

SPOCK BACKS GREGORY

VOTE FREEDOM&PEACE

⌚ VOTE COLUMN 'H' ⌚



AN OPEN LETTER FROM DR. BENJAMIN SPOCK

Dear Friend,

I am speaking tonight in behalf of the candidacy of Dick Gregory for President of the Freedom and Peace Party line which is on the ballot in New York State.

I address my remarks particularly to those of you who, like me, are deeply disappointed and sick at heart at the very thought of four more years of the same thing, whether it's under Nixon or under Humphrey. We had hoped and worked for something better.

We are also deeply disturbed that George Wallace and General LeMay have usurped the good name of political independence, for they represent not the new politics so desperately needed but a double dose of the old-- twice as much racism, twice as much militarism, and a still bigger war.

Never in my memory has the country been insulted with so meaningless a choice of major presidential candidates..God knows I have seen many an election with meaningless choices. But this year even the liberal magazine, The New Republic, which never had difficulty in recommending a presidential candidate to its readers, is stumped. It is against Wallace, of course, but finds it impossible to choose between Tweedlenix and Tweedlehump.

Yet this year promised to be so different. Let us think back a few months. The conscience of millions of Americans had been stirred and aroused by the monstrous immorality and utter senselessness of the Vietnam War. There was also growing awareness of the relationship between the shameful squandering of the nation's resources on militarism and imperialism and its inability to meet the acute domestic crisis of racism and poverty.

From all this there arose a feeling of desperation to provide the nation with a meaningful alternative in this year's election. When Senator Gene McCarthy rose to the challenge, picked up the peace torch and entered the race, a real crusade was born. This grew in strength and confidence from primary to primary, until it seemed that nothing could stop it.

The Chicago Democratic Convention crushed that hope; it showed that hope to be illusory. It proved that the Democratic Party, like its counterpart, the Republican Party, could be contemptibly unresponsive to the will of the voters for basic change. It proved that the political machine and the vested corporate and military interests behind it would sooner lose the election, even smash the party, than lose control of it.

Despite this defeat, many of the supporters of Senator McCarthy were still determined to provide a meaningful alternative. A movement for a new party was created in many states. Signatures were obtained to place McCarthy's name on the ballot as an independent candidate. The hope that he would permit his name to remain still lingered as late as a week ago. Unfortunately it is now dead.

Thus the many millions who fought so ardently for a peace alternative in November are now confronted with a dilemma, even a personal crisis of conscience. What to do on November 5th?

Each of us must answer this question for himself. I have for myself. I'm going to vote for Dick Gregory and the Freedom and Peace Party, appearing on Column H of the voting machine. I feel that the two major parties went to the bottom of the barrel to pick the most unappealing, discredited and unsavory of candidates. It is obvious that these parties are not and can't be controlled by the people. As far as I'm concerned there can be only one significant political way forward and that is by beginning to build a new party, one sincerely dedicated to the cause of freedom and peace everywhere. This will not be easy, It will take time, but it must be begun now or it may be too late.

(Over Please)

I say, "may be too late", advisedly. It would be a mistake to believe that all the people who vote for the racist George Wallace are racists themselves. Many of them are average people who want their politics simple and straight, are fed up with things as they are, with old line parties and politicians; scared, too, of what the future holds in store, and therefore responsive to a demagoguery that seems to speak for the common man and that promises something different as against the same old thing.

It is no accident that Wallace refers to himself as a radical and not as the ultra-reactionary that he really is. It is no accident that he appeals to the working people and promises them lower taxes and more social security, although Alabama has the highest sales tax and the lowest big property tax. But if the progressives and the radicals do not fill the vacuum of discontent with their own independent political movement, the reactionaries and neo-fascists will.

I have great admiration for Senator McCarthy and for the fight he waged. I believe him mistaken, however, in his refusal to run as an independent on a new partly line. I do not share his optimism about the future of the Democratic Party. America does not need a patched-up rag of an old party; it needs a new one. The times are too critical; the issues too sharply drawn.

Had the fight for Senator McCarthy's nomination been geared from the outset to the probably eventuality -- if not certainty -- of what happened in Chicago, the entire political scene today would be different. The Chicago disaster would have ended a round, not the battle itself. A call to form a new party would have then met with a new resurgence of the movement, with a new crusading zeal, with a new attraction of the forces who desperately wanted bold leadership in a new direction. But because the movement was not geared toward this objective, because there were illusions remaining about the Democratic Party, the call for a new party did not have the endorsement of the principal figures of the McCarthy movement, lacked his personal support, and thus failed. And so today it is the racist, war-hawk Wallace, who carries the banner of a 3rd party in all the 50 states of the union.

This, to me, is the outstanding lesson that must be learned. It also offers the clue as to what needs to be done on November 5th and after.

We will all support candidates for U.S. Senate and Congress who stand for peace and freedom to one degree or another. As for the presidency, however, we cannot in good conscience vote for either Nixon or Humphrey and certainly not for Wallace.

Some think that a vote for Humphrey is the only practical thing to do. I believe it to be the most impractical. It would only strengthen the corrupt machine in its cynical view that liberals, progressives and even radicals can be taken for granted, that they have no where else to go anyway.

There is somewhere else to go. In New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and in several other states, Dick Gregory will appear on the ballot as the Freedom and Peace Party candidate for president. I strongly urge a vote for Mr. Gregory. It is true that Dick Gregory cannot be elected. But a vote for him will have a meaning that cannot be mistaken. It will be for peace in Vietnam NOW. It will be for black freedom, Puerto Rican freedom, and freedom for all peoples. It will be a vote for a black man who, only next to Martin Luther King, has sacrificed a great deal in his quest for peace and justice.

Gregory has marched on picket lines across the land -- to end the war, for civil rights, to support striking workers, to help Indian fishermen. He has given of himself generously, his time, his talents, no matter what the cost, so long as it was in the cause of freedom and peace.

It is somewhat ironic that Dick Gregory, who has won so great acclaim as a comedian, should this year be the only serious presidential candidate on the voting machine, while those who appear so impressively solemn are the real buffoons.

And remember, a vote for Dick Gregory and the Freedom and Peace Party of New York is also a vote for a real new politics and for undertaking in a serious way the great task before us of building a new kind of party of black and white unity.

I urge you to vote for Dick Gregory and the candidates of the Freedom and Peace Party on Column H.

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