

# Black Nationalists Now Focusing on Politics

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**NEWARK, Sept. 10**—As the recently completed five-day meeting of the Congress of African Peoples here would indicate, political organizing within black district, around the country is beginning to take a top priority with many social activists.

Some 700 delegates to the Eastern regional meeting of the Congress vowed to run black candidates in at least 12 statewide elections and to help organize a strong national black political force for the 1972 Democratic National Convention.

Generally, the aim is both to elect more black public officials and to influence the selection of the Democratic party's nominees for President and for Vice President in 1972.

The congress is a Pan-African or nationalist-led amalgamation of black organizations. Its strategies coincide with those of a number of black political and social activists, as has been evident during a number of conferences, public statements and interviews during the summer.

## Endorsement Withheld

And while most black politicians are Democrats, they have been careful, so far, to refrain from publicly endorsing any of the Democratic Presidential hopefuls. In this, they are following the lead of the 14-member Black Congressional Caucus.

"No permanent friends, no permanent enemies, just permanent interests," was the way the young but influential Georgia legislator, Julian Bond, described black political strategy during last month's Southern Black Caucus in Mobile, Ala.

Delegates to the annual convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in New Orleans four weeks ago pledged to work for the election of Southern blacks to statewide offices and to Congress.

Dr. George T. Wiley, who heads the National Welfare Rights Organization, led some 1,200 mostly black delegates to the group's annual convention in Providence, R. I. His aim was to set up machinery to enable poor people to run for office and to become delegates to the Democratic National Convention.

new party, or an all-black party, should the commitments of the Democrats be unacceptable.

The Republicans have not completely given up seeking Negro support, although some top Republicans had advised writing off black voters in the past.

Sources close to the black officials in the Nixon Administration have said the Republican party would be campaigning to get "at least 20 per cent" of the black vote during the 1972 Presidential elections. The sources said Administration blacks would be used to point up "the positives" of the Nixon years in trips around the country during coming months.

## Black Silent Majority

A group called the National Black Silent Majority, headed by a former journalist, Clay Clayborne, who was also a special assistant to three Republican National Committee chairmen, has been touring the country as a "flying squad" on a "crusade for patriotism" this summer.

But the interest in the 1972

elections by the Congress of African Peoples represents one of the strongest moves ever into national politics by a group that is predominantly black-nationalist oriented.

For decades nationalist groups have made a point of staying out of politics and many considered voting a waste of time in a nation where, they said, blacks were programmed by the system to suffer. Their efforts had centered on keeping themselves separate from the general society, strengthening relations between black Americans and Africans and on stressing the cultures, languages and customs of Africa.

## African Greetings

These interests have not been dropped by the mostly youthful congress members in their new interest in winning elections. Many wear African-style clothing. They are more likely to greet one another with "habari gani," the Swahili equivalent for "hello," and to say thanks with "asente."

Creating their own "lifestyle," they have renamed the city of Newark as "New Ark" to signify an Old Testament

rebirth. Boston, to congress members, is "Boss Town," making the slang term for "good," the first syllable; Washington is "B-City," for Benjamin Banneker, the black inventor who helped lay out the city, and Baltimore has become "B-more," a long-time black name for that city.

Two of the congress leaders responsible for the political thrust are Imamu Amiri Baraka, 35 years old, the poet who is better known as LeRoi Jones, and Hayward Henry Jr., 23 a professor of black studies at Harvard University.

And in their efforts eventually to create an all-black "national-international African political party," they have not ruled out coalitions with the blacks more firmly committed to the Democratic party.

The congress theorists, who helped to elect Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson of Newark and are leading a "task force" of volunteers into Boston this week to work for black primary candidates in city elections, believe that a political party should give people "identity, purpose and direction."

## Democrat Commitment

Although there has been public speculation that some national black figures would be pushed as Democratic or independent Presidential candidates, the more frequently expressed theory is that black political leaders will attempt to get the best possible commitments from the Democratic party for their continued support. Some other black activists think that black political interests might be served better in a coalition with other minority and liberal groups in a