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The Banner

THE LESSON FROM CROSS RIVER

The last local government election was staged twice at Calabar. In the first election, Comrade Bassey Ekpo Bassey won the chairmanship of the Calabar Municipal Council. In the election, the right wing ;had all ganged up against Comrade Bassey. Still he won by over a thousand votes. The election was concelled, and it is very widely believed that this was because it was Comrade Bassey that won. When the lection was repeated, Comrade Bassey won again with a sweeping mojority - over three thousand votes higher than the main bourgeois candidate who did not score up to half of Comrade Bassey's votes.

Everyone close to the matter knows that Comrade Bassey won because of ideology and organisation. Comrade Bassey is the General Secretary of the Directorate for Literacy, an organisation put up by workers some two years ago for self-education towards a new social order and for self-help towards the acquisition of new skills. The Directorate defines the new social order as socialism and identifies the working people as the classes whose struggles alone can bring socialism about.

Comrade Bassey has been a very effective secretary of the Directorate. He has not been an armchair socialist, but has been very close to the workers and their trade unions for many years and is well-known to them. He was also close to students.

When Comrade Bassey set out to contest the election, he had no money but he had the goodwill of the working class, the common people in general, and progressive friends. Credit must be given to Comrade Bassey's confidence in the people, will to succeed, organising ability, hard work and political intelligence and skill. These qualities are not rare among socialists in the country but they are not willing to use them.

If for instance, the socialists resident in Lagos - there are many of us there - had rallied and led broad self-education among the working people in Lagos as Comrades from Calabar advised them to do repeatedly in the last two years, there is no doubt that they would have been able from among themselves to find a candidate close to the workers who could have won the chairmanship of the Lagos Municipal Council. Other candidates could have been found who could successfully contest the ward elections. The same applies to other large towns.

Winning the election is important, but still more important is challenging the bourgeoisie politically for power by participating in all the levels of bourgeois elections.

What of the money? Comrade Bassey's case shows that if the politics of the socialists is flexible and their programme appeals to a broad spectrum of people, the money can be raised from friends of progress as the struggle proceeds. It is very important while ing a devoted socialist not to think that members of the telligentsia or the bourgeois class are all incapable of being ogressive or patriotic. To think so is a sectarian error.

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Was the election not rigged? After the second election, urgeois hypocrits made noises about how efficiently and honestly they conducted it. The bourgeoisie planned to cheat massively. A number of ballot boxes actually did disappear only to reappear at the collating centre with thumped cards in them. What defeated the bourgeoisie was the sweeping margin of the support for Bassey and the massive presence of workers and students. The latter were