

# KKK HONORS RIZZO

May 1978

Frank Rizzo is finally getting the kind of national recognition he deserves. After his now famous "white rights" speech in Whitman Park, the *Klansman*, an organ of the Ku Klux Klan, gave Rizzo their "Racist Hero of the Month" award. Bill Wilkinson, an imperial wizard of the Klan said: "Rizzo is saying publicly what klansmen have been saying for decades, namely that whites must join hands and unite for their common good. . . Mayor Rizzo has shown the courage of his convictions and should be applauded loudly by all white people."

Rizzo was red in the face when he got the news about his newest group of supporters. "I have always been open and direct . . . They hide behind sheets," Rizzo said. While Rizzo claimed to "reject the KKK and all it represents", he was at a loss to explain just why the Klan might choose him as a comrade in arms. Rizzo returned to his feeble theme that "careless reporting" by the media is responsible for the widespread conviction that Rizzo stands for white supremacy.

Not only did Rizzo claim he is innocent

of the charge of racism. He further claimed that "no city has a better record than Philadelphia in promoting equal, fair and humane treatment for all its citizens." Given that racism and inequality are built-in features of capitalist society, it is certainly true that no city in the US has anything to brag about when it comes to "equal, fair and humane treatment". But Philadelphia under the Rizzo administration has to be near the bottom of the list.

Along with massive unemployment, rotting housing and segregated schools, Philadelphia has a mayor who opposes even the most token and modest measures to alleviate these conditions, a mayor who actively and more or less openly promotes racism. The KKK knows an ally when it sees one, even if the Mayor will not return the favor.

# TRADE UNIONS BATTLE OVER CHARTER CHANGE

October–November 1978

by JIM GRIFFIN

Frank Rizzo's attempt to incite white against Black to promote the charter change and a shot at another term has stirred controversy in every quarter of the city. The trade unions are no exception. Rizzo's carefully cultivated image as "the friend of the working stiff" is badly tarnished after eight years of high taxes, runaway shops, and attacks on public employee unions. Rizzo's open attacks on Black people are rightfully perceived by many trade unionists as a dagger aimed at the heart of trade union solidarity.

The main opposition to Rizzo in the unions has come from below. The city's trade union leadership is divided on the charter change question. Rizzo maintains his key allies in the labor bureaucracy. The Building Trades are supporting the charter change. So are the leaders of both the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers (ACTWU) and the International Ladies Garment Workers.

Many unions are maintaining a neutral stance. The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) leadership, perhaps in exchange for the recent contract settlement, has refused to take a stand. The core of opposition comes from 1199C (Hospital workers), the Retail Clerks, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Rank and filers began early to organize against the charter change. The Stop Rizzo Coalition organized a trade union committee encompassing members of over 20 different locals. Beginning in August mass leafletting of the shops began. Rallies were held at shop gates, job sites and outside union meetings. Anti-Rizzo activists

sold buttons, circulated petitions, and registered their co-workers to vote.

Where union leaders supported the charter change or refused to take a stand, rank and file forces organized opposition. In the ACTWU, for example, the Rank and File Committee unanimously voted to oppose the charter change at the same time union leader Harry Goldsmith, without so much as consulting his membership, threw his weight behind Rizzo. A petition campaign opposing the charter change has won broad support from ACTWU rank and filers.

In the PFT, where Ryan and Sullivan gingerly ride the fence, the

School Employees Action Caucus (SEAC) has been mobilizing opposition to the charter change. Attempts to raise the question before the Executive Board have been bureaucratically squashed, but a SEAC petition has been signed by thousands of members.

## RESOLUTIONS AGAINST RIZZO

Some rank and filers have succeeded in getting the question before the membership and thus forcing the union to take a stand. The United Paper Workers Local at the Connelly Container Corporation passed a resolution opposing the charter change and condemning Frank Rizzo for his racism and his anti-labor



stands, concluding Rizzo was unfit to be Mayor.

At the initiative of the Concerned Members Caucus, Local 813 of the United Autoworkers at Budd's Hunting Park plant passed a resolution in May unanimously condemning Rizzo's "White Power" speech in Whitman Park. Again in October the Local unanimously voted to oppose the charter change and denounced Rizzo's "vote white" tactics.

UAW Local 92 at Budd Red Lion issued a statement condemning "elected leaders. . . who exploit racial or ethnic differences. . . and polarize the community". Out of fear of jeopardizing a possible city contract the leadership has resisted taking a clear cut stand on the charter question in spite of broad rank and file sentiment for such a course. Some may hope Rizzo will step in and keep Budd from moving the Red Lion plant. But Rizzo's track record in stopping runaway shops isn't good as workers from Midvale Steel or Triangle Graphics can testify.

UAW members from several locals are circulating a petition calling for the regional UAW CAP Council, the political arm of the union, to take a position. Leaders of the petition campaign are confident of victory if they can succeed in getting the Council to vote.

In the struggle to get the AFL-

CIO Central Labor Council to take a position, progressive leadership and rank and file forces have worked in concert with one another. On October 11th Henry Nicholas, President of 1199C, introduced a resolution calling for the Council to condemn Rizzo's racial polarization as contrary to the principles of trade unionism.

Outside the Council meeting an ad hoc group representing some fifty trade unionists including large numbers of local officers and shop stewards issued a statement in support of Nicholas's action. "Unions were founded on the principle of unity and solidarity between working people - Irish, Italian, Puerto Rican, Jewish, Polish, Hungarian, German, but especially between Black and white", the statement said. "Like the Southern politicians of years ago, Frank Rizzo has tried to cover up the problems of Philadelphia by trying to make Black people the scape goat".

#### A LOT OF HOOEY FROM ED TOOHEY

Also like the southern politicians of old who filibustered civil rights legislation, Rizzo's allies in the Council stalled and maneuvered to avoid a vote on Nicholas's resolution. The vote was put off for ten days on the absurd grounds that the Council lacked the means to record a roll call vote.

Ten days later a meeting of the Council's Executive (which includes

only the heads of the member unions) voted 8-2 that the resolution was "unconstitutional". According to news reports, Council President Ed Toohey said, "the Council does not have jurisdiction to rule on the resolution which is a moral and not a legal question."

The workers who built the labor movement by defying court injunctions, sit-down strikes, and militant unity would turn over in their graves if they heard this bit of feeble and cowardly mumbo jumbo.

Union members from a dozen different locals picketed the meeting, prompting the Building Trades representative to the Executive Committee to shout that Nicholas's resolution was the work of Milton Street's "social extremists" and Communists. In the vote only Wendell Young, President of the Retail Clerks, stood by Henry Nicholas. Earl Stout, who earlier said he would pull AFSCME DC 33 out of the Council if they refused to allow the roll call vote, excused himself from the meeting right before the crucial vote.

As we go to press the Trade Union Committee of the Stop Rizzo Coalition is organizing a labor demonstration calling for the Council to reserve the decision of the Executive Committee while simultaneously calling on the unions to take a stand against the charter change. **Phooey on Toohey - Vote No!**

## EVERY DOG HAS HIS DAY

December 1978

*"We're pulling away like an express train...I never had any doubt I'd win. There was never a moment's concern."*

So said Frank Rizzo 45 minutes after the polls closed. A half an hour later Rizzo made his way downstairs to tell the faithful that it was all over—the charter change was defeated.

Rizzo had predicted a 50,000 yes vote margin for the charter change. Instead the charter was swamped by a NO margin of 220,000. Rizzo had said he would take the Northeast by a two to one margin. Instead he won only 5 of 14 wards. Rizzo predicted he would come out of South Philadelphia's huge 39th ward with a margin of 20,000. Instead the charter change carried the ward by 13,000 votes. Only one of Rizzo's pre election predictions came to pass. He said he would get his "fair share of the Black vote." He did: 4%.

The real prophets this election day were the charter change opponents who

predicted that a massive voter turnout would swamp the charter change by a 2 to 1 margin.

While only 37% of the electorate across the country went to the polls, in Philadelphia 71% turned out to vote. A record turnout in the Black wards insured that the charter change would go down big. The volume of the NO vote and the voter turnout is even more impressive in light of the dirty tricks of the "Right to Choose" gang. 225 divisions, almost all of them in Black, anti-Rizzo wards, reported machine breakdowns. Thousands of legally registered voters found they were not in the binders. Anti-Rizzo poll-watchers were harassed and in on case beaten. County Commissioner and loyal Rizzoite Margaret Tartaglione ordered the machines in one Germantown polling place moved around the corner during the night.

Before the day was out Tartaglione had been arrested. Common Pleas judge

Lisa Richette had ordered the printing of paper ballots to service West Philadelphia and a federal grand jury was launching an investigation into "unprecedented complaints of fraud."

An estimated 20,000 to 50,000 voters, mostly Black, were unable to vote as a result of the Rizzo machine's effort to sabotage the election.

In spite of these measures, the aroused voters were determined to have their say. Many waited in line for hours waiting for broken machines to be fixed. Others went to election court and waited more hours. In an average election, each of the city's fifteen election courts pass on 400 petitions to vote. This time the figure was 1,000 and some of the courts ran out of seals and legal documents.

Election night 300 Black voters blocked traffic at Broad & Columbia, demanding that the local election courts give them the right to vote. The log jam at the election courts was caused by the