intent.

Proposition 4, which limits increased government spending by consumer price index and population growth was headed by its sponsor Paul Gann as "the logical followup to Proposition 13." Gann claimed that the measure would save taxpayers billions of dollars; however, a report by California legislative analyst William Hamm prior to the election claimed that the effect of the measure couldn't be predicted, and at least in the short run would be minor.

Critics of the measure, including the California Tax Reform Association claim that the measure is so loaded with loopholes and exceptions that it couldn't effectively limit government spending even in times of moderate inflation and claim that a major overhaul of the state's tax system will soon become a state priority nullifying whatever effect Prop. 4 would have.

When California voters went to the polls, they passed both measures overwhelmingly, and the results have been widely interpreted as a major political swing to the right. However a closer reading of the returns indicated that this special election was indeed special. The voter turnout was only half that of the last general election. It was heavily skewed by special interests. Voters in the anti-busing strongholds of Southern California turned out in heaviest numbers—nearly 43 percent of the registered voters,

while the black communities turned out barely 25 percent.

Significantly, the most controversial issue voted on in California, rent control, came up with a split decision. Santa Monica, which had passed a strict rent control measure last year defeated a landlord sponsored initiative to gut rent control, but in El Monte, a neighboring Southern California city, a first time effort to pass a rent control measure was defeated.

In Santa Monica, a well established and organized coalition, the Fair Rent Alliance, beat back the heavily financed and deceptively run campaigning against rent control. The coalition, composed of local progressive organizations, labor unions and senior citizen groups, picked up a seat on the city council in the process, adding rent control spokesperson Cheryl Rhoden to the two incumbent alliance members on the seven member council.

The campaign against rent control spent over \$300,000 to the alliance's \$30,000 and ran on a slogan of "save rent control." It was accompanied by considerable red baiting of members of the Fair Rent Alliance.

Members of the Fair Rent Alliance stress that their victory was built on years of organizing and a well trained and efficient campaign organization. El Monte rent control advocates had neither the history of community organizing nor the effective campaign machinery to overcome the highly financed and professionally run opposition.

ACADEMIC UNIONISTS



Teachers call for a new kind of union

By David Sprintzen

HEMPSTRADE, N.Y.

METTING UNDER THE cloud of Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul Volcker's statement that Americans were going to have to accept a further decline in their standard of living, some 150 academic unionists gathered here Oct. 19-21. Attending this fourth annual Conference of Academic Unionists, hosted by the Collective Bargaining Coalition of Long Island Colleges and Universities, were representatives from all varieties of colleges and universities and from locals affiliated with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Education Association (NEA) and those without affiliation. Delegates came from as far away as California, Michigan and Florida. The meeting was an assembly of local labor leaders in higher education with only slight representation from the national offices of the AAUP, AFT or NEA.

A deep ambivalence pervaded the conference. Delegates were torn between the gloom of an increasingly contracting economy and the excitement generated by an emerging sense of solidarity. At first the litany of sorrows held sway. In the keynote address, Robert Leksachman, professor of Economics at the City University of New York, sought to locate the institutions of higher education within the framework of an economic system in contradiction with itself, in which all the old solutions no longer work. Virginia Mulrooney, Executive Secretary of the College Teachers Guild of Los Angeles, AFT, then surveyed the massive contradiction of California higher education in the post-Proposition 13 era. She detailed how property tax reduction is being paid for by teachers in the public sector through larger classes, more unemployment, reduction in fringe benefits and minimal salary increases in a time of double-digit inflation.

The extent of the onslaught on higher education, both public and private, was clear to all. In the face of pressures from increasing inflation, spending cuts, the public's growing refusal to bear the burden of an unfair tax system and admin-

istrative attempts at consolidation, retrenchment of faculty and an almost pervasive attack on faculty governance, the most pressing concern of many delegates was how to hold one's own in collective bargaining.

Addressing the gathering at dinner on the second evening, Victor Gotbaum, Executive Director of Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), evoked the sense of being up against the wall that teachers share with other trade unionists.

But conference co-ordinator Phil Nicholson, first vice-president of the Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers, broached the challenge facing the conference in his introductory remarks: "We will need to build stronger bonds of organization and unity across campuses, state lines and across the wide gaps that divide our so-called public and private institutions as well as those gaps that divide us from other workers," he said.

As the conference progressed, the importance of this call became increasingly

Victor Gotbaum told the conference that labor had always tried to make the system work, but that it's not working anymore.

"It is difficult for me to talk for the labor movement. There is no labor movement. There are movements within a movement. But there has been basically a labor ideology. We talk about it in terms of Samuel Gompers' statement of 'More.' We've worked within the institutions and within the system, especially within the economic system. And it's been relatively successful—except for the last decade. And we find that when the system breaks down and doesn't work we are fairly helpless."

These words expressed a sentiment that seemed to be widely shared at the conference. But coming together to express these common anxieties also seemed to have a cathartic effect. As they were shared, new ideas and strategies began to be expressed. As Gotbaum himself said, "We worked within a system we really couldn't control. But this has basically been the labor movement's thrust. I think it's beginning to break down. We've always looked to make the system work. Well, it's not working.... New sets of forces are engulfing us."

The search for new directions for organized labor emerged as the central theme of the conference. At the three previous gatherings, delegates firmly rejected attempts to give the conference a per-

manent structure. But conference co-ordinator Phil Nicholson, first vice-president of the Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers, broached the challenge facing the conference in his introductory remarks: "We will need to build stronger bonds of organization and unity across campuses, state lines and across the wide gaps that divide our so-called public and private institutions as well as those gaps that divide us from other workers," he said.

As the conference progressed, the importance of this call became increasingly evident—and this, in spite of the continuing distrust, and even animosity, that has so deeply divided the leadership of the major national teacher unions.

In fact, the continuing state of active belligerence between the national leadership of the AFT and the NEA cast a further shadow over the conference. Pressure from their national office brought about the withdrawal of almost all of the NEA staff representatives who had agreed to participate. It did not, however, prevent the active participation of elected leaders of NEA-affiliated locals.

The sentiment of the delegates was well expressed by Martin Morand, Director of the Center for the Study of Labor Relations at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, when he observed that "there was a time, about 10 years ago, when the competing national organizations made a positive contribution by their competition.... That day is past."

To give substance to this emerging conviction, at the concluding business meeting the delegates voted 1) to establish on a permanent basis the Conference of Academic Unionists; 2) to authorize the formation of a Steering Committee composed of one representative from each participating union local; and 3) to set up a sub-committee to draft a statement of

purpose. Underscoring the significance of these actions, Richard Hazely, President of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties, AFT-AAUP, and a founding representative to the conferences, observed that these decisions, which "would have been regarded with a great deal of apprehension four years ago, when this Conference first met, [constitute] a momentous half-step forward."

In seeking to give voice to the new directions for academic unionism that the conference seemed to articulate, Bertell Ollman, of the Department of Politics, New York University, noted that "We are at the same time professionals and workers. But the problems we are talking about, from which we are suffering, and for which we are trying to find a solution, are not problems we have as professionals, but problems we have as workers. If our problems are general to the entire working class, then our solutions cannot be approached piece-meal.... The solution is to improve the living conditions of all working people."

When Ollman went on to call for the creation of a labor party, no one at the workshop objected. The desirability of such a move seemed to be taken for granted. Discussion centered instead on the immediate relevance of such political activity. Some said that protecting their members from budget cuts and firings now precluded independent politics. Ollman insisted that this was the only practical thing to do. Only the establishment of a labor party can force politicians to take labor's immediate needs seriously, he said.

In the end, the conference centered on the conflict between traditional trade union strategies, which everyone present seemed to agree had come to a dead-end, and the straining effort to envision an alternative direction. Paul Lauter, former president of the College at Old Westbury chapter of United University Professionals, AFT, suggested that as unionists the need was to speak much more creatively and constructively to affirmative action and curricula.

Lauter argued the need to redefine the issues and thus to change the framework of political discussion. Otherwise, he warned, academics are bound to remain on the defensive, "fighting over the crumbs left over by the corporate agenda."