

## SECTION II: *Stop Rizzo Movement*

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### THE MEANING OF THE RIZZO LANDSLIDE

November-December 1975

The election of Frank Rizzo by a larger margin than in '71 and against a better candidate in the person of Charles Bowser represents a defeat for progressive forces in the city.

It means that we face four more years of blatant corruption, racism and cut-backs in vital city services from the Mayor's office. But more importantly it means that Rizzo's demogogy still holds a substantial portion of the city's working people under its sway.

And most importantly it means that the anti-Rizzo forces which are numerically considerable have yet to find the proper political approach and organizational vehicle for turning Rizzo and reaction out of City Hall.

#### THE RIZZO VOTE

As in '71 and as in the Democratic primary this year, Rizzo rolled up huge majorities in the white working class wards (64% in the Northeast, 70% in the Kensington Area, 76% in South Philly) which were more than enough to offset his loss of the Black and liberal middle class wards.

As in the previous election and primary, the voter turnout in the pro-Rizzo areas was much greater than in the areas where Rizzo was weak (South Philadelphia 69% as contrasted with North Philadelphia 53%). In comparing this election with that of '71 many analysts have concluded that Rizzo had greatly broadened his base of support. They point to the fact that he won by a much larger margin this time (76,544 over the combined votes of his opponents as compared to 48,000 over Thatcher Longstreth in 1971).

And they cite the larger portion of Black vote gained by Rizzo this time around (in '71 Rizzo got 24% of the Black vote, this time he got 34%).

But when these facts are placed in proper perspective, this analysis loses its force. The turnout this time was considerably less than in '71. This was particularly true in the Black wards where only 53% of the registered voters went to the polls as compared to 72% in 1971.

It is an old axiom that when the turnout is light the "organization" candidate is the winner. This was undoubtedly the case in the Black wards where Rizzo street money and organization combined with the allegiance of the Black ward leaders (In 1971 many backed Longstreth or were neutral ) produced a fair sized machine vote for Rizzo.

When Rizzo's vote is measured against the backdrop of the response of the whole Black electorate it hardly seems to indicate any groundswell of support. In West Philadelphia for example, about one out of every five registered Democrats voted for Rizzo.

It is also important to place Rizzo's victory citywide in this perspective. 28% of the registered voters in the city cast a ballot for Frank Rizzo. As electoral politics go in a period where there is widespread cynicism about the conventional political process this is more than enough to get elected, but it shows the active base of support for Rizzo remains about the same.

#### THE BOWSER CANDIDACY

While Rizzo gained no appreciable new support, the opposition forces failed to tap the existing base of anti-Rizzo sentiment, let alone cut into Rizzo's base.

Thomas Foglietta could hardly do this as his campaign was aimed at out-Rizzoing Rizzo. The voters sent him and the dying Republican Party into an oblivion they richly deserve.

But Charles Bowser, as an attractive Black candidate with considerable experience in the city government appeared to many as the candidate who might turn it around. For them, Bowser's performance was acutely disappointing. Bowser failed to turn out the Black vote, falling well short of Thatcher's '71 totals. Bowser did manage to finish second and 40% of his total vote came from the white wards, indicating that a Black candidate could pull white votes.

Certainly part of the explanation for Bowser's poor showing can be traced to organization. The Philadelphia Party with only a \$100,000 dollar campaign fund and one full-time staffer was no match for the Rizzo machine which spent over \$1,000,000 dollars and fielded a massive organization. But this is not the crux of the matter.

To mobilize the Black vote and cut into Rizzo's white working class support a hard-hitting campaign that squarely confronted the issues facing the people of the city was required.

The people who are staying home from the polls are sick and tired of politicians, liberal and conservative alike, who offer nothing more than the same old promises, the same old cliches about making government more honest and efficient, and the same old evasion about the important issues.

The big issues are taxes, crime, unemployment, and city services. Rizzo cons some people with his racist demogogy on these issues. The only way to beat him is to expose him as the pro-business, anti-working class phony that he is. The only way to mobilize the masses of working people and oppressed national minorities is by bringing to them a program that will solve the problems of the working class the only way they can be