Eldridge Cleaver For President

Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party

Author of Soul on Ice

Senior Editor of Ramparts Magazine

Member of the California State Steering Committee
Eldridge Cleaver gives content to this maxim, articulating a set of political principles that are clear, straightforward, persuasive. He explains complex issues in concrete terms that people can readily understand.

Eldridge Cleaver sets forth clearly the political goals of Peace and Freedom and shows how we can organize to ultimately achieve them. He sets forth concrete programs which Peace and Freedom can begin working on immediately - interim programs designed for this state of a continuing struggle. Ideas for many of these programs came out of Peace and Freedom neighborhood clubs; Eldridge Cleaver can provide the leadership to get these programs moving, and the perspective to give them broader content.

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER'S NATIONAL PROGRAM

THE GOALS

ON THE AMERICAN EMPIRE: The U.S. must be forced to withdraw troops from Vietnam and throughout the world; dismantle foreign bases; cancel all military and other AID programs which serve to maintain American political-economic dominance. With withdrawal of U.S. troops, bases, and military aid, the peoples of the world will wrest control of their governments from U.S. supported local elites, and wrest control of their own resources from the stranglehold of U.S. corporations. When this occurs, the U.S. should extend no-strings-attached aid to people's governments (not reactionary oligarchies) in the underdeveloped world - not to build markets for U.S. goods, not to maintain cheap raw material sources for U.S. industry, but to enable these peoples to industrialize, mechanize agriculture and generally satisfy their own needs. These principles apply also to the internal colonies of black people and other minorities in the United States. Without justice, there can be no peace. Without disarming the world's Number One warmaker, there can be no justice.

ON BLACK LIBERATION, CHICANO LIBERATION, AMERICAN INDIAN LIBERATION: Our goal is political and economic self-determination for our people. Over the years, the ruling elite has proved unwilling to relinquish its power over our lives, unwilling to stop brutalizing us, incapable of reforming its rule in any fundamental way. Our liberation will re-
quire a root change in the political and economic structures of this country, taking power from the hands of the ruling elite and placing it in the hands of the people. While this is our ultimate goal, our immediate aim is community control - control of local schools, police forces, and all public agencies operating in our communities. The demand for community control builds a strong local base, and is the logical first step toward self-determination in the larger society. Community control includes, of course, the people's right of self-defense against attacks by agents of the power structure.

ON THE U.S. ECONOMY: The U.S. must be forced to dismantle the war machine, and put the enormous savings to work to meet the desperate human needs of millions of Americans - for jobs, quality schools, free transportation, decent housing and public health facilities. Although the demand for federal spending on people instead of munitions is reformist and falls far short of our objective of people's control of all resources, it is a good interim demand - provided the administration of federal money is entirely in the hands of grassroots community organizations. We must continue to expose government Aid programs controlled by bureaucrats in Washington (or by local city halls and courthouse gangs) as ruses to dupe the people - ruses, in fact, to increase the government's control over our lives.

HOW TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS

It is clear that these kinds of changes cannot be achieved by electoral means. They cannot be achieved until a unified mass people's movement has been forged. This explains the importance of the three-way alliance of Peace and Freedom, the Black Panther Party, and militant Chicanos - an alliance founded on uncompromised, non-sectarian radical principles. An alliance which uses electoral politics to help build a mass base and provide a platform for our ideas. But an alliance which organizes in communities and links up with community and labor struggles...which organizes around those programmatic reforms that meet the needs of the people and strengthen their Movement - opposing those reforms which tend to strengthen the power of the state.

The State is trying desperately to divide - and conquer - the infant people's movement in America. Our short-lived but steadily deepening alliance is at present the best hope of averting that. Eldridge Cleaver was the inspiration and the moving force behind the alliance between Movement groups everyone said could "never get together." He is committed to making the alliance a concrete and workable reality in California and New York, and to forging similar alliances around the Peace and Freedom Movement in other states.
The three-point national program will not be met until the people organize to demand it. In turn, success in building a people's movement depends on their day-to-day struggles around local demands. Eldridge Cleaver believes Peace and Freedom must actively support local struggles, and unite them by showing how they are part of a larger struggle to transform American society. Peace and Freedom must say NO to the elitist, top-down politics of other candidates, YES to the only Presidential candidate who has proved by his actions his commitment to the politics of people's control from the bottom-up - Eldridge Cleaver. His community action program:

JOBS: Guarantee jobs to every adult American able to work - useful jobs, which build livable communities on sound ecological principles, create schools and hospitals on a human scale. (Demand job programs under community control, with jobs for the unemployed, especially black unemployed.)

HOUSING: a. Protect tenants and the small homeowners victimized by exorbitant rents and taxes (while the Bank of America gets a $2.5 million tax break on its San Francisco headquarters), by setting up community controlled Rent and Tax Control Boards. (Support actions like the San Francisco rent control/tax relief petition drive, and the Los Angeles housing marches against evictions.)

b. End all "urban renewal" and "model cities" programs, designed for corporate profit, which force poor and working people out of their communities. (Support struggles against local "redevelopment" boards.)

c. Build decent low-cost housing, for use not for profit, in such a way that existing communities are not leveled or disrupted. (Demand community control of all projects, tenant control of public housing.)

SCHOOLS: Quality education has priority, not gimmicks like bussing schemes. (Demand neighborhood control of schools; small classes; teachers not classroom cops; bilingual instruction; curriculum changes to include history of the Black and Mexican-American peoples, labor history, replacing the history of rulers with the history of peoples. Support actions like the high school students' organizing in New York City, and the new coalition in UFT supporting decentralization of the schools and opposing union leadership.)

4.
POLICE CONTROL: Disarm and disband police forces of the present type. Replace them with public safety guardians, living in the communities where they work, serving the people not propertied interests. (Demand civilian review boards in the cities; abolition of "tactical squads"; an end to police use of Mace gas. Organize immediately community police control boards to observe police and collectively protest abuses. Support actions like the "Free Huey Newton" campaigns in California and New York and the projected self-defense actions in New York City.)

GUN CONTROL: Take the guns from the cops and the Army, not from the people. Unless there is total disarmament, the people would be defenseless against attacks by what is becoming an increasingly repressive police state. The Vietnamese would be enslaved today if they had disarmed while the U.S. war machine kept its weapons. (Organize to defend the Second Amendment to the Constitution, guaranteeing the citizen's right to bear arms - one of our few remaining defenses against tyranny.)

LABOR: Build a new labor movement, representing workers not union bureaucracies which make deals with management and sell out the workers. (Join rank-and-file struggles to end discrimination in the unions; oust corrupt union leaders; fight the speed-ups in factories; organize agricultural workers; improve wages and job conditions; win decent job tenure and security against lay-offs. Join the fight against government strikebreaking and "wage guidelines," and against the prohibition on strikes by government employees. Support struggles like that of the hospital workers, and rank-and-file insurgent groups in AFSCME and other unions.)

TAXES: Remove the tax load from ordinary people and put it on the corporations, which benefit from the "help business" spending policy of the government. (Join the fight against sales and gasoline taxes, which hit us hardest; against the 10 per cent war tax surcharge; against the telephone war tax.)

HEALTH: Guarantee free medical care for every man, woman and child. (Fight to expand and modernize the scandalously crowded public health and mental health facilities, where adequate care is impossible. Fight to end government complicity with the drug companies, which results in price fixing, exorbitant profits and inflated drug prices the poor cannot afford. Fight for a National Health Program.)
PUBLIC TRANSIT: Establish free fares on city buses, trams and subways. (Support the projected campaign for free transit fares in New York City, to be financed by taxing downtown corporations, not working people.)

PRISONS: Abolish the archaic, inhumane prison system and replace it with centers for real rehabilitation of those who commit crimes against persons. (Join the fight against capital punishment; against political imprisonment; for the prisoner's minimum wage. Assist prisoners in organizing for drastic reform of the penal system.)

CORPORATE EXPLOITATION: Organize people's resistance to the corporations and banks that control and exploit their communities. (Support actions like the Oakland economic boycott, and the boycott of scab grapes from Delano.)

THE DRAFT: Abolish the Selective Slavery System. (Support local actions of draft resistance and organizing within the Armed Forces.)

ARGUMENTS FOR SUPPORTING CLEAVER

Argument #1: "His Age"

Eldridge's age (33) should not be a stumbling block. Even from a technical standpoint, the Constitution merely states that one must be 35 to hold office as President, not to run for that office. If state officials refuse to allow Eldridge to appear on the ballot, we can challenge them in the courts (which will gain publicity for the campaign); and if that fails, we can select a Vice-Presidential running mate who will appear on the ballot explicitly as a stand-in for Eldridge and who will project the same politics.

Argument #2: "His Prison Record"

Peace and Freedom Movement has always included those people disenfranchised by law for reason of a prison record. To disqualify our strongest and most eloquent spokesman because of a prison record would negate the principles of Peace and Freedom, which is dedicated to new beginnings for America. Moreover, Eugene Debs was in prison when he ran for President, and if anything this increased his appeal among poor and working people and the enlightened middle class.
Argument #3: "His radical politics might alienate potential support among McCarthy liberals"

The Peace and Freedom Party was founded as the electoral arm of the Peace and Freedom Movement, which grew out of the struggles for Black Liberation and against the Vietnam War. Our emphasis was on organizing people, rather than just getting them to the polls. At our founding convention in California we reaffirmed that our purpose was not to amass a large protest vote, but to increase people's political awareness by practical struggle and to unify the Movement around radical goals.

We have to stand up for what we believe in - this is what separates us from the Democrats and Republicans. We cannot sway one way or the other just to pick up a few more votes. The radical politics of Peace and Freedom articulated by Eldridge Cleaver will attract liberals seeking real political change.

Argument #4: "He is identified with the Black Panther Party"

Eldridge Cleaver's leadership role in the Black Panther Party is an asset, not a liability. White, Black and Mexican-American people alike will respond to the clarity of his program, which speaks to their needs, and the campaign will help to dissipate the gnawing racism in American society. Whites who have been bilked and brainwashed into thinking Black people are their enemy, can be made to see that they have the same enemy as Black people. Today's best answer to racism is to project our principled, radical Black-Brown-White alliance on a national scale.

Argument #5: "We shouldn't run a Presidential candidate"

Fundamental social change will not come through the electoral process. But we participate in electoral politics to expose its bankruptcy and direct people to more radical forms of political struggle.

The Movement will be represented by someone this year, someone who represents the opposition in America. The Movement must choose that representative, and not be manipulated by liberal Democrats who are not part of the Movement, do not understand it, and in fact are working to redirect the spread of people's struggle back into establishment politics.
We are projecting as our spokesman a man with a deep, personal understanding of the violence this system commits against our people, a passionate commitment to changing that system from the bottom-up, and a concrete program for building the mass movement which alone can transform the society.

Eldridge Cleaver is a new kind of "leader," a living example of radical change, who sprang from the people, remains with the people and speaks the language of their aspirations. He has grown enormously and continues to grow. He encourages and expects those around him to grow and become the "leaders" of their own lives. And he shows how the movement can and must grow - only by being honest, by being bold...by daring to struggle, by daring to win.

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