

power over Congress by the Democrats can be seen as somewhat of a victory. This is because questions such as aid to the contras, military intervention and cutting needed domestic programs can be checked by a Democratic Congress, despite the wishes of a Republican president. It is also a sign that through popular voting (unlike the presidency where the electoral college decides), Americans were intent on the re-election of Democratic representatives and unwilling to have a straight Republican ticket in power.

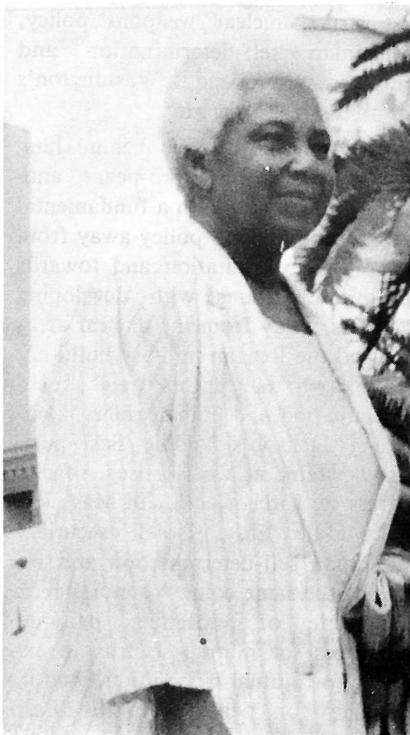
REFERENDUMS ON PALESTINE

On November 8, 1988, Americans in four cities voted on referendums relating to the Palestinian cause. In Berkeley, California, a proposition was placed on the ballot requesting Berkeley to adopt, as its sister city, Jabalia refugee camp in the occupied Gaza Strip. The proposal was originally brought up to the Berkeley City Council several months ago by councilwoman Maudelle Shirek who had recently returned from a delegation to the occupied territories. After heated town meetings, the proposal was voted down 5 to 2. This initiative was

defeated on November 8th by a high-financed, frantic campaign.

Across the bridge in San Francisco, an alliance of hundreds of organizations and individual religious, peace, Jewish and Arab activists was formed.

Maudelle Shirek



They were able to get over 18,000 signatures in order to put on the ballot a referendum entitled «Peace and Justice in the Middle East» calling for mutual recognition, and the Palestinians' right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. After the pro-Israeli lobby spent over two million dollars to foil this referendum, the measure was defeated.

However, in Cambridge and Somerville, Massachusetts, a resolution was passed condemning US support for the Israeli occupation and calling for an independent Palestinian homeland. According to Kathryn Silver, an organizer of the referendum, the referendum demanded from the President and members of Congress to exert pressure on 'Israel' in order to put an end to its human rights violations against the Palestinian people, and to end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to establish an independent state there. The organizers of the referendum advocated that pressure be put upon 'Israel' by cutting American financial support to the Zionist entity. They utilized the results of recent polls concerning the Palestinian question, in order to gain support for the referendum. In fact, one poll revealed that approximately 41% of Americans support a Palestinian state and approximately 23% oppose. Likewise, 41% called for a cut in financial support to 'Israel' while 7% called for an increase in aid. The results of a *New York Times* poll revealed that 50% of American citizens support a Palestinian state.

The value of these initiatives is not so much whether they passed or failed; rather they are important because they are actions taken to familiarize the average American citizen with the Palestinian question. The discussion which evolved has raised consciousness about the Palestinians' situation among Americans, and has threatened the Zionist lobby's aspirations to keep North Americans ignorant on the question of Palestine.

CHANGING VIEWS ON THE MIDDLE EAST

«I think all Jews have viewed the Democratic Party in the past as their home, and even when they voted out of the Democratic Party, they did so on a basis of individual candidates,» says Sylvia Neil, executive director of the Chicago branch of the American Jewish Congress. Jews have been, in recent decades, among the most loyal members of the frayed Democratic coalition, casting their votes for Democratic candidates in most cases by 2-1 or better (*International Herald-Tribune*, October 18, 1988).

In this presidential election, although the Zionist lobby in the US urged the supporters of 'Israel' to vote Republican, seeing their strategic interests hand-in-hand with George Bush, approximately 70% of the Jewish community voted for Dukakis. Meanwhile, various organizations, pollsters and newspapers have been busy per-

forming polls on the topic of the Middle East to see if there was any qualitative change in opinions. A survey taken by the American Jewish Congress in April, 1988, found that 43% of the US population favored an «independent Palestinian state in the West Bank;» 62% endorsed US negotiations with the PLO. According to pollster John Marttila, support for a Palestinian homeland has increased 10% over the last three years among the general public. A *Los Angeles Times* poll done this spring found that 34% of non-Jews favored a reduction of military aid to 'Israel' and 65% thought there was «an element of racism involved in the attitude of Israelis toward Arabs.»

With all this recent information, Zionists are still counting on the Republican party to follow through on their commitment to 'Israel' regardless of the changing tide of sentiment existing among US citizens.

*Trilateral Commission: began functioning in 1973 and represented a fresh attempt by world imperialism to find solutions for its economic and political crisis. It includes men representing the acme of power.