

Why Are Horses More Valuable Than People?

On Saturday, July 25, 2009, members of CCDS gathered in San Francisco for the third day of the National Convention for Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism. In the workshop, *Socialist Activism and the Civil Rights Movement: Developing a Democracy Charter for the South*, led by the Southern delegation of CCDS, Janie Campbell, a sanitation worker from Charleston, South Carolina, spoke on behalf of the sanitation workers of Charleston who are organizing around issues of health and safety and equal treatment of city employees. The sanitation workers have been protesting harsh working conditions and an unsafe working environment that have resulted in such incidents as workers being immediately called back on the job after being severely burned by chemicals and being physically injured. Ms. Campbell gave testimony to other grievances including the fact that water coolers holding water for the garbage collectors are placed underneath the garbage trucks resulting in the water being contaminated with waste, rendering the water undrinkable. In dangerously high temperatures, the city has allowed horses to return to their stables; sanitation workers are forced to continue to work in the heat.

These issues and others have lead Charleston sanitation workers to establish a union, Charleston Sanitation Workers (Local 1199). Most of the city's sanitation workers have signed cards to join the union. City sanitation workers demand that the city of Charleston commit to regular meetings with democratically elected representatives from their union. The workers also demand that the city of Charleston commit to the terms of a written Memorandum of Understanding. This Memorandum of Understanding will provide clarity in terms of hiring and promotion practices as well as establishes a series of changes that will ensure the health and safety of the sanitation workers. Ms. Campbell testified that she and her fellow sanitation workers have been inspired by Jack O'Dell and his Democracy Charter to look upon their struggle not just as a local issue, but as a human rights issue and as a part of a larger struggle in terms of social and economic justice for workers around the world.

Ms. Campbell expressed her support for the drafting of a Democracy Charter for the South to be built around labor, economic, racial and social justice as its core values which would adopt the struggle of the Charleston Sanitation Workers as one of its central issues. Members of the Southern delegation of CCDS who are actively organizing around the Charleston Sanitation workers include Janet Tucker, Renee Carter, Zach Robinson, Bill Chandler, John Dawkins, and Shafeah M'Balia. A resolution was drafted by the Southern delegation and adopted by the CCDS National Convention backing the Charleston sanitation workers in their struggle to be recognized by the City of Charleston. CCDS stands with the Charleston Sanitation Workers (Local 1199) to have local, national, and international pressure placed on the city of Charleston to recognize the Charleston sanitation worker's union and to adopt the Memorandum of Understanding in a commitment to the continued health and safety of the city's sanitation workers.

Brandon Wallace
American Studies
Purdue University-Alumn
www.juliusseaks.blogspot.com
(765)427-3473